

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: Council	REPORT NUMBER: MC/19/14
FROM: Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee	DATE OF MEETING: 25 July 2019

Report to Council 25 July 2019 From Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The newly appointed committee have held one meeting in Stowmarket and one Joint Meeting with Babergh Overview and Scrutiny members. In addition, the Chairs of the two committees, along with Jan Robinson and Henriette Holloway, attended a symposium at which the new Government Guidelines on Overview and Scrutiny were discussed.

The Guidelines are mandatory and cover a wide range of topics, including culture, resourcing, power to access information, and planning the work of the committee. Mid Suffolk and Babergh Scrutiny Committees were already working very much within the guidelines – this is largely due to the excellent guidance given by Officers - and there will need to be no significant changes to the way we operate. Emphasis is placed upon the culture of the organisation; the Scrutiny Committee should be seen as a ‘critical friend’ and I believe that is the case in BMSDC.

The guidelines can be found by following this link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/800048/Statutory_Guidance_on_Overview_and_Scrutiny_in_Local_and_Combined_Authorities.pdf

Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 27 June 2019

We have a number of members new to Scrutiny this year, so our meeting started with some general training and then specific guidance around Councillor Call-ins and Councillor Call for Action. Jan Robinson and Henriette Holloway delivered the training, which was greatly appreciated.

We then developed our Work Plan for the next few months. Topics will include: Disabled Facilities Grant; bringing empty homes back into use; Needham Lake development; Housing Delivery Test Action Plan; effectiveness of Citizens’ Advice Bureaux; Five-year housing land supply; and Staff turnover and welfare.

Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 1 July 2019

Members received a report on the CIFCO trading activity and performance for the year to the end of April 2019, and were asked to make comment on the draft CIFCO business plan for 2019/20. The first £25 million was fully invested by March 2019, two months later than target. Yield from the investment was very close to target, enabling an interest rate of 5% to be paid to MSDC (Suffolk Holdings) Ltd. Current investments are estimated to return to MSDC a net income after borrowing costs in excess of £676,000 in the current year.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for 2019/20 were discussed. The CIFCO board confirmed that the current High Street assets are performing well. However, future acquisitions using the further investment of £25 million will focus more on offices and industrial properties and less on retail. As new assets are acquired in the period up to April 2021, return on the £50 million investment may reduce due to the costs associated with the acquisitions. One of the KPIs sets an equivalent yield target of 6%.

Members agreed to endorse the report and the investment approach taken by CIFCO, and to ask the Councils to take note of the comments made during the discussion when considering the CIFCO 2019/20 Business Plan.

Keith Welham
Chair, Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Committee