

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **BABERGH COUNCIL** held in the King Edmund Chamber, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich on Wednesday, 2 February 2022

PRESENT:

Councillor: Adrian Osborne (Chair)

Councillors:	Clive Arthey	Sue Ayres
	Melanie Barrett	Simon Barrett
	Peter Beer	David Busby
	Sue Carpendale	Trevor Cresswell
	Derek Davis	Siân Dawson
	Richard Hardacre	John Hinton
	Michael Holt	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)
- Monitoring Officer (EY)
- Assistant Director, Housing (GF)
- Assistant Director, Corporate Resources (KS)
- Corporate Manager, Finance Operations (RH)
- Corporate Manager, Governance and Civic office (JR)

Apologies:

Mick Fraser
Jane Gould
Kathryn Grandon (Vice-Chair)

68 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

68.1 Councillor Maybury declared a local non pecuniary interest in Item BC/21/25 being a Director of Sudbury and District Citizens Advice.

69 BC/21/23 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 2 NOVEMBER 2021

69.1 On the proposal of Councillor Ayres and Seconded by Councillor Ward,

It was RESOLVED:-

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd November 2021 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

70 BC/21/24 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND LEADER

70.1 The Chairman referred members to Report BC/21/24 for noting.

70.2 Councillor Ward made the following Leaders announcements:

Firstly, I would like to say a few words about the current Covid situation. The Omicron variant produced a very rapid rise in infections over the Christmas holiday period due to its much greater transmissibility and then we saw a corresponding rapid decline over a fortnight to less than half the peak. However, that was last week and the infection rate is now rising again. The situation is still uncertain and, whilst the relaxing of restrictions is welcome and probably right, we must still take care and follow the basic rules: maintain distance, wash hands regularly and wear masks. But there is absolutely no doubt that the vaccination programme is working – I can personally attest to that.

Environment Briefing

A couple of weeks ago we had an excellent all-member briefing from the Environment team, highlighting the huge amount of progress that has been made towards our net zero by 2030 target. I thought it would be an opportune moment to highlight the key achievements so far.

- The single biggest contribution has, of course, been the replacement of diesel with HVO in our vehicle fleet. Our vehicles were accounting for 25.9% of the total CO₂ emissions of the two councils.
- A total of 730 solar panels have been installed on our two leisure centres and at the Wenham depot. The Babergh leisure centres were accounting for 18.9% of the two councils' CO₂ emissions.
- A new filtration system, saving both energy and water, has been installed at the Kingfisher leisure centre in Sudbury.
- Solar car ports are being installed in the Station Road car park in Sudbury.
- Across the two districts, we have installed solar panels on 2,000 council houses and 250 more now have air-source heat pumps.
- All new homes delivered for council housing last year were built to an EPC rating of B.
- We have undertaken a tree canopy survey and a biodiversity mapping exercise.

- Last year 281 trees were planted, and 4,690 hedgerow plants distributed to towns and parishes. This is only the start of a long-term programme to increase our tree canopy.

Although we have been successful in getting grants for a lot of this, it has all nonetheless been achieved within our budget or spending on things that won't provide a measurable impact – just as this administration promised when we developed our Carbon Reduction Management and Biodiversity Action Plans.

In addition to the things we are doing for our district, we are working with our partners in the county to support the delivery of the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan and we are also helping our businesses and communities to reduce their carbon footprint, starting with last year's first Low Energy Showcase event at Wherstead Park.

We are now awaiting clarification of some of the details concerning the government's Resources and Waste Strategy. I think it is fair to say that all local authorities have serious concerns about implementation and costs, and I really hope that we will be listened to as we – the districts and county – are the ones responsible for collection and disposal.

Levelling Up

I am pleased to inform you that the Government has announced that Suffolk is being offered a County Deal, within the existing local governance structure, as part of the Levelling Up White paper. This follows expression of interest submitted by SPSL last year. There will be a lot more to report on this as the details emerge in the weeks to come but I do want to stress that this does **not** mean a single county unitary, combined authority with Norfolk or an elected mayor.

This Year

But back to Covid. It is great that, for the first Council meeting of 2022, we are meeting in person in our chamber. I sincerely hope that this marks an irreversible return to normal – there is a lot to do this year and we need to focus on that. So, let's look forward to a much better 2022 when we are finally able to resume our lives without the fear of further disruption, albeit almost certainly having to live with Covid as an endemic disease with annual boosters.

- 70.3 Councillor Hinton requested that Councillor Ward clarify the offer made by Government and enquired who was consulted on the proposal put forward to Government
- 70.4 Councillor Ward replied that the initial offer made by Government last year was to ask if any Counties would like to express an interest in a 'County Deal' but no details are yet to emerge. A summary response to express interest was made by the Suffolk Public Sector Leaders which has been accepted by Government.

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

71.1 None received.

72 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

72.1 None received.

73 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

73.1 None received.

74 BC/21/25 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT

74.1 At the invitation of the Chair, Councillor McLaren introduced report BC/21/25 which gave a comprehensive picture reflecting the last two meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which reviewed the Shared Legal Service and Citizens Advice across the District.

74.2 Councillor McLaren also advised Council that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were looking into changing some of the subjects that they scrutinise.

74.3 Councillor Hinton enquired if the steering committee that the Shared Legal Services reported to was made up of officers or if it included any councillors.

74.4 Councillor McLaren confirmed that the Steering Committee did not involve Councillors.

74.5 Councillor Maybury asked why the monies given to Citizens Advice by Babergh District Council had not increased on a percentage basis as was previously agreed two years ago.

74.6 Councillor McLaren replied that this was discussed by Overview and Scrutiny, and she did not know why the increase had not been implemented, however a recommendation to index link the annual payment to Citizens advice had been made by Overview and Scrutiny to Cabinet.

74.7 Councillor Maybury enquired if a back payment of the difference would be made.

74.8 Councillor McLaren stated that she would pursue Councillor Maybury's concern with Cabinet.

75 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET / COMMITTEES

76 JAC/21/10 HALF YEAR REPORT ON TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2021/22

- 76.1 Councillor Hurren introduced report JAC/21/10 which detailed the Half Year Treasury Management for 2021/22 and moved the recommendations in the report.
- 76.2 Councillor Hinton asked if it would be possible for the labour market information contained in the report to be relevant to the district rather than the country as a whole. Councillor Hinton also enquired if table 3 on page 38 of the report included the CIFCO loans.
- 76.3 Katherine Steel – Assistant Director, Corporate Resources stated that it would be investigated if the labour market data was available at a local level.
- 76.4 Katherine Steel also confirmed that all external loans were included in table 3 on page 38 of the report including CIFCO debt borrowed from PWLB.
- 76.5 Councillor Maybury enquired if the amount that exceeded the daily banking limit was a minus or a positive and were any charges incurred.
- 76.6 Katherine Steel – Assistant Director, Corporate Resources replied that the amount was a surplus and therefore no charges were incurred.
- 76.7 Councillor Lindsay asked if the CIFCO debt could be shown separately in future reports and could he have clarification on how CIFCO were audited.
- 76.8 Katherine Steel – Assistant Director, Corporate Resources clarified that CIFCO as a wholly owned company has its own externally appointed auditors.
- 76.9 Councillor McCraw stated that CIFCO are scrutinised annually by Overview and Scrutiny.
- 76.10 On the proposal of Councillor Hurren and seconded by Councillor Ward,

It was RESOLVED:

- 1. That the Treasury Management activity for the first six months of 2021/22 as set out in report JAC/21/10 and Appendices be noted.**
- 2. That it be noted that Babergh District Council's treasury management activity for the first six months of 2021/22 was in accordance with the approved Treasury Management Strategy, and that, except for one occasion when the Council exceeded its daily bank account limit with Lloyds by £136k, as mentioned in Appendix C, paragraph 5.4, the Council had complied with all the Treasury Management Indicators for this period.**

77 UPDATE FROM CHAIR OF LICENSING AND REGULATORY COMMITTEE

- 77.1 Councillor Maybury gave a verbal update from the Licensing and Regulatory Committee meeting of 10th December 2021 where the “No Casino Resolution” was discussed and reported that it was the decision of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee that no action was needed.
- 77.2 Councillor Busby enquired if the “No Casino Resolution” should be included in the Cultural Strategy currently being devised.
- 77.3 Councillor Maybury reiterated that there were currently no allocations for casino licenses in the UK and that the Government was unlikely to allocate any more licences any time in the near future.

78 BC/21/26 THE DEVELOPMENT OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLANS

- 78.1 Councillor Jan Osborne introduced report BC/21/26 which detailed the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan which set out income and expenditure plans for delivering council housing services, key council housing priorities and demonstrates how it was intended to develop services meet tenant expectations.
- 78.2 Councillor Jamieson asked for clarification on paragraph 4.19 in the report where it stated there would be an emphasis on good quality design and energy efficiency where appropriate.
- 78.3 Councillor Jan Osborne stated that in most cases it would be appropriate but there was a balance on how much needed to be spent on retrofitting properties and providing tenants with a roof over their heads.
- 78.4 Councillor Hinton asked why backlog of repairs did not appear in the report.
- 78.5 Councillor Jan Osborne stated that that issue would be dealt with in an action plan that would follow the HRA Business Plan.
- 78.6 Councillor Beer enquired how the Council was ensuring tenants were being listened to.
- 78.7 Councillor Jan Osborne stated that a tenant sounding board had been developed which was working well, also an electronic newsletter was sent to all tenants and officers talk to tenants when out in the district.
- 78.8 Councillor McCraw sought assurance that the enhanced void standards referred to on page 63 of the report were not going to affect the performance level which had been dramatically improved in recent times.
- 78.9 Councillor Jan Osborne assured Councillor McCraw that the focus for voids would be on quantity and quality with a very proactive approach being adopted.

- 78.10 Councillor Lindsay stated that he was pleased to see the comments on retrofitting within the report which was very important to enable the Council to meet the climate emergency commitments, however he was concerned regarding the vagueness of new builds within paragraph 4.18 of the report and sought assurance that some exemplar council housing would be provided.
- 78.11 Councillor Jan Osborne stated that a design guide and specification was being developed which sets out very clear aspirations.
- 78.12 Councillor Arthey referred to paragraph 9.7 which stated lack of car parking was the issue tenants were most unhappy about and enquired if ways to introduce new parking areas on existing council estates was being investigated.
- 78.13 Councillor Jan Osborne agreed that there was a problem with parking in the district and that a parking strategy would be coming forward in the near future alongside a review of garage sites which would hopefully provide some solutions.
- 78.14 Councillor Hurren asked if the Gateway to Home Choice method of allocating council tenancies would be reviewed and possibly moved away from.
- 78.15 Councillor Jan Osborne replied that a review had been due to take place before the Covid crisis. One of the issues raised, if there were plans to leave the Partnership of seven authorities would be the costs involved therefore looking at ways to improve the system would be the best way forward.
- 78.16 Councillor Melanie Barrett began the debate raising the issue of lack of parking and people parking on grass verges.
- 78.17 Councillor McCraw expressed that he was impressed with the ambition within the plans.
- 78.18 Councillor Beer sought assurance that the housing department were going to have input into the forthcoming Parking Strategy.
- 78.19 Councillor Maybury agreed that car parking needed reviewing but with a green agenda in mind.
- 78.20 Councillor Ward stated that a lot of green verges were being reduced to mud and what was needed were hard porous surfaces.
- 78.21 Councillor Lindsay stated that the parking strategy would only deal with parking and transport was the real problem.
- 78.22 Councillor Dawson gave assurance that a wide consultation had been undertaken for the Parking Strategy, however green issues seem to be lower priority compared to availability.

78.23 Councillor Hurren commented that a lack of public transport was contributing to the parking problems, also void houses needed to be in a good state before being shown to prospective tenants.

78.24 Councillor Jan Osborne thanked Councillors for the healthy debate and stated that members' comments had been noted particularly on parking and thanked tenants and members for engaging in the process and thanked the housing team for their continued commitment.

78.25 On the proposal of Jan Osborne and seconded by Councillor Davis,

It was RESOLVED:-

- 1. That Full Council note the approach that has been taken and the progress that has been made in developing the HRA Business Plans along with the overarching aims as set out in this report.**
- 2. That the creation of a new HRA Business Plan be approved.**
- 3. That a final draft of the plan including any financial costings will be presented to Full Council in April 2022, after the 2022/23 budget setting process has been completed.**

79 BC/21/27 DRAFT COMMITTEE TIMETABLE FOR 2022/2023

79.1 Councillor Ward introduced report BC/21/27 and advised members of an amendment to the report which was in the tabled papers.

79.2 Councillor Simon Barrett asked if the provisional Council meeting scheduled for 23rd August was needed as it could impact on councillor holiday arrangements.

79.3 Councillor Ward stated that it was one of the additional meetings scheduled and as it was provisional it was dependant on business brought forward.

79.4 On the proposal of Councillor Ward and seconded by Councillor Simon Barrett,

It was RESOLVED:-

- 1. That the draft Committee Timetable for 2022/23 be approved.**
- 2. That the Chief Executive call the meetings in accordance with the agreed Timetable unless there is insufficient business for the meeting to go ahead.**

80 BC/21/28 POLITICAL BALANCE AND COMPOSITION OF COMMITTEES

80.1 Emily Yule – Monitoring Officer introduced the report and advised Councillors of the following changes:

- Councillor Owen, previously ungrouped has joined with the Green Group to form the Green and Labour Group.
- Councillor Maybury has left the Independent Group and joined the Conservative Group.

As a result of the above changes:

- The independent group has lost a seat on the Planning Committee and the Conservative Group has gained that seat.
- The previously unallocated seat on the Planning Committee has now been allocated to the Green and Labour Group

It was RESOLVED:-

That the Committees' size and numerical allocation of seats be approved as detailed in Appendix A to the report.

81 COUNCILLOR APPOINTMENTS

It was RESOLVED:-

That Councillor Maybury be appointed to Planning Committee as a Conservative Group representative.

That Councillor Parker be removed from the Planning Committee as an Independent Group representative.

That Councillor Owen be appointed to Planning Committee as the Green/Labour Group representative.

That Councillor Maybury replace Councillor Dawson on the Licensing and Regulatory Committee as a Conservative Group representative.

That Councillor Parker be appointed to the Licensing and Regulatory Committee as an Independent Group representative.

That Councillor Hinton be appointed to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as an Independent Group representative.

82 MOTIONS ON NOTICE

82.1 There were no Motions on Notice.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 7.04pm.

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Chair