

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **BABERGH COUNCIL** held in the King Edmund Chamber, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich on Tuesday, 21 June 2022

PRESENT:

Councillor: Kathryn Grandon (Chair)
Derek Davis (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:	Clive Arthey	Sue Ayres
	Melanie Barrett	Simon Barrett
	Peter Beer	David Busby
	Siân Dawson	Mick Fraser
	Jane Gould	Richard Hardacre
	John Hinton	Bryn Hurren
	Leigh Jamieson	Elisabeth Malvisi
	Margaret Maybury	Alastair McCraw
	Mary McLaren	John Nunn
	Adrian Osborne	Jan Osborne
	Alison Owen	Lee Parker
	Stephen Plumb	John Ward

In attendance:

Officers: Chief Executive (AC)
Monitoring Officer (EY)
Corporate Manager – Governance & Civic Office (JR)
Assistant Director – Housing (GF)
Assistant Director – Environment & Commercial (CC)

Apologies:

Sue Carpendale
Trevor Cresswell
Michael Holt
Mark Newman

The Chairman, Councillor Kathryn Grandon made her Declaration of Office. She thanked Councillor Adrian Osborne who had done such an excellent job as Babergh Chairman. During her speech, the Chairman announced that her chosen charity for her term of office was the Ipswich Hospital Blossom Appeal and that a JustGiving page had been created for donations.

16 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

16.1 There were no declarations of interests by Councillors.

17 BC/22/5 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING HELD ON 25 MAY 2022

It was RESOLVED:-

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25th May 2022 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

18 BC/22/6 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND LEADER

- 18.1 The Chair referred Councillors to Paper BC/22/6 and also informed Councillors that she had attended an event earlier in the day in Framlingham to mark the official start of Suffolk Day.
- 18.2 The Chair also draw Councillors' attention to the forthcoming Armed Forces Day event due to be held in Hadleigh on Thursday 23rd June.
- 18.3 Councillor Ward made the following announcements:

Gt Yarmouth Market

It was a busy month for me. It started on the 1st with an invitation to the official opening of the first phase of the new market in Great Yarmouth. The total project cost was £4.6m, partly funded by the council but also with Future High Streets Fund support. The town was bustling and thriving, having had a bumper tourism season last year due to travel restrictions and expecting similar this Summer. It was bit galling that they are category 1 for the Levelling Up Fund, which they hope to take advantage of, while we languish in category 3.

And on the evening of the 1st, I was invited to attend a major road accident training exercise by the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service at Assington Autos. This was their biggest training drill in two decades and it was very interesting to see the detail and complexity that goes into a response – and to see the variety of equipment that they can draw on to help the victims and save lives.

Jubilee

Like many of you, I attended several Jubilee events in my ward, all of which were very well attended and enjoyable. The weather threatened on the Sunday, but it did remain dry, if a little chilly. We had about 200 at the Polstead beacon lighting on a warm Thursday evening in an idyllic location with views across to Stoke by Nayland where we could see their beacon.

6th June

On 6th June, along with Cllr Davis, I was invited to the mast lowering ceremony at HMS Ganges. After several years of inactivity, this site is now on the way to being redeveloped into a vibrant new community with residential, commercial, retail and leisure facilities. The mast will be renovated and returned to its position at the centre of the site.

Later, I watched the Women's Tour speed through Raydon in a slight drizzle at lunchtime as I headed for Shimpling to see Mount Farm Vineyard with Cllr Holt and Michelle Gordon. They have a great idea for a tourism theme linking all the vineyards along the Stour valley. This would sit well with the artistic and heritage offerings in Babergh.

Sudbury

On Thursday last week, I attended the preview of the 'What's Next for Sudbury?' exhibition. A lot of work was put into this, and it is gratifying to know that it was so well attended over the three days it was on. There was a total of 442 visitors – members of the public, business representatives and county, district and town councillors. We have had a huge amount of positive feedback. The online survey is open until 18th July.

On Friday evening last week, I attended the official opening of the Sudbury Innovation Lab in Borehamgate. This is part of our Innovate Local initiative and offers businesses a co-working space, access to cutting edge technologies, business support services, funding advice and network opportunities in the heart of the town. It opened to businesses yesterday.

LGA Annual Conference

Next week I will be attending the LGA Annual Conference in Harrogate with Cllr McCraw. This is the first time this has been held as a physical event since 2019 and I am looking forward to seeing many of my colleagues in person for the first time in a long while. I will provide a summary of what took place on my return.

Net Zero Carbon Toolkit

I just wanted to take a few minutes to let you know about the Net Zero Carbon Toolkit.

This was commissioned by local authorities in Oxfordshire and funded by the LGA Housing Advisers' Programme and has been made available to be adapted and shared by other local authorities. The Suffolk Climate Change, Environment & Energy Board has taken the opportunity to publish it for the county and earlier this year SPSL approved its county-wide use.

It has been created to make Net Zero carbon new build and retrofit more accessible for all building professionals and is also relevant to self-builders, planning officers and other housing professionals. Although it can be used by homeowners, it is aimed at those who already have some knowledge or experience of construction.

The primary focus is on small to medium scale housing projects, but the principles are generally applicable to projects of any scale. It covers all stages of building design and construction, including maintenance and operation.

Suffolk Day

As our Chairman has already mentioned, today is Suffolk Day and yet again we have had the perfect mid-summer's day for it. This year it is particularly special – not just because we can enjoy it fully for the first time in 3 years, but also because it is part of the ongoing Festival of Suffolk, the county's own special celebration of Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee year.

Gavin and Cas

And finally...I just want to mention two of our SLT who will be leaving us soon. I know Jan will be saying a few words about Gavin later. We will miss his professionalism and hard work – he has built a great team in what is a very large and complex Housing service. Yesterday's excellent all-member briefing has given us all a great insight into what he has achieved. Cas, too, will be sorely missed. The Environment service is also wide-ranging and complex, made more so with all the new work we are doing as we face the climate change and biodiversity challenges. Her enthusiasm and humour have made working with her a sheer delight.

I think I speak on everyone's behalf in saying that we will miss them both greatly and wish them the very best for their new challenges at Ipswich Borough Council and East Suffolk Council.

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

19.1 None received.

20 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

20.1 The Chair invited Mr Riley to ask his question to Councillor Ward, Leader of the Council.

Question 1 Mr Riley to Councillor Ward, Leader of the Council

What possible justification is there for £9,000 a month to be spent every month on security for the Corks Lane properties?

Response

Thank you for your question, Mr Riley.

The justification is to protect the premises. It has been necessary to have 24/7 security in operation at Corks Lane in Hadleigh due to the level of break-ins and anti-social behaviour that was occurring at the vacant site. I am sure you will agree that we couldn't leave it unattended.

The security presence on site has reduced this activity: it has protected the listed buildings from damage and vandalism and reduced the impact of any anti-social behaviour on the immediate neighbours and community.

Security will be provided by our contractors as part of the development once the works commence on site in August.

Supplementary Question

If Babergh is not making money out of the project, who is?

Response

Mr Riley you have stated that Babergh would break even or make a slight loss, Babergh has never said that. This Council has always said we will break even or make a profit. We are redeveloping the site, we will break even or make a profit more likely the latter. It is a project which has been delayed unfortunately but we are finally making progress with it and indeed it will allow me to honour a commitment that I and my colleagues opposite made in our manifesto in 2019.

21 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

21.1 None received.

22 BC/22/7 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN

22.2 The Chair invited Councillor Jan Osborne – Cabinet Member for Housing to introduce Paper BC/22/7.

22.3 Councillor Beer referred to several pages within the report and asked when improved car parking, the satisfaction of residents and other priorities would be addressed.

22.4 Councillor Jan Osborne replied that the council was working with Suffolk County Council to make improvements to car parking provision, a garage review was underway, and an update was scheduled to be tabled at the September Cabinet meeting. Also, a lot of work was being undertaken alongside partners regarding anti-social behaviour.

22.5 Councillor Beer stated that he would appreciate more information regarding the improvements to car parking.

22.6 Councillor Hinton referred to page 35 of the report where it mentioned both rent increases and a rent freeze and asked for this to be clarified. He also asked why there was no mention of solar panels within the environmental section of the report.

22.7 Councillor Osborne advised councillors to watch the recording of the housing briefing held on 20th June which gave a thorough update on what the housing team had done over the last 12 months and what was planned for the next 12 months.

- 22.8 Gavin Fisk – Assistant Director for Housing thanked the councillors for their kind words regarding him leaving the council and stated that solar panels were going to be key to improving energy performance of existing homes and apologised for any confusion regarding rent freezes. He clarified that on page 43, scenario 2 looked at the impact of a potential rent freeze in 2023/24, this was one of a number of alternative impact examples.
- 22.9 Councillor Ward thanked the Assistant Director for Housing for the clarity regarding a likely rent freeze and stated that more than 65 houses a year for the next 5 years would need to be built to fulfil the numbers of social and affordable housing outlined in the Joint Local Plan.
- 22.10 Councillor Ayres expressed her concern regarding digital transformation and asked what support would be given to those unable to use or access the service digitally.
- 22.11 Councillor Jan Osborne gave assurance that ongoing support would be given and that choices on how to access the housing services were being increased not decreased.
- 22.12 The Assistant Director – Housing stated that people skill training was being embarked on in some sheltered housing schemes and an update on that would be brought to a future meeting.
- 22.13 Councillor Beer enquired why grass cutting was being reduced.
- 22.14 Councillor Jan Osborne replied that grass cutting was being reduced as part of the biodiversity plans to avoid and encourage wildflower areas.
- 22.15 Councillor Melanie Barrett commented that an increase in council owned properties would also mean an increase in maintenance costs, and it was not clear if this was reflected in the report, she also asked if the measures available to councils to ask residents to renew their tenancy agreement after five years was being used to good effect to address those on the waiting list.
- 22.16 Councillor Jan Osborne stated that maintenance costs were high at the moment as there were a lot of older houses that required upgrading and that was a reason for developing a design guide for the new houses to try and prevent this in the future.
- 22.17 The Assistant Director – Housing stated that Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils have not adopted a policy to provide fixed term tenancies, tenancies were provided on a secure tenancy basis which gave any tenant the opportunity to stay in that property for their lifetime subject to not breaching the terms of the tenancy.
- 22.18 Councillor Melanie Barrett sought clarification of rights to pass on tenancies to children.

- 22.19 The Assistant Manager – Housing clarified that every council tenant had the right to one succession of their tenancy but the succession was to the tenancy not the property, when a tenancy was succeeded, the Housing Team would work with the individual that had the succession to the tenancy to find them suitable accommodation.
- 22.20 Councillor Dawson sought clarification on the introduction of additional zero carbon works and the possible introduction of a rent and service charge policy as detailed on page 44 and 45 of the report.
- 22.21 The Assistant Director – Housing clarified that scenario 1 was in relation to the investment to bring all of the councils social housing up to zero carbon standard in addition to meeting EPC and the rent and service charge policy was due to be presented to Cabinet in July.
- 22.22 Councillor McCraw asked if the fundamental drive of the HRA Business Plan and its overarching aims were similar to those in the original plan which was adopted in 2017.
- 22.23 The Assistant Director – Housing replied that the proposed plan was about development in terms of the housing service building on sound foundations that had been built since 2017 and taking the HRA Business Plan forward for the next 6 years.
- 22.24 Councillor Busby stated that it was an ambitious and challenging plan and that there were a lot of competing demands on funds but increasing the number of houses would mean increasing rents and more money to help achieve the council's objectives.
- 22.25 Councillor Jamieson gave some details of a retrofitting model adopted by Lewes Council and wondered if this model could be explored as an option.
- 22.26 Councillor Hurren stated that it was a positive report, and he was thrilled that climate change was addressed and allotments were included.
- 22.27 Councillor Simon Barrett stated that the standard of new housing needed to be looked at.
- 22.28 Councillor Maybury asked if it was possible for broadband to be supplied in sheltered housing schemes.
- 22.29 Councillor Osborne thanked councillors for their comments.

23 BC/22/8 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

- 23.1 The Chair invited Councillor McLaren to introduce Paper BC/22/8.
- 23.2 Councillor Maybury asked why the review of Shared Legal Services was only monetary and not a review of the whole service.
- 23.3 Councillor McLaren replied that this was because a member of the public had raised concerns regarding the Shared Legal Services costs.

- 23.4 The Monitoring Officer said that any issue regarding the Shared Legal Services could be directed to her.
- 23.5 Councillor Maybury enquired about the increased funding for Citizens Advice.
- 23.6 Councillor McLaren replied that the recommendation from Overview and Scrutiny regarding the index linked increase of funding for Citizens Advice was due to be presented at the September Cabinet Meeting.
- 23.7 Councillor Melanie Barrett asked if the call-in process was sufficient when the option can be removed by Cabinet.
- 23.8 Councillor McLaren stated that there was some misunderstanding regarding the call-in process and detailed the 3 options available.
- 23.9 The Chair thanked Councillor McLaren for her report.

24 BC/22/9 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PLAN 2022/23

- 24.1 The Chair invited Councillor Hinton to introduce Paper BC/22/9 which detailed the upcoming works planned for Overview and Scrutiny.
- 24.2 Councillor Simon Barrett stated that he was looking forward to working with Councillor Hinton as the new Chair of Overview and Scrutiny.
- 24.3 The Chair thanked Councillor Hinton for his report.

25 BC/22/10 GENERAL EXCEPTION DECISION TAKEN BY CABINET UNDER DELEGATED POWERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 2 OF THE CONSTITUTION

- 25.1 The Chair invited Councillor Ward to introduce Paper BC/22/10 which detailed the general exception decision taken by Cabinet under delegated powers.

26 COUNCILLOR APPOINTMENTS

- 26.1 There were no new councillor appointments.

27 MOTIONS ON NOTICE

- 27.1 There were no Motions on Notice.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 7.14 pm.

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Chair