

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **BABERGH COUNCIL** held in the King Edmund Chamber - Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich on Tuesday, 23 October 2018

PRESENT:

Councillor: Barry Gasper (Chairman)

Councillors:	Clive Arthey	Sue Ayres
	Melanie Barrett	Simon Barrett
	Tony Bavington	Peter Beer
	Tom Burrows	David Busby
	Sue Carpendale	Michael Creffield
	Luke Cresswell	Derek Davis
	Siân Dawson	Alan Ferguson
	Kathryn Grandon	John Hinton
	Michael Holt	Bryn Hurren
	Jennie Jenkins	Richard Kemp
	Margaret Maybury	Alastair McCraw
	Mark Newman	Adrian Osborne (Vice-Chair)
	Jan Osborne	Lee Parker
	Peter Patrick	Stephen Plumb
	Nick Ridley	David Rose
	William Shropshire	Ray Smith
	Fenella Swan	John Ward

In attendance:

Strategic Director (JS)
Monitoring Officer (EY)
Assistant Director – Assets and Investments (EA)
Corporate Manager -Democratic Services (JR)

Apologies:

Peter Burgoyne
Sue Burgoyne
Tina Campbell
Frank Lawrenson
James Long
John Nunn
Harriet Steer
Stephen Williams

61.1 Before the meeting commenced a minute's silence was held in memory of Peter Jones, former long serving councillor and Chairman of the Council.

61.2 At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Maybury made a short statement as follows:-

"I am very grateful to the Chairman for granting my request to say a few words following a misleading story that appeared in the East Anglian Daily Times two weeks ago.

This story attempted to convey my views on mental health, but sadly I feel that I have been misquoted.

Let me be absolutely clear. Through personal family experience and caring for someone myself, I absolutely understand the impact of poor mental health.

I do not feel duty bound to go into personal details about this in public, suffice to say that I have my own lived experience of the struggles that come with supporting someone with a mental health condition. I know others do too and they have my full support.

Perhaps more important than my own experiences, this council is very supportive of efforts to help our staff and residents. I either support my cabinet colleagues with initiatives in this respect or lead on them myself. I will continue to do this.

I trust this clarifies where I stand on this important matter and the support this administration gives to Babergh residents with poor mental health. We're on their side. Thank you"

62 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

62.1 There were no declarations of interest.

63 BC/18/25 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 SEPTEMBER 2018

63.1 Subject to the published Minutes being checked to ensure they were the correct version and the numbering being amended at Minute 55, the Minutes from the meeting held on 25th September 2018 were approved as a true record.

64 BC/18/26 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND LEADER

64.1 The Chairman introduced his report for noting and then made a short statement updating the Council about the unauthorised disclosure of confidential papers pertaining to the Belle Vue Development proposals and the investigation that had been undertaken by the Monitoring Officer including the actions that had been implemented.

64.2 The Chairman then invited Councillor Ward to present his report as follows:-

1) Firstly, the Leader on behalf of the Council welcomed Councillor Hurren back from his recent illness and wished him continued recovery from his heart surgery.

2) The Leader on behalf of the Council, congratulated Councillor Arthey and Councillor Patrick on being shortlisted at this year's LGiU and CCLA Councillor Achievement Awards, to take place on 6th November at the Guildhall in London. Councillor Arthey had been shortlisted for the Place Shaping and Environment Award and Councillor Patrick had been shortlisted jointly with Councillor Glen Horn from Mid Suffolk for the Finance and Transformation Award. There were nearly 200 nominations this year and so this shortlisting was a fantastic reflection of their calibre. The Leader wished them both the best of luck.

3) Since the last Council meeting, the Leader reported that he and Cllr Osborne had held another three further Q&A sessions around the district – in East Bergholt, Long Melford and Gt. Cornard. East Bergholt was challenging, with 152 fairly angry residents in attendance. Most were there to listen as they wanted to understand, with only one or two who were unwilling to accept anything that was said. As expected most of the questions were about planning policy with a few additional topics raised. The Leader and Deputy Leader had taken away a list of 12 points to follow up and had since been in correspondence with Mr Dent, one of the leading lights behind the Action East Bergholt group, about progress on these points. Mr Dent had since written to the Leader as an East Bergholt resident, having reflected on Saturday's meeting and also taking account of what so many people have since shared with him had concluded that the meeting with a packed assembly of villagers was very 'successful' He also had reiterated the need to maintain dialogue, which the Leader had promised to do.

The Leader then went on to say that Long Melford, in contrast, had been disappointing as nobody had attended the meeting. Gt Cornard had also been a bit disappointing. The concerns that had been raised were mostly highways-related. But residents were also interested in the plans for Hamilton Road and keen to hear of the progress with the Baker's Mill footpath bridge.

The next Q&A session would be a return to Lavenham on Saturday, followed by Pinewood, Capel and Brantham.

4) The Leader reported that the Stars of Babergh and Mid Suffolk awards had been held in St Mary's Church, Hadleigh. The event was a great success and was a thoroughly enjoyable evening. The venue was wonderful – the church had been transformed for the evening – and the food was excellent. There were some inspiring stories of what businesses, community groups and individuals had achieved in our districts, and the winners were genuinely surprised and pleased at being nominated and then winning.

The Leader passed on his congratulations to the winners, and express his thanks to all the nominees, the officers who organised the event and particularly the sponsors who had supported the event so generously.

5) The Leader paid tribute to a long- standing member of staff Linda Sheppard, who was retiring on November 27th after 32 years of service to Babergh for her efficiency in supporting both councils. Councillor Beer presented a gift on behalf of the Council and Councillor Bavington also paid tribute to Linda thanking her for her support and kindness over the years she had been at the Council.

64.3 At the invitation of the Chair, Councillor Bryn Hurren made a short statement to Council thanking them for all good wishes and support during his recent illness.

65 TO RECEIVE NOTIFICATION OF PETITIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

65.1 There were no petitions received.

66 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

66.1 There were no questions received.

67 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

67.1 There were no questions received.

68 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM CABINET MEMBERS

68.1 Councillor Ward introduced the reports from Cabinet Members and highlighted the key activities within each portfolio.

68.2 The Chairman then invited each Cabinet Member to introduce their report:-

68.3 CMU19 Councillor Lawrenson Cabinet Member for Investments (in the absence of Councillor Lawrenson written responses would be provided)

Q.1 Councillor Hinton to Councillor Lawrenson

At paragraph 3.3 on page 13 of the report CMU19 it talks about the plans for the headquarters site in Hadleigh as progressing well. Are councillors going to see some options for this site rather than a terms of ownership etc or is the Council going to plough ahead and do what the Cabinet thinks it is going to do?

Response

Written response to be provided.

Q2. Councillor Hinton to Councillor Lawrenson

Will councillors see a business case as far as the increase in headroom for £4.8million is concerned in social housing provision?

Response: Councillor Jan Osborne Cabinet Member for Housing

The £4.8 million as you know was put in as a bid under the previous guidelines from central government and that bid was sent in by the end of September. As you know now, there has been an announcement that the cap has been lifted, so the Council will now have to put in a revised bid. The Council is awaiting the guidelines for that after 30 October 2018, which is when the cap has been lifted and from there officers and myself will be working together to see what bid we are going put forward to get some funding from the lifted cap.

Q.2 Councillor Hinton to Councillor Jan Osborne, Cabinet Member for Housing

You talk there about funding as if it was a grant from central government. This increase in the headroom presumably is to allow us to borrow rather than to actually be given money so is it actually going to cost us something at some stage?

Response: Cllr Jan Osborne, Cabinet Member for Housing

If you borrow money you always have to pay it back. Yes of course it will but it will be to the Council's advantage. It means that that the Council can deliver more houses in the future, the Council had previously planned for 210 over the next 3 years. With the lifting of the borrowing gap the Council can now look to see how many it can deliver above that figure if indeed it can.

68.4 CMU19 Councillor Grandon, Cabinet Member for Communications

Q.1 Councillor Hinton to Councillor Grandon, Cabinet Member for Communications

On page 16 of the report the last bullet point. Key stories, Leaders Question Time. We heard from the Leader, Cllr Ward about the meeting in East Bergholt and the fact that there were a lot of people there and he went away with a list of questions/point to be looked at and also, would be talking to Councillor Dent of the Action group. Will the Cabinet Member confirm that the two local Ward Members will be kept informed as to what goes on there as well?

Response Cllr Grandon

Of course, all the Ward Members will be kept up to date. Any correspondence between myself and Peter Dent will be copied to you and Cllr Williams.

Q2 Councillor Bavington to Councillor Grandon, Cabinet Member for Communications

In relation to Page 16, paragraph 4 of the report the fourth bullet point relating to the Delphi Site, it talks about maintaining high skill employment, the high skills employment that we have there at the moment is delivering high precision engineering and as long as that workforce is engaged before they find alternative employment then that site may be able to be saved - would the Cabinet Member for Communications agree?

Response Cllr Grandon

Yes, I would agree but this isn't the area that I would wish to comment on myself because I am more the person that can help with regard to the communications of such matters.

Q3 Councillor Bavington to Councillor Grandon, Cabinet Member for Communications

There was some controversy in the newspaper about the Long Melford Leader's question time and how it was organised and there was not much known about the Great Cornard one before it actually took place, as the Cabinet Member for Communication can you ensure that there is good buy-in from the local community. Also it has always been the case that if another Councillor wanted to visit somebody else's Ward, as a matter of courtesy not just democracy you would ring them up or something and make sure they knew about it first, can the Cabinet Member confirm this is happening? And finally, how popular is Leaders question time as the fact that there was a poor turnout in Lavenham, was because they were all on a gardening away day suggests perhaps it is not as popular as gardening?

Response Cllr Grandon

Firstly, on the first point that you made. As far as I am aware the dates are always announced in the town and parish briefings that are issued by communications. So, in that report that you get on a monthly basis it normally details the Leader's meetings. This gives you an opportunity to tell your town and parish councils and for you to be aware yourself. Secondly, I must admit when the Leaders meeting came to Hadleigh it was a very busy day to. But you know luckily our communities are thriving, hopefully when our Leaders do their next meeting in your area or in the area, they will be key for people.

Q4 Councillor Bavington to Councillor Grandon, Cabinet Member for Communication

With regard to the ownership of the flagpole at Hadleigh, please can the Cabinet Member confirm whether she has actually spoken to Mr Holbrook yet and if so what was his response?

Response Cllr Grandon

The flag pole that is located outside the former headquarters was actually paid for by the council members at that time and the whole idea was led by Peter Holbrook, Cllr Peter Holbrook. After one of the Council meetings, some of the councillors suggested that perhaps the flagpole could now be donated to an organisation in Hadleigh. Hadleigh Sea Scouts were very keen to have it and on Cllr Bavington and Cllr Arthey's suggestion, I contacted former Cllr Holbrook and he loved the idea of the flag pole potentially being donated to Hadleigh Sea Scouts. The Council is still looking at the idea because there are certain issues around it. But there is a strong possibility that Hadleigh Sea Scouts might get the flag pole that currently stands outside the former headquarters.

Q5 Councillor Beer to Councillor Grandon, Cabinet Member for Communication

Can you please give the latest update on the Cornard riverside path?

Response Cllr Jan Osborne

It is nearly completed and there is going to be a grand opening event sometime in November when obviously all the ward members will be invited. Relevant members of the public will also be invited. I did a site visit myself to have a look to see how it was progressing, because I think about a quarter of my emails are about the Bakers Mill bridge and what is happening to it and when is it going to happen. The person doing the construction work had said that there had been over 100 people visit the site to see what was happening and how it was progressing. So, there are a lot of people behind this.

Q6 Councillor McCraw to Councillor Grandon, Cabinet Member for Communication

I would like to return if I may to the Leader's question time. This is partly a question of communications and partly a question for Leadership. I am very much in favour of these question times and I have spent a considerable amount of time and effort going to all my parishes. Telling them about the forthcoming Leaders question time at Brantham village hall rather. Publicising it heavily on Facebook only to discover at the very last moment that it had been cancelled and no communication had been received. Please can you make sure that any changes to the schedule is communicated to all ward councillors?

Response Cllr Grandon

I apologise for that Cllr McCraw, it was due to issues surrounding booking the venue and the fact that you weren't informed was an oversight. I will make sure that won't happen again.

68.5 CMU21 Councillor Maybury, Cabinet Member for Communities

Q1 Councillor Hurren to Councillor Maybury, Cabinet Member for Communities

Parish and Town liaison meetings mentioned in paragraph 3.3 of the report. Could you tell me, were these events well attended and how did they compare to past years please?

Response Cllr Maybury

Thank you for the question, I don't know how they compared to last year because I haven't been given the figures, so I will find out and come back to you.

Q2 Councillor Hurren to Councillor Maybury, Cabinet Member for Communities

Do you have the figures for the two events that have just passed?

Response Cllr John Ward

On this occasion, Cllr Maybury was not able to attend. I attended along with a number of officers. Both the one in Capel and the one in Pinewood had roughly the same sort of attendance, there were about 30 odd people there from various parishes. They listened attentively to what topics were discussed. There was some very good questions and I think they all left both events thinking that they were thoroughly successful. There was a good attendance at both of them and we hope that will continue at future ones.

Q3 Councillor Cresswell to Councillor Maybury, Cabinet Member for Communities

On Tuesday 9 October, you were representing this council at a mental health event in Elmswell organised by several charities and one of these charities claimed that you made unacceptable comments and you said that you were misquoted. Could you please tell us what you actually did say?

Response Cllr Maybury

I refer to the statement I gave at the start of the meeting.

Q4 Councillor Cresswell to Councillor Maybury, Cabinet Member for Communities

Will that statement be made available to all members?

Response Cllr Maybury

Yes

68.6 CMU22 Councillor Simon Barrett, Cabinet Member for the Economy

Q1 Councillor Bavington to Councillor Simon Barrett, Cabinet Member for the Economy

On Paragraph 3.2 of the report it talks about Babergh working hard with Suffolk County Council and legal teams to ensure the smooth handover of ownership to Babergh District Council. This is of the South Suffolk business centre. How much is it going to cost Babergh to take over ownership of this facility and I thought that part of it was owned by us in the first place?

Response Councillor Simon Barrett

I think there is some confusion here. The South Suffolk Task Force is not to do with the Suffolk Business Centre. The South Suffolk Task Force is related to the Delphi Centre.

Q2 Councillor Bavington to Councillor Simon Barrett, Cabinet Member for the Economy

As this isn't in your report please can you explain what this is about? The South Suffolk Task Force is obviously working with those other bodies to try and make sure that the Delphi Centre is disposed of in a reasonable way, so it has the least impact on our local economy and obviously impact on our high skills level, which I refer to Cllr Bavington's concerns, which are duly noted. This is very much high priority to keep the skilled workforce together if we can and see if we can sell that as a going concern to another operator. That's the first part. The second part, the South Suffolk Business Centre is obviously a totally different part of that.

Q3 Councillor Bavington to Councillor Simon Barrett, Cabinet Member for the Economy.

How much is it going to cost us?

Response Councillor Simon Barrett

For the South Suffolk Business Centre, as far as I am aware it won't cost us anything as it is 100% occupied.

Q4 Councillor Hinton to Councillor Simon Barrett, Cabinet Member for the Economy.

Who owns it if we are working with Suffolk County Council.

Response Councillor Simon Barrett

The report is confusing because the South Suffolk Business Centre really has not got anything to do with the Delphi site. So, they should be separated. So, the South Suffolk Business Centre, is owned by Babergh District Council. We have the tenants in there and as far as I know it is pretty well occupied. There are starter units. I think this is an inaccuracy in the report, so I apologise for that.

Q5 Councillor Hinton to Councillor Simon Barrett, Cabinet Member for the Economy

If that is the case then perhaps there should be a new paragraph starting on line 1,2,3,4 where it says Babergh have been working hard with Suffolk County Council and the legal team to ensure smooth handover of ownership to Babergh, which implies we don't own it. Now what don't we own - South Suffolk business centre which is a bit further down that sentence or are we talking about some other sort of building that is floating around in the ethos somewhere?

Response Jonathan Stephenson, Strategic Director

To try to clarify this, with regards to South Suffolk Business Centre, as stated previously, it is owned by the Babergh District Council and previously this was leased to Suffolk County Council. The ownership is still with Babergh District Council, and now as I understand it, the lease has now transferred back to Babergh District Council.

Councillor Ward

The impact for us in the transfer of that back to Babergh is of course, we will be getting an increase in the rental income from the tenants so in actual fact it isn't costing us anything, it is going to provide us with extra funds. Because it is fully occupied, and we will get the full benefit of all of the rental income.

68.7 CMU23 Councillor Campbell Cabinet Member for Environment

Q1 Councillor Hinton to Councillor Campbell

Just looking at page 25 of the report, paragraphs 3.1, 3.2, 3.3. do not apply to Babergh District Council, neither does paragraph 3.16 on the following page. So perhaps we can have things that are relevant to Babergh in the next report, rather than a generality?

Chairman

Duly noted

68.8 CMU25 Councillor Jan Osborne, Cabinet Member for Housing

Q1 Councillor Carpendale to Councillor Jan Osborne, Cabinet Member for Housing

At a recent cabinet meeting, the member for housing cited several good examples of where the council has built social housing, would it be possible if we could have a list of where and how many, so we actually know where the council's new social housing is.

Response Councillor Jan Osborne

Yes, I can provide that. It is actually provided in the quarterly monitoring report, the performance report. There is another one due out in November, but I will make sure that all councillors get this.

Q2 Councillor Bavington to Councillor Jan Osborne, Cabinet Member for Housing

I would just refer to the bottom part of page 34 of the report. There are five outcomes that are aspired to and there are five outcomes that are going to have to be achieved by 2023. And in order to do that, there are 6 priorities identified. The one priority that has not got any identified outcomes is the mitigation of the impact of welfare reforms. So what is going to happen?

Response Councillor Jan Osborne

Can I suggest Cllr Bavington that you take a look at the preventing homelessness strategy? All the answers will be on there. If when you have read it you haven't got the answer that you want, come back to me and I will provide it for you.

Q3 Councillor Busby to Councillor Jan Osborne, Cabinet Member for Housing

With the homeless reduction strategy 2018 – 2023, we are going to go out for consultation for a period of 6 weeks. I would have thought it's a strange consultation because I can't see anybody disagreeing with the aims of this. What concerns me is I suspect if we look at our current strategy for ending homelessness or reducing homelessness. It is exactly the same. It is all well and good having strategies, but you have got to do something about it. How are you going to do that?

Response Councillor Jan Osborne

That is outlined in the strategy. The Council will be monitored by our success against preventing homelessness, that is the new rules of the preventing homelessness act and the Council will be judged on that. The Strategy details how we are going to deliver this and it is down to us as councillors to make sure it is not just a strategy that sits on the shelf, but that we monitor it and have a look at the outcomes to make sure that they are being delivered.

Q4 Councillor Beer to Councillor Jan Osborne, Cabinet Member for Housing

On page 34, I was under the impression that Babergh has been trying to reduce the usage of bed and breakfast for homelessness. Is that going down? Do you know what the costs are or is it going up?

Response Councillor Jan Osborne

Unfortunately the charges at the moment are not going down, the new act has caused some issues and some problems. We are working hard to reduce that as of course we want to reduce the cost to the Council of bed and breakfast and obviously there is also the social impact that it has on our residents. We have already put in place The Foyer in Stowmarket. Even though it is in Stowmarket, we have access to that. Officers are also looking for another site in Sudbury for temporary accommodation, so that can reduce the cost of bed and breakfast. But it is all about preventing homelessness in the first place. And I have just previously said that is what we will be monitored on, not how many we put in bed and breakfast, not how many we put in temporary accommodation. But how many we help to support at the early stages to actually prevent them reaching that stage in the first place.

Q5 Councillor Arthey to Councillor Jan Osborne, Cabinet Member for Housing

I know that Cllr Osborne can refer us to the quarterly reports. But I just wondered since this is an update on page 38 about the new homes that the council will be building and that we will have 143 new builds by 2021/22 by then, have you a figure to date for new build?

Response Councillor Jan Osborne

32

68.9 CMU26 Councillor John Ward Leader and Cabinet Member for Organisational Delivery, Law and Governance

Q1 Councillor Hinton to Councillor John Ward, Leader and Cabinet Member for Organisational Delivery, Law and Governance

On page 41 it talks about the fact that we are having to produce two registers of electors. As we now know that the new boundaries for the wards in Babergh has been laid before Parliament. Any chance of us doing away with the relevant register of electors that is going to be proposed on 1st December to comply with statutory regulations and replace it with the one that was going to be the 1st February. It seems an awful waste to produce something nobody is going to use anyway. And then produce something else 2 months later?

Response Monitoring Officer

I quite agree with Cllr Hinton's point that it is doubling procedures to do this twice, however because of the timing of when the order becomes implemented, we have to publish on 1st December and then publish again later for electoral purposes. The orders bring the new boundaries into effect for elections so until that time I still have to have a register that reflects the old boundaries.

Q2 Councillor Bavington to Councillor John Ward, Leader and Cabinet Member for Organisational Delivery, Law and Governance

Is there any likelihood that you may be able to publish the new register before the 1st February and if possible will you try and do that?

Response Monitoring Officer

The 1st February is the earliest we can publish it on the new boundaries in order to have a register on the 1st March, which is used for nominations. So no we can't publish it earlier than that.

68.10 CMU27 Councillor Davis, Cabinet Member for Organisational Delivery

Q1 Councillor Parker to Councillor Davis, Cabinet Member for Organisational Delivery

Under paragraph 3.2 Customer services - performance in quarter 2 continues to improve with customers waiting on average 1 minute and 30 seconds. What is your target for that? 1 minute and 30 seconds still seems like an extraordinarily long time. In most call centre services, you are looking to pick business up within 5 rings.

Response Councillor Davis, Cabinet Member for Organisational Delivery

We continue to monitor it and we continue to improve the targets. We are looking back on this in quarter two and I am delighted to say that in quarter three, we know already that it is down to less than a minute. So, we are continuing to slash it down. The target I guess would be 5 rings or people could pick up straight away. But that is going to take a lot of time and we are working to improve it and we are making continued improvements.

Q2 Councillor Simon Barrett to Councillor Davis, Cabinet Member for Organisational Delivery

Thank you for your input as the cabinet member to stabilize the Sudbury position, which was a little bit up in the air and we have now got a deal on the table, I believe. Which has duly been signed so we have a 12-month contract with Sudbury Town Council for the set down point. That is correct isn't it? And that means we can go forward knowing that we are going to have that position.

Response Councillor Davis, Cabinet Member for Organisational Delivery

All credit for that should go to Sarah Wilcox and her team. They do a fantastic amount of work, you know including bringing the customer access points to Hadleigh and to Shotley and to bring the abandoned calls down, so they have done great. Also with Sudbury your Town Clerk also worked extremely hard in negotiating that as well, as I know Councillors did. So thank you very much and I will take that back to our team as well.

Q3 Councillor Shropshire to Councillor Davis, Cabinet Member for Organisational Delivery

I am just looking at page 46, item 5.6. It has been greatly welcomed that the IT platform now opens at 8.30. I was just wondering whether there as any intention to perhaps have a day where it might stay open slightly later. There is a flat refusal for anyone to staff beyond 5 'o'clock, when I asked.

Response Councillor Davis, Cabinet Member for Organisational Delivery

I think the member makes an excellent point, and it is something that I believe, and I know the Senior Leadership Team and the Leader is working so that we have a better arrangement with Suffolk County Council because they run the IT desk. I don't think it is ideal at the moment, I think we have got an awful lot of work to do to improve that and weekends as well, there are lots of things that still hasn't been completely aligned from the previous agreements from when we made the move to Endeavour House and we have still got a long way to go to get things better.

Q4 Councillor Hinton to Councillor Davis, Cabinet Member for Organisational Delivery

On 4.3 regarding the end of term report for this administration. Will we be seeing some sort of timetable for when this is coming out including when the drafts are going to be available to be critique?

Response Councillor Davis, Cabinet Member for Organisational Delivery

The timetable was shown to Members that came to the end of term performance briefing, at the moment it is going through the editorial process with the Head of Comms, The Leaders and the Chief Executive and myself. So, we are still working towards it and I will let you know how and when this progresses to the next stage.

68.11 CMU28 Councillor Ridley, Cabinet Member for Planning

Q1 Councillor Bavington to Councillor Ridley, Cabinet Member for Planning

At the bottom of page 47, paragraph 3.2, it says the 5-year housing land supply has been challenged at the public enquiry relating to the Boxford appeal. My understanding of that was this is the 24 houses that we turned down and they were appealing because we didn't have the 5-year land supply? Now we have got the 5-year land supply, I am struggling to understand what they are appealing about. Could you clarify that for me?

Response Councillor Ridley, Cabinet Member for Planning

As you may already know Mid Suffolk have already been challenged at a public enquiry, so in fact their 5-year supply is now no longer a 5-year supply. This Council is awaiting with considerable concern with regard to the Boxford appeal and a judicial review which follows fairly shortly afterward, in the area of East Bergholt again. It is obviously very important to see what in fact either the inspector or the judges will say on this issue, because at the moment, it looks as if we could have a situation where it could well be challenged and if it is challenged and we lose, then it is going to put us back into the situation where we no longer have a 5 year supply. As far as Boxford is concerned this was an appeal against a decision made against officer recommendation to approve. At that particular moment of course we did not have a 5-year housing supply. We now say we have and therefore that is why we are defending that particular position. The outcome from that appeal will be is

expected any day and we do hope to have that decision within a very few days. It seems that inspectors are going backwards and forwards in making their decisions, so what appeared to be a decisive date when we declared we had 5-year land supply, is not necessarily being looked at that way by the inspectors. Because they are looking both sides of the line. The difficulty with the 5-year supply, is it is based on numbers, but it is also based on interpretation of those numbers. So, although we took the very finest legal advice we could before we declared that we had it, nevertheless the developers are all still banging away at the door on every appeal that is coming before us.

Q2 Councillor Hinton to Councillor Ridley, Cabinet Member for Planning

Are we advising new applicants for neighbourhood plans that their plans will need to be updated every two years?

Response Councillor Ridley, Cabinet Member for Planning

I don't think I can respond to that, whatever plan you set up you would need to review it at regular intervals.

Q3 Councillor Parker to Councillor Ridley, Cabinet Member for Planning

Please can you clarify, paragraph 3.3 says that there remains some vacancies in Development Management and the Planning Policy teams and the application caseload remains accordingly high. Consequently, this has been flagged as significant risk on the corporate risk register. So, which of those points remains a significant risk on the corporate register. And the fact that it remains a significant risk is quite severe in itself, so how long does it remain on the significant risk register and what is the plan to mitigate that risk going forward please?

Response Councillor Ridley, Cabinet Member for Planning

As I think probably most Members know by now it is a merry go round in terms of recruitment to planning departments. It depends who is paying the most, who is offering the best opportunities in terms of jobs. We have looked very carefully at what we pay our staff in that particular department. We are being successful in recruitment as it says, clearly the performance is what is important which is in 3.1, and if we start dropping away there clearly there will be a problem. But we are determined to make sure we don't have that problem, so I mean the fact that application case- loads remain high is a fact of life.

69 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT

69.1 Councillor McCraw introduced his report and highlighted the key issues within it as follows: -

- The front page of the report provided a summary of the recommendations that were relevant to Item 10 Strategic Property and Land Investment Fund report.
- Details of the meeting held on 20th September 2018 where the Committee reviewed the West Suffolk Community Safety Partnership (WSCSP). A wide range of witnesses attended the meeting that were crucial to the process. The Committee focused on the four identified priorities that WSCSP had been concentrating on in the past. Councillor McCraw drew attention to two in particular:- County lines and violence against women and girls or VORG, which did include men and boys. The Committee were extremely concerned

about these matters and the statistics were particularly shocking even though they represented a small number of people. The key messages that the witnesses supplied were contained in the report along with the conclusions of the Committee. The Committee felt very strongly that they should be looking for a positive and proactive outcome and have requested that officers prepare a tool kit for use by Members for the various signs and signals that they can use within their communities, including phone numbers, places of refuge, and who to contact in a given set of circumstances. The Chair of Scrutiny hoped that the toolkit would be available in the near future.

- The second item that was reviewed at this meeting was the void project, this continued to be maintained at its current level, but further improvements were being sought, and this was duly noted.
- The meeting held on 22nd October 2018 reviewed the Strategic Property and Land Investment Fund. The Chairman of the Committee presented the history of the process it had gone through in the course of the last two months. The Committee had focussed on three principle areas in the report - the purpose and need of such a fund, the financial impacts, the costs of borrowing and the mitigation costs in terms of the MRP. Following the review Overview and Scrutiny Committee had made the recommendations to Council that were listed on the front of the report.
- Finally, the Committee reviewed matters on staff turnover and welfare specifically relating to the Planning Department.

69.2 The Chairman invited questions from members.

69.3 Councillor Beer asked if it was known how many sick days Babergh staff lose per year and how does this compare with other councils?

69.4 In response Councillor McCraw told Council that the Committee was focusing on figures that had originally been supplied to the Mid Suffolk Committee, but since those figures were being prepared, the Committee had agreed that the information should be shared with Babergh as well. The focus of the figures in the information bulletin was specifically on the Planning Department and Housing Tenancy Services. The figures were also compared with those against two combined and unspecified rural district councils that were in a similar position to Babergh and Mid Suffolk. From the figures available the Council was well within line to those in a similar situation with some signs of improvement per employee, particularly in Housing Tenancy Services where they have in fact dropped. The sickness days lost per employee in Planning were more or less static, but the Council was losing fewer days per full time equivalent.

69.5 Councillor Grandon queried whether the tool kit would be made available for Town and Parish Councils?

69.6 In response the Chair of Scrutiny informed Council that he was very keen for this information to be available across the Board.

69.7 Councillor Burrows asked if there was any provision for men seeking refuge from domestic abuse in the County and if not how far away was the nearest provision?

69.8 in response the Chair of Scrutiny told Council that he was of the understanding that these were available in adjacent Counties.

69.9 Councillor Maybury added that it was a very sad fact that the majority of domestic violence was towards women and girls and that notwithstanding that, there were sometimes issues with violence towards males as well. If there was a refuge males and females could not be placed together. Because there has always been a majority of incidences against females then we have more facilities for females. There are one or two facilities for males but because of the nature of this I am not going to divulge where they are, you all have to be well aware that if someone goes into a refuge it is a refuge.

69.10 The Chairman thanked Councillor McCraw for his report.

70 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET / COMMITTEES

71 BCA/18/35 STRATEGIC PROPERTY AND LAND INVESTMENT FUND

71.1 Councillor Ward introduced the report and informed Council that it had been recognised that the Council may not always be able to respond quickly enough through the normal governance procedures when property and land that could be of strategic interest became available for purchase. This report sought to establish a fund for investing in strategic property and land within the district. In addition to approval for establishing a fund of £3m to be funded from borrowing as and when required, the report set out the strict criteria to guide property and land purchases and a streamlined approval process outlined in appendix a of the report that would enable the Council to act quickly and compete with the commercial sector not just to acquire an asset but to be able to secure the best purchase price for the Council. The criteria was listed in paragraph 4.7 of the report and further checks and balances would be put in place as described in paragraph 4.8 of the report. This proposal would meet several of the Council's strategic priorities and outcomes for delivering homes and developing the local economy as described in paragraph 5.1 of the report.

71.2 Councillor Ward then **MOVED** the recommendations in the report as modified by the Overview and Scrutiny as follows:-

“that Council approves the establishment of a strategic property and land investment fund of £3m to be funded borrowing as required and paragraph 3.2 delegates to the strategic director with responsibility for assets and investments in consultation with a minimum of 3 cabinet members including the cabinet members for assets and investments, finance and economy, the authority to pursue and finalise purchases of strategic property and land as set out within sections 4.7 and 4.8 of the report to enable the council to react and secure when required strategic property and land as an investment opportunity and to assist future house building and economic growth within the district.”

71.3 Councillor Barrett seconded the recommendations and reserved the right to speak.

71.4 Councillor Parker queried why the figure was £3m and was there any significance in that figure?

71.5 In response Councillor Simon Barrett informed Council that it was felt that £3m was a reasonable figure, looking at what had been historically brought, the amounts had been significantly less than that, but the Council did make an acquisition which was around that sort of mark. There had to be some limit, we also have to authorise a certain amount of borrowing, this is a sensible level for the type of investment that the Council is looking to make.

71.6 Councillor Patrick raised concerns relating to the proposals and felt that the Council already had enough to focus on without adding any more. He also felt that the Overview and Scrutiny's recommendations would slow the process down and defeat the purpose of the report, to move quickly.

71.7 Councillor Hinton sought clarification as the report requested Cabinet approval and also asked if the Council were to borrow £3m, what would that produce in terms of the total borrowing for the Council planned and actual before May 2019?

71.8 In response Councillor Simon Barrett clarified that the £3m limit did not mean that the Council would have £3m sitting there waiting for a project to come along. The Council would only borrow the money when a project came up. If you take recent projects the money required was substantially less. The borrowing cost to the Council of up to a maximum of £3m is approximately £27K which is detailed in the report. It is an extra cost but it is minimal and the whole point is to generate extra income where the Council can. Therefore this is the worst case scenario but obviously there would be positive sides that would come out of any deal.

71.9 Councillor Ward also clarified that the report was not discussing two £1.5m purchases. The Council would have a fund up to £3m in total, of which any one single purchase would not exceed 1.5m so it could have a larger one of 1.5m then maybe 2 or 3 others of say half a million each. In terms of what it meant between now and the end of the financial year, it would depend on what if anything the Council would buy in that period. At the moment it was not possible to say what the total outlay was going to be, however there was some indicative numbers at paragraph 6.4 of the report which would show typically what the whole lot of £1.5m being invested in a single purchase. The indicative numbers were for the first 2 years in terms of the interest and the MRP depreciation over those years. If the Council were to borrow at the long term interest rates should it need to borrow the money for a long period up to 40 years or 50 years but typically if it were going to buy something just for a short period of time, 2 or 3 years, the Council would probably be looking at short term borrowing which was at currently a lot lower interest rate of about 0.75% at the moment.

71.10 Councillor Bavington asked what mechanisms would the Council have in place to scrutinise the spending of this money.

71.12 In response the Assistant Director for Assets and Investments informed Council that a report would be taken to Cabinet reporting that an acquisition had taken place which would provide an opportunity to keep a running review on the fund as and when every acquisition had occurred.

71.13 Councillor Patrick reminded Council that the professional external advice that would be required for an acquisition would need to be accounted for from the General Fund if the bid were to fail.

It was Resolved:-

- 1) **That the establishment of a strategic property and land investment fund of £3m to be funded by borrowing as required be approved.**
- 2) **That the Strategic Director for Assets and Investments in consultation with a minimum of 3 Cabinet Members including the Cabinet Members for Assets and Investments, Finance and Economy, be authorised to pursue and finalise purchases of strategic property and land as set out within sections 4.7 and 4.8 of the report to enable the council to react and secure when required, strategic property and land as an investment opportunity and to assist future house building and economic growth within the district.**

72 BC/18/27 POLITICAL BALANCE AND COMPOSITION OF COMMITTEES

72.1 The Monitoring Officer introduced the report and informed Council that following further changes to the Conservative Group membership a revision to the allocation of committee placements had been tabled. The report had been calculated numerically and had to take into account the proportionality of each individual committee as well as the overall proportionality.

72.2 Councillor Ward **MOVED** the recommendations within the report which Councillor Simon Barrett **SECONDED**.

72.3 Councillor Hinton proposed an amendment to the report after negotiating with Labour Group members to the effect that the Independent Conservatives would take the Labour Members Planning seat in exchange for the Independent Conservative members seat on the Joint Audit and Standards Committee.

72.4 The Monitoring Officer advised that this would not represent good proportionality.

72.5 Councillor Bavington then informed Council that he would not be seconding the amendment.

It was Resolved:-

That the Committee's size and numerical allocation of seats be approved as detailed in appendix (a) to the report.

73 COUNCILLOR APPOINTMENTS

It was Resolved:-

That Councillor Ferguson be appointed to Planning Committee as a Conservative Group Member.

74 UPDATES TO TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS 2019/20

74.1 The Corporate Manager for Democratic Services asked Council to note the revised date of the Annual Council meeting which was now scheduled for Wednesday 22nd May 2019.

75 MOTION ON NOTICE

75.1 On the proposal of Councillor Cresswell and seconded by Councillor Bavington the following Motion was moved.

This Council notes:

- 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem in any given year.
- The World Health Organisation predicts that depression will be the second most common health condition worldwide by 2020.
- Mental ill health costs some £105 billion each year in England alone.
- People with a severe mental illness die up to 20 years younger than their peers in the UK.

This Council believes:

- As a local authority we have a crucial role to play in improving the mental health of everyone in our community and tackling some of the widest and most entrenched inequalities in health.
- Mental health should be a priority across all the local authority's areas of responsibility, including housing, community safety and planning.
- All councillors, whether members of the Executive or Scrutiny and in our community and casework roles, can play a positive role in championing mental health on an individual and strategic basis.

This Council resolves:

- To sign the Local Authorities' Mental Health Challenge run by Centre for Mental Health, Mental Health Foundation, AMHP, Mind, Rethink Mental Illness, Royal College of Psychiatrists and Young Minds.
- We commit to appoint an elected member as 'mental health champion' across the council.
- We will seek to identify a member of staff within the council to act as 'lead officer' for mental health.

The Council will also:

- Support positive mental health in our community, including in local schools, neighbourhoods and workplaces.
- Work to reduce inequalities in mental health in our community.
- Work with local partners to offer effective support for people with mental health needs.
- Tackle discrimination on the grounds of mental health in our community.
- Proactively listen to people of all ages and backgrounds about what they need for better mental health.

75.2 Councillor Cresswell in his introductory speech informed Council that he wanted the Council to establish a clear position on mental health within the Council and to build a foundation that could be further extended in the future so that the Council could start prioritising rather than stigmatising mental health. The motion sets out the principles of where this Council stands on mental health and how to support those that need it.

75.3 In response Councillor Ward stated that although the Council was not directly involved with health or social care provision there was much that a district council could do to create an environment that promoted mental as well as physical wellbeing from ensuring sufficient housing of the right mix of tenure types was available to creating safe and pleasant communities and also the provision of leisure and recreational facilities. Babergh was working hard in all of these areas and had achieved much in the last few years. For example the leisure sports and physical activity strategy had quite a bit to say about mental health and the Council's partner Abbey Croft Leisure also did a lot towards promoting mental health. Babergh District Council was fully committed to supporting all people including those with poor mental health. This year the Council jointly hosted an event to mark mental health awareness week and last week on mental health awareness day the Council had specially trained colleagues talking to staff about their own mental health and wellbeing. This motion is the one provided by the local authorities mental health challenge to enable councils to promote mental health across all of their business and given all that, Councillor Ward said it was right that this Council should sign up to it. He was therefore delighted to support this motion.

75.4 If the motion was carried Councillor Ward would appoint a member of the Council to be the mental health champion to ensure that all of the authorities activities and responsibilities were influenced by the principles of the challenge. In recognising that the challenge only really deals with our outward facing activities and doesn't actually refer to the council's role as a major employer Councillor Ward proposed an amendment to the motion so that Babergh would appoint 2 lead officers, one to be responsible for our outward facing activities and another responsible for supporting the mental health of our staff.

75.5 Councillor Jan Osborne seconded the amendment and made the following statement:-

"Mental Health is very close to my heart. There are very few, if any, both members and officers here tonight, who have not been affected by mental health within their family and/or a relative and or a friend. I support this motion as amended but would like to assure Council of the commitment and work already being undertaken by this Council to support those within our communities that are affected by mental health. Our policies and strategies make a commitment to this. For example, one of the aims in the revised Housing Strategy, is to support the more vulnerable people in our communities, the recently approved Leisure, Sport and Physical Activity Strategy has 6 priorities one of which is to 'Increase active participation and benefits to participants with mental health issues through sport and physical activity.'

During my role as the Portfolio Holder for Communities and then Housing I have had numerous meetings with key stakeholders to agree on how the Council can work with our partners to ensure that support and help is maximised. To name a few - Gary Page, Chair of the Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust, The Stone

Foundation, The Richmond Fellowship and Teresa Bishop in Sudbury who is very proactive with the homeless and those with mental health problems. During which new ways of working have been identified and implemented or being implemented. Having a home is a key factor in helping and supporting those with mental health problems. The Council's Housing Team, together with our Communities Team and Planning, are undertaking a great deal of work to ensure that our most vulnerable are supported. To name just a few - previously there was a banding A restriction on those leaving supported housing to 2 or 3 a year. That restriction has now been lifted. A Leasing Programme to those organisations who help people into housing is being reviewed. Housing Solutions work in partnership with a range of agencies to ensure that we meet the housing and support needs of those customers who suffer from mental health issues. Housing Solutions will carry out a detailed housing needs and risk assessment of all customers who present for assistance or have been referred by a partner agency. A personalised housing plan will then be drawn up confirming any advice given, how the Council will assist and what the customer may need to do to help themselves.

Other examples of support include:

Housing forums to discuss individual clients if they are not succeeding in their supported housing scheme. Although we cannot refer directly to mental health services (this needs to be done by the clients GP) we can suggest that a client books a GP appointment to see if they require any specific mental health referrals for support. With the support of the Communities Team, Suffolk Artlink in partnership with the Rural Coffee Caravan and Dance East are delivering a high-quality arts outreach programme led by artists. The programme has been designed for and co-produced with older people, particularly those who are rurally isolated, lonely or living with dementia by providing opportunities for people to get together and try new activities. Evidence provided by HomeStart Suffolk has shown an increase in the number of referrals, particularly from young families living in rural locations with limited support. Some of these families have parents experiencing mental health issues and report a lack in confidence in parenting their children and general day to day routines. In response the Health and Wellbeing Team are working closely with Suffolk ArtLink to develop a grant-funded programme for young parent families. The project will contribute to our understanding of how an early creative arts intervention can positively impact families where a parent is experiencing an emerging mental health problem or managing a recently diagnosed condition. The Health and Wellbeing team continue to work with our local Dementia Action Alliances to raise greater awareness and understanding and enable dementia friendly activities such as relaxed film screenings, memory walks and activity classes. Working with Human Resources Team, we now have 21 Mental Health First Aiders in place. Mental Health First Aiders are trained to support staff, promote positive mental health in the workplace and reduce mental health stigma through various health campaigns and continuing to provide one-to-one support to colleagues. The Communities team formed a working group with staff from Ipswich Borough Council and Suffolk County Council to collaboratively organize and deliver a range of health and mental wellbeing promoting activities for Workplace Health Week held between 10 & 14 September. Following the commitment our Councils gave earlier in the year as partner organisations of the Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board, the Health and Wellbeing team has drafted an action plan for this which sets out the commitments we are making as an employer. This is scheduled to go to SLT prior to the Leaders

who will then be asked to sign the pledge on behalf of their respective Councils. This is just some of the work that this Council, together with our partners, is doing to support and help those with or affected by mental health problems. I am happy to provide a more extensive briefing on work being done and planned for to members on request”.

75.6 The Chairman asked Councillor Cresswell if he accepted the amendment?

75.7 Councillor Cresswell confirmed that he accepted the amendment.

75.8 The Motion as amended was **PUT** to the meeting and **CARRIED** unanimously.

It was Resolved: -

This Council notes:

- **1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem in any given year.**
- **The World Health Organisation predicts that depression will be the second most common health condition worldwide by 2020.**
- **Mental ill health costs some £105 billion each year in England alone.**
- **People with a severe mental illness die up to 20 years younger than their peers in the UK.**

This Council believes:

- **As a local authority we have a crucial role to play in improving the mental health of everyone in our community and tackling some of the widest and most entrenched inequalities in health.**
- **Mental health should be a priority across all the local authority’s areas of responsibility, including housing, community safety and planning.**
- **All councillors, whether members of the Executive or Scrutiny and in our community and casework roles, can play a positive role in championing mental health on an individual and strategic basis.**

This Council resolves:

- **To sign the Local Authorities’ Mental Health Challenge run by Centre for Mental Health, Mental Health Foundation, AMHP, Mind, Rethink Mental Illness, Royal College of Psychiatrists and Young Minds.**
- **We commit to appoint an elected member as ‘mental health champion’ across the council.**
- **We will seek to identify two members of staff within the council to act as ‘lead officers’ for mental health.**

The Council will also:

- **Support positive mental health in our community, including in local schools, neighbourhoods and workplaces.**
- **Work to reduce inequalities in mental health in our community.**
- **Work with local partners to offer effective support for people with mental**

health needs.

- Tackle discrimination on the grounds of mental health in our community.
- Proactively listen to people of all ages and backgrounds about what they need for better mental health.

76 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC (WHICH TERM INCLUDES THE PRESS)

It was Resolved:-

That pursuant to Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for business specified in the Minutes on the grounds that if the public were present during discussion of this item, it is likely that there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as indicated in the report.

77 BC/18/28 TO CONFIRM THE CONFIDENTIAL MINUTE OF 25 SEPTEMBER 2018

77.1 Councillor Patrick requested that his question be added relating to the cost of the preliminary advice and expenditure that had been incurred on the project that if the project went ahead the preliminary expenses would be probably capitalised and that would not pose a problem. If the project did not go ahead then the preliminary expenses would have to be written off to current account, to the general fund current account which would be more of a problem. This was agreed.

It was Resolved:-

That subject to Councillor Patrick's question relating to the possible capitalisation of the costs for the project being added into the Minutes, the confidential Minutes of 25th September 2018 were approved as a true record.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 7.55 pm.

.....
Chairman