

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: Council	REPORT NUMBER: BC/20/18
FROM: Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee	DATE OF MEETING: 19 January 2021

The Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee met at 9.30am on the 23rd November 2020.

Chair: Alastair McCraw (BDC Co-Chair)

JOS/20/3 REVIEW OF OUTSIDE BODIES

Jan Robinson, Corporate Manager Governance and Civic Office introduced this report on member representation on Outside bodies. These were confined to those appointed by Council and did not include appointments made by Leaders or the Cabinets.

The committee took the approach of examining each of these in turn, using available evidence from questionnaire responses gathered from the bodies and from members themselves. Members present were also asked to provide outline information on any bodies they had experience of, or currently served on. The principle was to establish the value of member representation to the Bodies themselves, to the Councils and to residents. It is worth noting that many members commented on the value to their own understanding of issues involved.

A complete record of the bodies discussed, and the evidence will be found in the report itself and in the minutes. After lengthy debate on each body the Joint Scrutiny Committees made recommendations for Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, according to their different circumstances. For clarity, the resolutions refer to the Joint committee, but separate votes from Babergh and Mid Suffolk members were taken where appropriate.

The recommendations are listed below.

IT WAS RESOLVED:

- 1.1 That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to the Councils named that the following appointments to Outside Bodies, no longer requiring representation, be removed from the appointments made, based on the information received.**

Babergh District Council

**Babergh Domestic Violence and Abuse Forum
East West Rail Consortium
Joint Waste Management Board
Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Policy Panel**

Suffolk Rail Policy Group

Mid Suffolk District Council:

Joint Waste Management Board Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Policy Panel

- 1.2 That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends that both Councils consider withdrawal from the Haven Gateway Partnership as the Committee feels that the Partnership cannot demonstrate Value and relevance.**
- 1.3 That Babergh District Council considers that a member representative be appointed to Home-Start in line with Mid Suffolk District Council**
- 1.4 That consideration be given by Mid Suffolk District Council that an observer be appointed to Stowmarket Citizens Advice in line with Babergh District Council**
- 1.5 That a reporting mechanism in the form of a template for Representatives on Outside Bodies be established to provide valuable information to members and Public, the information to be presented as part of the annual review of Member Representation on Outside Bodies to the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
- 1.6 That support and training be established for members when appointed as representatives on Outside Bodies.**
- 1.7 That Mid Suffolk District Council considers taking up the appointment of a representative to the East West Rail Consortium by making a payment of the subscription fees required for full participation.**

One resolution for Mid Suffolk remains to be voted upon and this will be done at a subsequent meeting.

The Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee met at 9.30am on the 14th December 2020.

Chair: Keith Welham (MSDC Co-Chair)

JOS/20/07 PLANNING ENFORCEMENT – TRANSFORMATION UPDATE

The Chief Planning Officer introduced his report on the Planning Enforcement Service and explained the background to the project. Simon Bailey then gave some caseload statistics, explained how Covid restrictions had necessitated a different way of working. He detailed the methods staff had used to review longstanding cases. He explained that businesses, especially in the retail and leisure sectors had needed to alter the way they operate in order to keep working under the Covid restrictions.

John Mawdsley explained a new enforcement flow chart devised to show every step from initial report of an alleged planning breach through to final outcome. Alleged breaches are categorised high, medium or low and each category has a different timescale for investigation. Julie Havard detailed the work of the administration team and timescales for the various steps in the process. Each report needs to be validated in a similar way to planning applications. Closer working with the Development Management team has been beneficial.

The number of alleged breaches reported has increased year on year, but the increase in 2020 may have been partly due to people spending more time in their neighbourhoods due to Covid travel restrictions. Not all reports are planning breaches and it is important to sieve these out and inform the complainant.

Improved process mapping and workflow management have assisted officers to deal with high personal workloads.

Members of the Committee asked a large number of questions and were confident that the transformation project is resulting in an improved service. On the question of resources, members were assured that sufficient staff are in place to cover the work.

Most cases can be resolved but, in exceptional circumstances, legal proceedings are necessary. These can be costly without any certainty of reimbursement of costs when cases are successful.

It was RESOLVED:

- 1.1 That the contents of this report be noted.**
- 1.2 That a further update on progress with service transformation work within planning enforcement be provided to the Committee at the conclusion of the work of the Joint Member/Officer Task and Finish Group recommended under 3.3 at the conclusion.**
- 1.3 That the Chief Planning Officer establish a Joint ember/Officer Task and Finish Group, comprising as a basis of the Members of the Joint Local Plan Member Working Group together with further Member input resolved with the Chief Officer in consultation with Political Group Leaders to review and make recommendation on the Joint Local Planning Enforcement Policy (JLPEP) and that this group have regard to the best practice and other examples of published local enforcement policies in that process of review.**

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

Alastair McCraw.
Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee, BDC.
19th January 2021.