

**Monday, 7 February 2022**



**BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**DECISIONS NOTICE**

**DECISIONS BY THE BABERGH CABINET  
CALL IN DEADLINE 5:00PM ON 16 FEBRUARY 2022**

The following decisions have been taken by the Cabinet and will come into effect on 17 February 2022 unless the call-in procedure is activated. For clarity, where an item is 'to be noted', 'received' or recommended to Council for a decision, this is deemed not to be a formal Executive decision and so the call-in provisions will not apply.

**BCa/21/35 GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2022/23 AND FOUR-YEAR OUTLOOK**

It was **RESOLVED**: -

- 1.1 That the General Fund Budget proposals for 2022/23 and four-year outlook set out in the report be endorsed for recommendation to Council on 21 February 2022.
- 1.2 That the General Fund Budget for 2022/23 be based on a 2% increase to Band D Council Tax.

**REASON FOR DECISION**

To bring together all the relevant information to enable Cabinet Members to review, consider and comment upon the Council's General Fund budget for endorsement and recommendation to Council.

**Alternative Options Considered and Rejected**

Setting a balanced budget is a statutory requirement, therefore no other options are appropriate in respect of this.

**Any Declarations of Interests Declared:** None

**Any Dispensation Granted:** None

## **BCa/21/36 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) 2022/23 BUDGET**

**It was RESOLVED: -**

- 1.1 That the HRA Budget proposals for 2022/23 set out in the report be endorsed for recommendation to Council on 21 February 2022.**
- 1.2 That the CPI + 1% increase of 4.1% in Council House rents, equivalent to an average rent increase of £3.72 a week for social rents and £5.23 a week for affordable rents be implemented.**
- 1.3 That garage rents were kept at the same level as 2021/22.**
- 1.4 That Sheltered Housing service charges were kept at the same level as 2021/22.**
- 1.5 That Sheltered Housing utility charges were kept at the same level as 2021/22.**
- 1.6 That the budgeted surplus of £511k be transferred to the Strategic Priorities reserve in 2022/23**
- 1.7 That in principle, Right to Buy (RTB) receipts should be retained to enable continued development and acquisition of new council dwellings.**

### **REASON FOR DECISION**

To bring together all the relevant information to enable Cabinet Members to review, consider and comment upon the Councils Housing Revenue Account budget for recommendations to Council.

#### **Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

The Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2022/23 is an essential element in achieving a balanced budget and sustainable medium-term position, therefore no other options are appropriate in respect of this.

**Any Declarations of Interests Declared:** None

**Any Dispensation Granted:** None

## **BCa/21/37 BUSINESS RATES RELIEF POLICIES**

**It was RESOLVED: -**

- 1.1 That Cabinet gave authority to the Assistant Director for Corporate Resources in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Finance and Economy to agree the COVID-19 additional relief fund policy.**
- 1.2 That Cabinet agreed the retail, hospitality and leisure policy, transitional relief policy and supporting small business relief policy for 2022/23 as set out in Appendices a, b and c.**

1.3 That Cabinet gave authority to the Assistant Director for Corporate Resources in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance to agree any future changes to the 2022/23 retail, hospitality and leisure discount policy.

1.4 That Cabinet gave authority to the Shared Revenues Partnership Operations Manager to administer the Covid-19 additional relief fund, discretionary retail, hospitality and leisure discount, transitional relief and supporting small business relief policies.

## **REASON FOR DECISION**

To provide discretionary reliefs to support ratepayers in Babergh.

To enable the implementation of the discretionary schemes.

### **Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

#### **Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF)**

2.1 Option 1 – Delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Corporate Resources in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Finance and Economy to agree a local discretionary COVID-19 additional relief fund policy once the modelling has been complete and system implications are understood.

A new policy can be introduced for the relief and applications can be invited from ratepayers.

2.2 Option 2 - Do nothing

There is no mandatory requirement on billing authorities to provide these discounts, however the Government is funding the scheme. It would therefore be an opportunity missed not to support local ratepayers.

#### **Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Discount, Transitional Relief and Supporting Small Businesses Relief**

2.3 Option 1 – Agree the draft policies in Appendices a, b and c. Delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Corporate Resources in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance to agree any future changes to the 2022/23 retail, hospitality, and leisure discount policy.

New policies can be introduced for the schemes. Delegations would be in place to allow the Council to act swiftly should the Government make any further changes to the scheme in the future.

2.4 Option 2 - Do nothing

There is no mandatory requirement on billing authorities to provide these discounts, however the Government is funding the scheme. It would therefore be an opportunity missed not to support local ratepayers.

**Any Declarations of Interests Declared:** None

**Any Dispensation Granted:** None

## **BCa/21/38 ACCOMMODATION AND AGILE STRATEGY - ENDEAVOUR HOUSE**

**It was RESOLVED: -**

- 1.1 That the Cabinet agreed to reduce and reconfigure the floorspace demised to the Councils within Endeavour House in accordance with this report**
- 1.2 That the Cabinet delegated authority to the Assistant Director of Assets & Investments to deliver the reconfiguration of the floorspace including finalising the detailed design, the appointment of contractors and suppliers and completing negotiations with the landlords.**

### **REASON FOR DECISION**

**To create a fit for purpose workspace at Endeavour House to reinforce our organisational culture, enable collaboration, networking and learning whilst promoting well-being and supporting the delivery of effective and efficient services for residents.**

**To deliver financial savings over the term of the original lease period.**

**To enable the timely, efficient, and effective delivery of the project.**

### **Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

- 2.1 Option 1: Do nothing: retain the current office accommodation and layout within Endeavour House.** This is not a viable option as working practises have changed significantly since the pandemic and demand for traditional desk spaces in an office environment has reduced, whilst demand for space to collaborate with colleagues has increased. Doing nothing would fail to align with the adopted SAMP principles to ensure that our properties are well used, collaborative spaces that offer good value for money.
- 2.1 Option 2: Relocate to alternative premises.** Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils jointly relocated to Endeavour House in 2017 and committed to 10-year leases with break options at the fifth year. Endeavour House continues to offer BMSDC high quality office accommodation and our occupation aligns with all the principles of the SAMP. At Endeavour House we share accommodation and services with partner organisations such as Suffolk County Council, who for example deliver IT services to BMSDC but co-location also helps to support partnership working across the public sector. Endeavour House is well-located with easy access to public transport and has good communal facilities such as a canteen, café and informal meeting spaces which have helped to attract and retain staff. Relocating to other premises at this time is not viable. There are very few buildings across the County that would be able to provide shared services and spaces similar to those we use at Endeavour House and as such it is likely that relocating would increase our space requirements and costs.
- 2.2 Option 3: Become fully digital Councils without a Headquarters building.** Whilst working practises and technology have changed significantly there is still a need for in-person meetings from a legal perspective, such as full Council meetings and planning committees but also from a practical perspective to support our people who are unable to safely work remotely and to support collaborative work and training across teams, service areas and organisations. This is therefore not a viable option.
- 2.3 Option 4: Reconfigure accommodation within Endeavour House to meet changing**

working practices. Endeavour House is well located to meet organisational needs however over the last 2 years our use of office accommodation has changed significantly with more people working remotely and growing demand for collaboration spaces when people do attend Endeavour House. Our existing office accommodation could be reconfigured to deliver the desk and collaboration spaces needed by the Councils within 1 floorplate enabling the remaining floor plate to be returned to the landlords by instigating the break clause in March 2022. This option will deliver a creative and efficient workspace with increased opportunities to collaborate, align with the principles of SAMP as well as offering financial savings.

**Any Declarations of Interests Declared:** None

**Any Dispensation Granted:** None

## **BCa/21/39 HAVEN GATEWAY PARTNERSHIP MEMBERSHIP**

**It was RESOLVED: -**

- 1.1 That the key information in this report which outlined the current economic funding and policy landscape and the range of partnerships, which now existed across the East of England, which support the Babergh/Mid Suffolk economy, be noted.**
- 1.2 That the withdrawal of the Council's membership of the Haven Gateway Partnership from 31 March 2022 be approved.**
- 1.3 That delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director Economic Development and Regeneration in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth to finalise any legal documents associated with a withdrawal from the Partnership.**

### **REASON FOR DECISION**

To ensure future resources are diverted to areas and partnerships to drive greatest growth and support, especially as part of covid 19 recovery.

### **Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

- 2.1 Option 1 – To remain within the partnership from end of March 2022 working with the Haven Gateway team to review a new vision for the future
- 2.2 Option 2 – To decide not to remain within the Haven Gateway Partnership and to withdraw from membership at end of March 2022

**Any Declarations of Interests Declared:** None

**Any Dispensation Granted:** None