

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: Council	REPORT NUMBER: BC/18/31
FROM: Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee	DATE OF MEETING: 18 December 2018

Babergh & Mid Suffolk Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee met on the 19th November.

Councillor Keith Welham (Mid Suffolk) was in the Chair.

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY - CIL EXPENDITURE FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW

The committee were reviewing the framework after Bid Round One had been completed, and whilst Bid Round Two was in progress. Our purpose was to inform the review and the Joint Member Panel carrying it forward.

The following witnesses provided evidence.

Sally Reeves – Secretary to Stowupland Village Hall Management Committee responsible for two bids, one successful and one unsuccessful.

Clive Arthey – Babergh Ward Member for 7 of the 11 Bids made in Bid round one for Babergh and Member of the Joint Member Panel on CIL Expenditure. 5 bids were successful.

James Cutting of Suffolk County Council - representing Education and Passenger Transport improvement Infrastructure provider - responsible for 6 Bids. 3 were approved and 3 deferred.

Concerns were expressed by the first witness about the complexity of the forms, clarity of the process, the limited time available in which to make a bid (a one-month window) and the administration cost to Parish Councils.

The Professional Lead Key Sites and Infrastructure clarified some of these points and proposed that the others be considered by the Joint Member Panel.

Members felt that the timeline was key and suggestions were made that the bidding period could be extended.

Cllr Arthey's evidence focussed on the role available to members in supporting bids and the need for clarification of the criteria for a successful bid. Appendix A contained a list of learning points that would be considered as part of the overall review process.

James Cutting from SCC explained the infrastructure requirements and the implications of CIL funding with particular attention to highways, education and transport.

Members questioned the SCC bids for bus stops and schools and received the response that this had previously been covered by S106 funding. There was considerable discussion on these points with a view from SCC that classroom improvements and bus stops should be allowable under CIL funding. On balance, the committee had considerable reservations on how appropriate these were to the process and to the forms provided.

The Assistant Director – Communities and Planning outlined the relationship between Section 106 and developments, how this depended on the Five-year Housing Land supply and the importance of collaboration between SCC and the District Council.

As Appendix A already contained agreed learning points, the committee resolved that these recommendations be added:

- 1.1 That the Communities be made aware of upcoming CIL bidding rounds and that consideration be made to extended to the lengths of the bidding round.
- 1.2 That clarification be made if parish clerks can charge a fee for administration costs when administering CIL.

THE HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION ACT 2017 - REVIEW OF THE FIRST SIX MONTHS

This review followed on from previous briefings given to the committee. Rather than the expected doubling of workload, Cllr Osborne, as Cabinet Member responsible, explained that it had been far greater and more complex.

The Corporate Manager for Housing Solutions addressed the ongoing process of monthly reviews of staffing requirements but reinforced the point that there was enough funding for staff and services for the next two years.

The extensive report contained a variety of graphs, figures and details of the processes in place to deal with the caseload that has resulted from this significant change in legislation.

I would personally recommend the report in general, and particularly the Appendices A-J, to any member with an interest in this area.

A link to the public pack for this meeting: <https://tinyurl.com/ya4awm2b>

Heather Sparrow and the entire team were congratulated for their efforts and achievements.

It was resolved:

- 1.1 **That the Committee notes the information provided**
- 1.2 **That the Committee commend the Corporate Manager – Housing Solution and her team for the effort already taken and that there should be a further review in another six months.**

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION FUND POLICY

This, now out of date, policy required updating. Historically this fund has been used to prevent someone becoming homeless. Again, officers were commended for the clarity of the report which explained why the current policy is out of date. Members agreed that the draft policy proposed be noted, without comment, as they agreed with the content of the report.

COMMUNITY STRATEGY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Tom Barker, Assistant Director – Communities and Planning had discussed the report with Councillors Margaret Maybury and Julie Flatman – respective Cabinet Members for Communities and agreed that this report was not restricted and could be heard in public. Tom Barker introduced the report, which was at an early stage, and the Cabinet members took questions and commented.

The engagement process revolved around the balance between timeliness and involvement. Members were asked for their inputs. These initially focussed on involving of Parish, Town & District councillors. Officers were happy to involve these further. Involvement of youth and the elderly was also to be encouraged and several suggestions were made. The recommendation from the paper was approved.

3.1 That the Committee endorse an engagement approach through use of focus groups involving (a) internal staff; (b) external statutory and voluntary sector partners; (c) members of the community represented by a cross-section of winners from the recent ‘Star ’awards; and (d) a cross-section of Councillors.

INFORMATION BULLETIN: BABERGH FORMER HQ, CORKS LANE & ANGEL COURT.

Alastair McCraw in the Chair.

The Mid Suffolk members having left, Babergh members received an update on the applications for the above. Cllr Nick Ridley in briefly introducing this item, reporting that Option 4 was preferred.

Members discussed the options, mitigation, the off-HQ site provision of affordable housing at Angel Court and control of the developments.

As this had been extensively covered in previous briefings and meetings and would be placed before the Full Council, the committee noted the report with no added comments.

I'm happy to take questions, either in or out of the meeting.

Alastair McCraw.

Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee, BDC.

13th December 2018.