

## BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

<b>TO: Council</b>	<b>REPORT NUMBER: BC/19/34</b>
<b>FROM: Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>	<b>DATE OF MEETING: 26 February 2020</b>

### The Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee met at 11.30am on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2020

**Chair: Keith Welham (MSDC Co-Chair)**

#### **CORPORATE PLAN OUTPUTS**

The Committee examined the above document after a leadership request. This high-level document forms a layer in the Corporate Plan between the overall Plan itself and the variety of Policies and Programmes that will be used to carry it out. As such, it lists the various outcomes desired under each of the six priorities, including items completed, in progress or planned for action.

The document was introduced by the two Council leaders, Councillors Morley and Ward who expanded on the need for a statement of the Outputs as a series of desired outcomes over the course of the next four years. Each priority was to be supported by its own strategy, updated as necessary. These, and the outputs themselves, would expect to be added to and changed throughout their life. In addition, 'Business as Usual' would be expected to contribute to Strategies and Outputs without being specifically listed.

Several threads had been identified to achieve strategic outcomes. Examples were given. The use of resources such as funds, Officers understanding and a Learning and Development Plan for each member of staff was described.

At the same time, it was recognised that both local Members and Cabinet Leadership should be equipped with the development opportunities that would be needed. Further regular monitoring and reporting would take place, which could then feed into future Scrutiny work plans.

In questioning, Members queried measurement of the outputs and how this could be achieved. An approach of using 'milestones' and Programme Boards chaired by the Strategic Director was given, alongside the quarterly reports to Cabinet. A traffic light system (red, amber, green) was being integrated.

An alternative approach to the subject was also suggested in that this aspirational list was too high level for detailed scrutiny but that individual parts and programmes of the six priorities would make suitable subjects for closer examination.

All member briefings for the priority themes were suggested by the Strategic Director and there were cross party Member Working Groups already in place to support delivery.

There was a considerable amount of discussion about the various means of involving Members more fully in the Corporate Plan, the Corporate Outputs and the individual pieces of those outputs. It was noted that uptake and ownership was not always high amongst Members.

**It was Resolved: -**

**That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee urges Cabinet to find a range of methods to engage with all Members to understand the linkage between the Corporate Plan and the Corporate Outputs and explain the role of Member Working Groups in developing strategies and action plans.**

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**The Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee met at 3.00pm on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2020**

**Chair: Alastair McCraw (BDC Co-Chair)**

**WESTERN SUFFOLK COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP (WSCSP)**

This annual statutory requirement had been postponed due to the General Election. It was attended by the following witnesses.

<b>Cllr Joanna Spicer</b>	Chair of Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership Suffolk County Councillor
<b>Paul Goodman</b>	Group Commander for Prevention and Detection – Suffolk Fire
<b>Clair Harvey</b>	Community Safety Lead - Localities & Partnerships Team Health, Wellbeing & Children's Services Suffolk County Council
<b>Emma Gaskell</b>	Senior Primary Care Manager NHS West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group
<b>Kim Warner</b>	Western Area Commander – Police Vice-Chair of WSCSP

Councillor Mansel, as the MSDC representative, introduced the report detailing the aims and priorities of the Partnership and requested that Members confine their questions to these already complex areas. The Community Safety Professional Lead for Communities Franstine Jones would be happy to assist with individual cases after the meeting.

The five priority areas are County Lines, Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Men and Boys, Hate Crime, PREVENT, Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR). This does not exclude emerging areas of concern in Community Safety.

Each witness was invited to introduce their role within the WSCSP.

Councillor Spicer emphasised that Western Suffolk included West Suffolk, Babergh, Mid Suffolk and Ipswich and expanded on the active involvement of all partners. This had been further enlarged to include organisations other than the statutory members.

Councillor Spicer outlined the work and programmes undertaken by the WSCSP including issues around social housing. Lee Crowdell – Tenants Services Corporate Manager had contributed to this area. Work programmes for schools and education had focussed on County Lines and gangs. West Suffolk College, secondary schools and the Pupil Referral Units now had representatives on the WSCSP.

The WSCSP was in the process of preparing its 5-year Tactical Plan and would welcome feedback from members.

Paul Goodman, for the Fire Service, outlined the process of information sharing, and referral of issues in diverse areas such as County Lines, drug abuse, radicalisation and domestic violence. Resources were often shared, and training given in spotting signs for protection and prevention. In response to a question he also described available resources for target hardening (locks on letter boxes for example) in cases of potential victims at risk. A fuller report on Target hardening was included in the papers and this is recommended to all members.

Emma Gaskell (CCG) explained the NHS role in relation to health, domestic abuse and County Lines. Training was provided to GP's regarding these issues and in gathering information feedback which could be provided to relevant organisations. She agreed that NHS contacts were a prime indicator for potential issues as highlighted by Domestic Homicide Reviews. These, though rare, are a statutory duty for the WSCSP to examine what lessons may be learnt.

Clair Harvey (SCC) confirmed the five main areas concerning the Partnership were unchanged but, following recent event feedback, two new areas were emerging; modern day slavery and anti-social behaviour. In addition, the recent Government Violence Bill had added a statutory duty for the CSP's to tackle severe violence, including County Lines and drug induced violence. No resources had been allocated for this extra responsibility. In questioning, Suffolk had no special issues and did not differ from other areas. Supt Warner confirmed that with a low crime rate, Suffolk reflected national trends with no disproportional effects compared to similar areas.

Kim Warner described how the Partnerships work had changed over the last five years, fundamentally by its own work in tackling meaningful topics. County Lines work continued as a focus and indications were that this was having an effect. The Police Service were working in Schools, with students and Head Teachers and seeking to inform parents. A Crime Disruption Unit was operating very effectively with other forces, including the Metropolitan Police, to conduct preventative measures. The WSCSP itself was cooperating within the partnership and looking at the right areas.

In general questioning and discussion, questions were raised about Violence against Women & Girls, domestic abuse in general, mental health issues, availability of beds for victims of domestic abuse. It became apparent that the situations were much as before, but that there was an increasing willingness to report issues and for them to be taken seriously.

In summary, Councillor Davis, the Babergh representative on the WSCSP, added that the WSCSP was very relevant to Babergh and Mid Suffolk and that he and the Councils could not be complacent and that lessons learnt should be shared with the various groups working together in the WSCSP.

The committee debated, including witnesses, on how members could assist with the work of the WSCSP. The following points were arrived at:

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The committee debated, including witnesses, on how members could assist with the work of the WSCSP. The following points were arrived at:

- Member briefings;
- Members to consider how they could share the information available with the wider community;
- Raise awareness amongst Council employees;
- Use meetings and committees as a catalyst for awareness for both Counsellors and communities;
- Use social media for awareness campaigns;
- News releases to Parish Councils;
- Approach Suffolk Association of Local Councils to assist with Parish Councils for the above;
- Display poster on community notice boards
- Members, who were involved with Community Safety, to share their training experiences with other Members.

The late 2018 review having produced a Members Confidential Tool kit, it was proposed that this be updated and distributed.

Thanks to all the witnesses were given by Councillor Morley (Leader MSDC) and the Chair.

**It was Resolved: -**

**That the confidential member 'Contact Tool Kit' pack be updated and distributed to all Members as a Babergh and Mid Suffolk Confidential 'Contact Tool Kit'**

(Noting as Chair, it is expected that next year's annual review may see greater change as the WSCSP's own tactical plan emerges. This review will take place within the Council year 2020-21.)

#### **TASK AND FINISH GROUP FOR CITIZENS ADVICE - TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Chair described these as this was the first opportunity the committee had to meet since the group formation and basic remit was agreed.

**It was Resolved:**

**That the Task and Finish Group for Citizens Advice – Terms of Reference be approved.**

#### **TASK AND FINISH GROUP - CITIZENS ADVICE REPORT**

The Chair presented the draft report and draft recommendations to the committee. The Task & Finish group needed to present these to the Committee, so they could be sent to the Babergh & Mid Suffolk Cabinets immediately. As the Group had only met the day before, and time was pressing, the final text was not complete but the basis and almost all the content had been agreed by the Group.

Group approval was given for the Task & Finish Group Chair to complete the report for general distribution to all constituent Councils.

The committee were asked to approve the proposal that the report be so completed.

**It was Resolved: -**

**That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee approve that the Members of the Task and Finish Group completed the report and recommendations in time for the Report and Recommendations to be presented to both Cabinets in January 2020.**

It should be noted that the report and recommendations were presented to both Cabinets and Councils in January meetings as described above.

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### **The Babergh Overview & Scrutiny Committee met on the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2020.**

**Chair: Alastair McCraw**

#### **DRAFT GENERAL FUND BUDGET 202/21 AND FOUR-YEAR OUTLOOK**

This report will not describe the draft budget provisions as Members will have the Final Budget before them within this agenda.

The following points were raised during questioning of the Leader, John Ward; the Assistant Director for Corporate Resources, Katherine Steel; and the Assistant Director for Housing, Gavin Fisk.

A clearer explanation was asked for in the press that was accessible to the public. Councillor Ward expanded on the rise and referred to the Council Tax Bill as an explanation already provided.

The provision of better information to Parish Councils (and residents) and training available in understanding Budget provisions was requested.

SALC were suggested and Councillor A. Osborne would bring this to their attention.

Could Parishes receive their precept information any earlier to set their own budgets? This was dependant on Central Government which gave tight deadlines. These were unlikely to change.

What replacement might be forthcoming for the now largely defunct New Homes Bonus? This was unknown, but expected to revolve around planning applications, permissions and completed developments. Council and the LGA were lobbying Government in this important area of incentivised funding.

The changes to the Empty Homes Discount were queried.

These were designed to bring homes back in to use quicker. The process of contacting owners and the resources used (three housing officers tasked) were described.

Further advice would be forthcoming for landlords. Councillor Jan Osborne (Cabinet Member for Housing) added that the SRP were proactive in this area. Uncompleted properties were not included in this provision. Comment was also made on the improved layout and structure of the report.

**It was Resolved: -**

- 1.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorsed Recommendations 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 in the report to Cabinet.**
- 1.2 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee complimented the Finance Team on the work undertaken for the General Fund Budget and Four-year Outlook.**

**DRAFT HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET AND FOUR-YEAR OUTLOOK**

This report will not describe the draft budget provisions as Members will have the Final Budget before them within this agenda.

The report was introduced by the Leader, Councillor John Ward; and the following points were raised during questioning of the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Jan Osborne; and the Assistant Director for Housing, Gavin Fisk.

The increase in Capital spend for the new building programme and acquisitions for 2020-24 was queried.

The Assistant Director for Housing outlined the Capital Programme and referred to the HRA Business Plan. He said that new schemes were coming forward. The teams were working diligently on sites and a review of garage sites and a report on whether these were used appropriately would be presented to Cabinet later in the year. Land was always needed and required for further housing developments.

There was further questioning on garage sites and compulsory purchase for housing use. This was also under review, with a variety of aspects (Right to Buy options for tenants, listed buildings and general building regulations) to consider, before the report could be prepared.

The impact of raising sheltered housing rents was questioned.

In response, it had initially been a concern but with a rise in need a balance had to be struck. The requirements of service and residents had been considered and the proposed rents were lower than those predicted 5 years ago.

It was confirmed that the surplus in the account would be transferred to the HRA reserves.

It was also confirmed that further Council houses were intended to be built beyond those currently proposed. Further, that the funding received from the Right to Buy scheme would be invested in new homes.

**It was Resolved: -**

- 1.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorsed Recommendation 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 in the Report to Cabinet.**

- 1.2 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee complimented the Finance Team for the work undertaken for the Housing Revenue Account budget and Four-year Outlook.**
- 1.3 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted with satisfaction the proposal of new build of 229 new homes.**

I'm happy to take any questions on this report, either within the meeting or afterwards.

Alastair McCraw.  
Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee, BDC.  
14th February 2020