

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: BDC Cabinet	REPORT NUMBER: BCa/22/22
FROM: Cllr Mary McLaren Cabinet Member for Communities & Wellbeing:	DATE OF MEETING: 5 th September 2022
OFFICER: Director for Communities & Wellbeing, Di Robinson Corporate Manager for Communities, Vicky Moseley	KEY DECISION REF NO. CAB359

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS – ANNUAL REVIEW OF SUDBURY & DISTRICT CAB

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To respond to the recommendations from the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 20th December 2021 that resolved:
- a) To thank the Local Citizens Advice Chief officers and their respective staff for the work that they have carried out in the last year. Particularly during the pandemic.
 - b) The Committee are reassured that both CABs are operating effectively and efficiently and responded well to all questioning from members.
 - c) That the Councils take a single view of debt and implement an integrated system for dealing with housing rent, and council tax debt.
 - d) That contact be made with foodbanks with a request that their clients are referred to the CAB for advice on nutrition and budgeting and cookery skills classes.
 - e) Remote virtual operation capability for CAB and other bodies should be provided on an accelerated programme as a matter of urgency defining locations, IT equipment and applications, training, and connectivity.
 - f) That Cabinets be asked to consider the previous resolution of Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee that the 3 year rolling funding arrangements review be subject to indexation on an annual review basis.
 - g) That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee review the CAB in December 2022
 - h) That extra funding be provided to Sudbury Citizens Advice to enable greater provision for debt advice across the whole district.

2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 20th December 2021

- 2.1 Recommendation A & B: The O & S Committee thanked both CABs at the December meeting and were assured both CABs are operating effectively and efficiently and responded well to all questioning from members
- 2.2 To accept or reject:
- Recommendation C: The Councils take a single view of debt and implement an integrated system for dealing with housing rent and council tax debt;
 - Recommendation D: Contact be made with foodbanks with a request that their clients are referred to the CAB for advice on nutrition and budgeting and cookery skills classes; and
 - Recommendation E: Remote virtual operation capability for CAB and other bodies should be provided on an accelerated programme as a matter of urgency defining locations, IT equipment and applications, training, and connectivity.
 - Recommendation F: That the 3-year rolling funding arrangement in place for Sudbury & District CA be subject to indexation on an annual review basis.
 - Recommendation G: That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee review the CAB in December 2022
 - Recommendation H: That extra funding be provided to Sudbury Citizens Advice to enable greater provision for debt advice across the whole district.

The Councils Cost of Living 5 Point Plan and appointment of a dedicated Cost of Living Co-ordinator, agreed at Cabinet (BCa/22/3) on 8th June 2022, will address recommendations C-F & H, and identifies a 'one off' 30% uplift provided to the Sudbury and District CAB 2022/23 annual revenue grant.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Cabinet considers the report from Joint Overview and Scrutiny and agrees its response to the recommendations in the report as detailed in paragraph 4, and in line with the Council's response to the Cost of Living Crisis and the five point plan that will look at a better system of connectivity between partners, including the CAB, the Council and system wide partners.

REASON FOR DECISION

To respond to the recommendations in the report from the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

4. KEY INFORMATION

4.1 At the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 20th December 2021, a review of the Annual work programme of Sudbury and District and Mid Suffolk CAB was conducted.

4.2 The recommendations for Babergh proposed and agreed included:

Recommendation	Response
The Councils take a single view of debt and implement an integrated system for dealing with housing rent, and council tax debt’.	Officers have been working with CABs at locality level and is looking to appoint a specific post that will focus on Cost of living – titled Cost of Living Co-ordinator. This post will build on the excellent operations we already have in place – ranging from customer services, housing and welfare support, external partnerships etc to ensure that all systems talk to each other in meeting the needs of people. This work will be developed further as part of the delivery of the Cost of Living 5 Point Plan.
That contact be made to foodbanks with a request that their clients are referred to the CAB for advice on nutrition and budgeting and cookery skills classes	Officers work closely with Foodbanks at District level but also as part of wider system activity. Officers encourage Foodbanks to link in with CABs regularly and recent reports prepared by Community Action Suffolk show that a significant no. of referrals to Foodbanks are made by CABs. Further work has also taken place and will continue to take place to ensure that Foodbanks signpost and offer additional advice where needed.
Remote virtual operation capability for CAB and other bodies should be provided on an accelerated programme as a matter of urgency defining locations, IT equipment and applications, training, and connectivity.	This piece of work has also been identified as part of the Cost-of-Living Action Plan. At present Suffolk County Council are building the shared devices, which will then be tested in locations identified through the data scoping exercise, described within the plan. Initial conversations have taken place with Suffolk libraries as possible host locations for some of the devices. Once the locations have been agreed, through the data scoping exercise taking place in the summer, this approach can be scoped out and agreed with cabinet members.
That Cabinets be asked to consider the previous resolution of Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee	A rolling three-year funding agreement is in place with Sudbury & District CAB but is not indexed linked. The work developed in

that the 3 year rolling funding arrangements review be subject to indexation on an annual review basis.

the Cost of Living 5 Point Plan and additional support already provided by Babergh to provide an additional uplift to their revenue grant for 2022/23 demonstrates the Councils ongoing support. Suffolk Public Sector Leaders has agreed to underwrite £1m of hardship funding which is also expected to provide direct support to CABs and the Local Welfare Assistance Service.

That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee review the Local Citizens Advice in December 2022

The annual review of CABs is already part of the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committees annual work programme.

That extra funding be provided to Sudbury Citizens Advice to enable greater provision for debt advice across the whole district

A 'one off' 30% uplift to the Sudbury and District CAB 2022/23 annual revenue grant as set out in the Cost of Living Plan.

4.3 The vital relationship between the CAB and Babergh District Council is recognised, hence its inclusion within the Homes and Housing Strategy Delivery Plan and established rolling three-year revenue grant agreement. Housing issues may be only one of multiple issues the CAB may be working with a household to resolve and so a holistic approach to problem solving is only possible where there is a strong working relationship between the CAB and the Council.

4.4 Teams across the Council have a good working relationship with the CAB and where improvements need to be made these are discussed via regular meetings.

4.5 Babergh District Council and the CABs are part of the Suffolk Information Partnership (SIP), this allows customers' personal information to be shared between partner organisations via referrals, so individuals can get the help they need. Further mechanisms for increasing integrated working are currently being explored.

4.6 Dialogue between the Council and the CABs has included the need for:

- A resource to better co-ordinate and connect established systems through a multi-agency case work partnership; and
- Better intelligence gathering that enables the potential deployment of "pop up" services where there is a need.

4.7 Supporting people to access a wide range of opportunities that are impacted by the emerging crisis to maintain resilience, health and wellbeing.

This will prevent people from falling into crisis and support people's mental health, which was the principal recommendation in the Director of Public Health's annual report.

4.8 There are already mechanisms in place for the CAB and Babergh Council to work together, and this will be further built upon. The proposed Cost of Living Co-ordinator

will ensure that partners continue to work together effectively and will build on the existing relationships and systems formed.

4.9 The Cost of Living 5 Point Plan will address the many of the recommendations the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee made at its meeting on 20th December 2021 meetings.

5. LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

5.1 The provision of advice and assistance by the CABs strengthened by effective working relationships between the CAB and Babergh District Council aligns with both the vision set out in the:

- Homes and Housing Strategy (2019), that everyone should have a suitable home, which enables them to build settled, safe and healthy lives within sustainable and thriving communities; and
- Wellbeing Strategy (2021), that the residents of Babergh have the best possible conditions for good wellbeing and have lives that are healthy, happy and rewarding.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The £60K identified to fund the Cost-of-Living Coordinator will be ringfenced specifically for this project from funding provided by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. There will be no direct cost to the council

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

8.1

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
The impacts of the Cost of Living Crisis reduces the overall wellbeing and resilience of our communities	High	High	Maximise partnership working and established systems to provide targeted support in localities where there is a particular trend and need, implementing a targeted family-first approach. Appointment of a dedicated officer to co-ordinate

			work and maintain strong partnership arrangements
--	--	--	---

9. CONSULTATIONS

9.1 Due to many of the responses being further wrapped up in the Proposed Cost of Living 5 Point Plan, many of the issues raised in this paper have been discussed more broadly at all member briefings, with cabinet members, internal teams and partners organisations.

10. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

10.1 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no environmental implications in this report.

12. APPENDICES

Title	Location
(a) Babergh Mid Suffolk District Council Joint Homes and Housing Strategy 2019 – 2024.	https://www.babergh.gov.uk/assets/Housing-and-Homelessness/Housing-Strategy/Home-Housing-Strategy-Final-21032019-.pdf
(b) Babergh Mid Suffolk District Council Joint Wellbeing Strategy 2021 - 2027	Microsoft Word - Wellbeing Strategy 2021-27.docx (babergh.gov.uk)

13. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

13.1 None.

14. REPORT AUTHORS

Vicky Moseley, Corporate Manager for Communities