

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: Council	REPORT NUMBER: BC/22/26
FROM: Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee	DATE OF MEETING: 25 October 2022

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT TO BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Babergh District Council on the business conducted at the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 27th June 2022 and 30th September 2022.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 This report is for noting.

3. KEY INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 27th June 2022 and considered the following items:

3.1.1 CAPITAL INVESTMENT FUND COMPANY ('CIFCO CAPITAL LTD') BUSINESS TRADING AND PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Director - Assets and Investments and Christopher Haworth presented a summary of the Business Plan to Members including the purpose of the Business Plan, the split of the portfolio between sectors, the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for the next year, the Councils income for the previous year, and refurbishment that had been undertaken in properties over the last year.

Various members then posed questions to test the financial and managerial integrity of the processes surrounding the portfolio.

Members debated whether the Business Plan should continue to be reported to Full Council following scrutiny by the Committee, or whether the Committee should only refer the Business Plan to Full Council if they were not satisfied with the performance.

Councillor Barry Humphreys proposed the recommendation as follows:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend to Full Council that future CIFCO business plans are scrutinised by the Councils' Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee and only reported to Council if the Committee is not satisfied with the Company's business plan and performance.

Councillor David Muller seconded this motion.

This motion was lost by a vote of 5 For and 6 Against.

Councillor John Hinton then proposed the recommendation as follows:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend to Full Council that future CIFCO business plans continue to be scrutinised by the Councils' Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee and then reported to Council.

Councillor Sian Dawson seconded this motion.

By a vote of 6 For, 4 Against, and 1 Abstention

It was RESOLVED:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend to Full Council that future CIFCO business plans continue to be scrutinised by the Councils' Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee and then reported to Council.

Councillor Kathryn Grandon proposed the following recommendations:

That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny committee notes the CIFCO Business Plan and Business Trading and Performance and ask that the minutes of this meeting be taken into account at Full Council.

That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee is satisfied that the CIFCO Business Plan and Business Trading and Performance is robust for 2022 – 2023

Councillor Terence Carter seconded the motion.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED:

That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny committee notes the CIFCO Business Plan and Business Trading and Performance and ask that the minutes of this meeting be taken into account at Full Council.

That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee is satisfied that the CIFCO Business Plan and Business Trading and Performance is robust for 2022 – 2023

Members considered paragraph 2.2 in the report illustrated below:

The Business Plan has been approved by the Holding Companies and we seek the Councils' Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider whether:

- *the current performance of CIFCO delivers good value to the Councils*
- *the KPIs are appropriate measures of performance*
- *the business plan is robust and appropriate for the next 12 months*
- *there is sufficient confidence in the management of CIFCO*

Councillor James Caston proposed that the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee approves the statement as detailed in paragraph 2.2 in the report.

Councillor Barry Humphreys seconded the motion.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED:

That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee approves the statement as detailed in paragraph 2.2 in the report.

I can therefore report that the detail and processes surrounding CIFCO have been scrutinised in detail and that with Council's endorsement will continue to be so with reports back to Council as appropriate.

3.2 The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 30th September 2022 and considered the following items:

3.2.1 **BABERGH AND MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCILS PARKING STRATEGY**

Councillor Davis left the room as he had previously been involved in the Strategy creation through his previous position on the Babergh Cabinet.

The item was introduced by Councillor Fleming as the Cabinet Member for Environment at Mid Suffolk District Council. She was supported by the Director of Environment and Commercial Partnerships and the Parking Services Manager.

This is the first Parking Strategy for the Councils and involved considerable public consultation with significant levels of particularly online responses. The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee welcomed the Parking Strategy and made the following comments:

Members expressed concern over the uncertainty in predicting parking capacity and expressed the need to update predictions of car use and car park use as the project moves into the implementation phase.

There were queries over the governance of parking strategy implementation and a request that the business case for the implementation plan be made available for scrutiny at an appropriate time. Also, Information Bulletins at key stages of the implementation phase.

The collected data shows that some 40 -50% of journeys to a car park are 1.5 miles or less. The strategy needs to encourage implementation of proposals to discourage car use by providing opportunities for journeys to be undertaken by other means. This will involve working with partners, including SCC and the Sustainable Travel Officer.

Members asked why there was no data on problem areas and suggested producing a heat map showing reported instances of enforcement and issuing of penalty charge notices in hot spot areas.

Emphasis needs to be on trip reduction, not increasing the number of car parking spaces.

The strategy seems to accept that spend in town centres increases when on street parking is permitted. Officers should be asked to review case studies conducted in towns where the reverse has been shown to be the case.

Members expressed concern about the lack of flexibility in the strategy - data was collected before the sharp increase in fuel prices and the cost of living crisis.

Transport to school often leads to on street parking. A strategy for reducing the problems caused by parent parking needs to be developed, probably with SCC.

Members suggested that work is needed to investigate the (often unsatisfactory) parking of vehicles for car and van sharing, particularly along the A14 corridor.

Members agreed that the strategy has a limited scope as most car parking spaces are under the control of others, especially on street parking.

Most areas appear to have been covered in the formation of this Strategy but the real test will come with the drafting of the implementation plan.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED:

That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the content of the report and that a verbal presentation of the comments made at this meeting be provided to Cabinet

That Cabinet is requested to carry out further work to replace carparking demands with alternatives by looking at other areas that have done so successfully.

That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee asks that a report be provided to the Committee in due course to review the progress on the Parking strategy implementation plan.

3.2.2 SHARED REVENUES PARTNERSHIP – COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME

The Committee also discussed the Council Tax Reduction Scheme report that was presented by the Corporate Manager for Finance Operations.

Four options were presented to the Committee – all the details were outlined and the “pros and cons” of each were explained.

The constant changes to various schemes have been amplified in recent months by Government proposals and the pressures on the lowest income groups in the community are of increasing concern. The proposals put forward were considered and the following recommendation was endorsed by the committee:

Overview and Scrutiny recommends to Cabinet that their preferred option for changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme is Option Three.

This was considered to give the most even benefit to residents and would assist staff in their processing of claims and speed up delivery with minimal financial impact on the council. All parties involved would gain.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to Cabinet Option 3 as the preferred option for the Consultation for the Council Tax Reduction (Working Age) Scheme.

3.2.3 INFORMATION BULLETIN – SHARED LEGAL SERVICE PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND SPLIT OF NEW LEGAL MATTERS

The Committee also received a report from Nigel Dulieu on the Shared Legal Services performance and Monitoring and the split of new legal matters.

The costings and financial splits are reviewed by the Steering Board on a six monthly basis. The split on cases is split by Council and complexity. Figures are similar to the past year but the charts presented were not the easiest to extrapolate information from as they were for “New” cases. Guidance was suggested for future reports.

A question on staffing was responded to with a comment that the level of staffing is being maintained with a “churn” that is within normal parameters.

Other questions from Members included issues such as: the split in cases between Councils, the types of services provided, the workload, the increase in cases and their complexities for some Councils, and the financial impact.

The report was for noting.

3.2.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUP FOR RURAL TRANSPORT

The Committee then received a report on the conclusions of the Task and Finish Group for Transport.

There were different recommendations for each council and the ones for Babergh were:

That Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to Babergh Cabinet that an analysis of the unmet demand for community transport in the district be carried out.

Secondly that Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to Cabinet that Suffolk County Council be informed of the apparent lack of publicity of community transport across the District and to encourage joint working between Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils and Suffolk County Council to promote community transport services.

Thirdly, that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to Cabinet that the feasibility of providing an electric bus project throughout the district, similar to that being implemented by Mid Suffolk be investigated

These recommendations were unanimously agreed.

4. REPORT AUTHOR

Councillor John Hinton – Chair of Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee