

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **BABERGH COUNCIL** held in the Virtual Meeting on Tuesday, 24 November 2020

PRESENT:

Councillor: Kathryn Grandon (Chair)
Adrian Osborne (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Clive Arthey Susan Ayres
Melanie Barrett Peter Beer
David Busby Sue Carpendale
Trevor Cresswell Derek Davis
Mick Fraser Jane Gould
Honor Grainger-Howard Richard Hardacre
John Hinton Bryn Hurren
Leigh Jamieson Robert Lindsay
Elisabeth Malvisi Margaret Maybury
Alastair McCraw Mary McLaren
Mark Newman Zachary Norman
John Nunn Jan Osborne
Alison Owen Lee Parker
Stephen Plumb John Ward

In attendance:

Officers: Chief Executive (AC)
Assistant Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Office (EY)
Assistant Director - Environment and Commercial Partnerships (CC)
Assistant Director - Housing (GF)
Assistant Director - Customer Services (SW)
Corporate Manager - ICT (MH)
Corporate Manager - Governance and Civic Office (JR)
Senior Food and Safety Officer (ER)
Licensing Officer (KS/KG)
Senior Governance Support Officer (HH)

Apologies:

Councillors: Siân Dawson
Michael Holt

23 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

23.1 None received.

24 URGENT MOTION ON NOTICE

24.1 The Chair advised Members that she would take Item 12 before Item 3 on the Agenda and referred to the Urgent Motion on Notice, which had been circulated to Members and was tabled at the meeting. She invited Councillor Ward to present and move his Motion.

24.2 Councillor Ward referred to the Motion detailed in the Tabled Papers:

This administration has consistently pursued the use of technology to provide the public and press with an enhanced level of access and engagement in our meetings. This approach has been crucial during the covid-19 pandemic where we have maintained open, accountable and transparent democracy by fully embracing virtual meetings. Indeed, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils were the first Councils in Suffolk to hold fully virtual meetings open to the public. An extension to our use of technology in virtual meetings, is the adoption of e-voting to replace the lengthy and cumbersome process of roll call voting. Temporary alterations to the constitution to allow e-voting have already been made by the Monitoring Officer under delegation, however I firmly believe e-voting is the way forward for a robust and efficient means of voting for all our meetings whether virtual or in person. Hence, I am proposing that the Council adopts e-voting as its primary means of voting. I have also listened to the concerns raised by other Councillors about losing the current enhanced level of public access to voting, afforded by the process of roll call voting. This is essentially the ability of the public to see how each councillor votes on every item, something which we didn't even have in face-to-face meetings without the public physically being present in the meeting room. Therefore, this urgent motion also proposes a constitutional change to enable the publication of a record of voting at every meeting on the Council's website to ensure the highest level of openness and transparency. This will not negate the process for formally requesting a recorded vote for the purposes of the minutes or the statutory requirement to formally record the budget vote.

24.3 Councillor Ward then read out the Motion:

“That this Council permanently adopts e-voting as its primary method of voting in all meetings and that a record of all votes cast at meetings of the Full Council, Cabinet and Committees be published on the Council's website with immediate effect. Further, that the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make the required amendments to the Council's constitution.”

24.4 Councillor Ward **MOVED** the Motion, which was **SECONDED** by Councillor Jan Osborne.

24.5 Councillor Lindsay **PROPOSED** an amendment to be added to the Motion before the wording 'Further, that the Monitoring Officer....':

That immediately after the vote, during the meeting, the Monitoring Officer reads out the names of those voting against and those abstaining.

24.6 Councillor Jamieson seconded the Amendment.

24.7 Councillor Ward did not approve the Amendment, as this would delay the purpose of electronic voting and he did not think the process required further complications.

24.8 Members debated the Amendment.

24.9 In response to Members' questions, the Monitoring Officer explained that a recorded vote was a constitutional process and was recorded in the minutes, whilst an electronic vote would be published on the Website.

24.10 Members debated the issues including that the identification of those voting against and abstaining on an item, could be taken as naming and shaming Members; that Members could indicate during the debate how they intended to vote; that the result could be screen shared after the vote and that Members should not be ashamed of how they voted on an item.

24.11 The Monitoring Officer clarified that screen sharing was not currently a solution, as not all votes were visible on one screen.

24.12 The Amendment was put to Members for voting.

By 26 votes against and 4 votes for.

It was RESOLVED:-

That the Amendment was lost.

24.13 Members debated the Motion, and in response to constitutional questions the Monitoring Officer clarified that the Motion would allow electronic voting to be permanent and would be added as a method of voting in the Constitution. Electronic Voting would be the primary method of voting for all Cabinet, Council and Committee meetings whether they were conducted as virtual or face to face meetings. However, voting by show of hands and voting by roll call would remain as valid forms of voting should technical issues prevent electronic voting. There would not be any requirements for further amendments to the Constitution once meetings returned to the Council Chamber.

24.14 Councillor Ward summed up the debate and said that now Members were becoming familiar with the Modern.gov system, electronic voting would be more proficient, efficient, and quick.

24.15 The Motion was put to Members for voting.

By 29 votes for and 1 against

It was RESOLVED: -

That this Council permanently adopts e-voting as its primary method of voting in all meetings and that a record of all votes cast at meetings of the Full

Council, Cabinet and Committees be published on the Council's website with immediate effect. Further, that the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make the required amendments to the Council's constitution.

25 BC/20/10 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING HELD ON 22 SEPTEMBER 2020

It was RESOLVED:-

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2020 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

26 BC/20/11 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND LEADER

Note: the meeting was adjourned between 6:15 pm and 6:20 pm.

26.1 Councillor Grandon, the Chair, referred to Paper BC/20/11, which was for noting and invited Councillor Ward to make his announcements.

26.2 Councillor Ward said that the second Covid-19 wave had now hit hard, and the District was back in lockdown. Things were different this time round with fewer restrictions, and numbers in Suffolk, whilst fluctuating, were still low compared with the national picture. The latest data from the Suffolk Corona Watch site showed the East of England currently had an estimated R value of between 1.0 and 1.3. Here in Babergh, there were 113 cases reported in the past week, which was a rate of 120.6 per 100,000. In total, there had been 925 confirmed cases and sadly 63 deaths since the pandemic began. Although this latter number was the latest data from the ONS and was only up to 6th November. However, there was currently a spike in Hadleigh, and this was very concerning. The current weekly numbers for the town were 67 cases, which was a rate of 601 per 100,000. Although extremely high, it was thankfully on the decline. Whilst there had been a focus in the press on the care homes and high school, household-to-household transmission was also taking place and residents must continue with a relentless public awareness and messaging campaign.

26.3 The 'Stick with It Suffolk' campaign was still active and the Home But Not Alone service had been reactivated. The advice was to stay at home as much as possible, but if going out the message was simple: hands, face, space. Use sanitisers where provided in shops; wear a mask and maintain distance from others. That way transmission would be minimised and bring the infection rate down.

26.4 The Council had started to distribute the latest government business grants – the Local Restrictions Support Grant and the Additional Restrictions Grant. A review of the Council's response to enable homeless people to have somewhere to live through the winter was also being undertaken.

26.5 The Council was awaiting the Government's one-year spending review, with a statement due from the chancellor tomorrow. Whilst it remained disappointing

that the review won't provide longer-term financial certainty, hopefully it would include more support for local authorities to address the very significant financial pressures faced and also include the measures needed to provide certainty for budget-setting next year. There was a significant budget challenge at Babergh and work had started to consider measures to be taken to produce a balanced budget for 2021-22 and provide a sound MTFs for the years beyond.

26.6 To finish on an upbeat note, the first BMS Innovation Awards were held virtually on 3rd November and were a great success in terms of promoting innovation in the districts, although the technology had gremlins. There had been 11 categories and there were inspiring stories for each of the 28 finalists, so the winners were those that really stood out.

26.7 Councillor Grandon added her concern for the residents in Hadleigh and that Councillors would have residents in their thoughts.

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

27.1 None Received.

28 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

28.1 None Received.

29 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

29.1 None received.

30 BC/20/12 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT

30.1 The Chair invited the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to introduce Paper BC/20/12.

30.2 Councillor McCraw provided a summary of the main issues in the report and responded to Members' questions.

30.3 Councillor Hinton queried issues around Open Spaces and the Public Realm Delivery Model on page 23, to which Councillor McCraw responded that the list was not exclusive, and that Public Realm covered all areas previously covered by the service.

31 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET / COMMITTEES

32 BC/20/13 LICENSING ACT 2003 - STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY STATUTORY FIVE-YEARLY ADOPTION

- 32.1 The Chair invited the Chair of Licensing and Regulatory Committee to introduce Paper BC/20/13.
- 32.2 Councillor Newman provided a detailed summary including that a public consultation was carried out between 20 August 2020 and 16 September 2020 in respect of the Statement of Licensing Policy for Babergh District Council.
- 32.3 Section 5 of The Licensing Act 2003 required that each Licensing Authority should determine and publish a local 'Statement of Licensing Policy' relating to the discharge of its licensing functions under the Act. The Licensing Team revisited the statement, which had been in effect since January 2016. The report sought the approval by full Council of the revised policy statement for Babergh DC so that it may be adopted for publication and ready to take effect from 7 January 2021.
- 32.4 The current draft would be the fifth edition of the Council's 'Statement of Licensing Policy' under the Licensing Act 2003. The consultation took place over a period of four weeks, through various channels and media. Only one response was received. As well as all existing premises and club licence holders, 150 relevant businesses and organisations were consulted, including all Parish Councils. The Statement of Licensing Policy was based on the Licensing Act 2003 and the statutory guidance (section 182 guidance).
- 32.5 The draft 'Statement of Licensing Policy' for Babergh was considered by the Licensing and Regulatory Committee on the 9th October. There were some discussions around the breadth of the consultation, and checks carried out to ensure that licence applicants have adequate English language skills, but no amendments were made and the Committee voted unanimously to recommend to full Council that it be adopted without further amendment.
- 32.6 Councillor Newman **PROPOSED** Recommendation 3.1 in the report which was **SECONDED** by Councillor Carpendale.
- 32.7 Councillor Carpendale thanked the Licensing Team for their extensive knowledge.
- 32.8 Councillor Lindsay enquired if the legislation allowed changes for single use of plastic cups and plates when providing licensing for events, which would encourage reuse of plastic cups.
- 32.9 Katherine Green, the Licensing Officer, responded that events had to provide a detailed plan and that the team could advise the use of plastic cups.
- 32.10 Councillor Arthey queried the inclusion of hairdressers and why they would apply for a license.
- 32.11 Councillor Newman responded that some hairdressers offered alcoholic beverages to customers attending the salon for special occasions, such as weddings.

32.12 Members did not wish to debate the item, and the recommendation was put to Members for voting.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED:-

That the draft revision Licensing Act 2003 'Statement of Licensing Policy' document as attached as Appendix A to Paper BC/20/13 be adopted, for publication and to take effect for five years (unless sooner revised) from 7 January 2021.

33 BC/20/14 ICT STRATEGY

33.1 The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for Customers, Digital Transformation and Improvement to introduce Paper BC/20/14.

33.2 Councillor Parker introduced the report and summarised the main points in the report, including that an ICT Strategy was all about customer outcome and not IT delivery. He then introduced Matthew Harding, Corporate Manager for ICT who provided a presentation to Members before responding to Members' questions.

33.3 Councillor Maybury hoped that when the new strategy had been implemented, the collating and use of data would be improved to ensure that deceased residents were not forwarded any communication.

33.4 The Corporate Manager responded that where access to data was possible, this would be improved. However, there were lags in the data available to the Council.

33.5 Councillor Jamieson enquired about the carbon footprint for the services included in the Strategy, such as storage and hardware.

33.6 The Corporate Manager for ICT responded that this information was not available yet, but that a process was being undertaken through the biodiversity and carbon reduction plans. Microsoft was trialling a tool set to monitor the carbon footprint for services.

33.7 Councillor Ward said that the strategy was easy to understand and he was pleased that the focus was data gathering and the analysis of the information available. He added that storage was efficient and shared facilities should be monitored to ensure efficiency.

33.8 Councillor Busby commented that the Council had worked on getting the management of the data right for a number of years.

33.9 The Corporate Manger for ICT responded that the Cloud based service provided the Council with the power to process data quicker than before and

that data could be joined up quicker, which had made a significant shift in the process.

33.10 Councillor McCraw thanked the Corporate Manger for ICT for the presentation which had made the technical issues easy to understand. He thought that it was important to take care when creating the processes and that to be successful, IT intuitive had to be key. He felt that it was good that the Council was not subservient to Suffolk County Council and that the Council had its own ICT Strategy.

33.11 Councillor Parker agreed with Councillor McCraw and said that ultimately it was all about Customer Care and that customers could access the Council Services when they would like.

33.12 The Chair thanked Members and Officers.

The report was for comment only.

34 COUNCILLOR APPOINTMENTS

34.1 None Received.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 7:19 pm.

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Chair