

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, 18 July 2023.

PRESENT:

Councillor: Elisabeth Malvisi (Chairman)

Councillors:	Peter Beer	David Busby
	Jane Carruthers	Jessie Carter
	Paul Clover	Helen Davies
	Sallie Davies	Derek Davis
	Simon Dowling (Deputy Chair)	Ruth Hendry
	Michael Holt	Bryn Hurren
	Leigh Jamieson	Margaret Maybury
	Alastair McCraw	Mark Newman
	John Nunn	Adrian Osborne
	Alison Owen	Lee Parker
	Stephen Plumb	Daniel Potter
	Tim Regester	Brian Riley
	Deborah Saw	Laura Smith
	John Ward	John Whyman

Officers: Chief Executive (AC)
Monitoring Officer (IA)
Corporate Manager for Governance and Civic Office (JR)
Director for Economic Growth and Climate Change (FD)

Apologies:

Councillors: Kathryn Grandon
Mary McLaren
Isabelle Reece

19 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

19.1 None declared.

20 BC/23/6 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 MAY 2023

It was **RESOLVED:-**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2023 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

21 BC/23/7 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND LEADER

21.1 The Chairman referred Councillors to Paper BC/23/7 for noting.

21.2 The Chairman invited the Leader of the Council and the Deputy Political Leaders to make their announcements.

21.3 Councillor Busby made the following announcement:

“I’d like to start my announcements by giving an update about our coalition administration’s collective ambitions for this Council term. The Green, Independent, and Liberal Democrat coalition is built on a spirit of partnership and cooperation – it is absolutely essential to our approach. This will be exemplified not just by how we work together as an administration but how we work with our communities. We want to listen, collaborate, and empower.

As Councillors, we’ll know we have now agreed three broad themes that will drive our agenda and be at the coalition’s heart. We shared these with you yesterday, so I won’t go into detail, but perhaps Councillor Saw or Councillor Ward may like to say a few words about them.”

21.4 Councillor Ward made the following announcement:

“Thank you, Councillor Busby. It is clear that the electorate wanted to see changes to what we do and how we do it but change is good, or at least inevitable. These shared priorities are both ambitious and exciting. They are a combination of continuity with many refreshing new ideas and a strong commitment to strengthen some of the plans already proposed by the previous administration.

We will support our residents, communities, businesses, and environment through greater collaboration and a real desire to seek out innovative projects. Collaboration means with all partners, our communities, and also other Councils and organisations in the County.

Yes, there is a greater focus on climate change mitigation and I know some may be sceptical due to the potential costs, but we have made it clear that a strong economy based on thriving towns, encouraging new businesses, and improving skills is the bedrock on which we will meet the climate challenges. The administration has work to do and I’m pleased to be a part of that and deliver against these priorities.”

21.5 Councillor Saw made the following announcement:

“Thank you, Councillors Busby, and Ward. We are an ambitious administration – as Councillor Ward says we are committed to change, not for its own sake but because we want to help improve the lives of our residents, the resilience of our communities, and make our contribution to the achievement of national priorities such as the drive to net zero and the biodiversity recovery.

Our vision is to see local communities empowered to develop and deliver solutions to the issues that matter to them. It is our role to bring these different stakeholders together, whether fellow local government organisations, businesses, or the voluntary sector, to work with us to develop new solutions and to find the funding to make them a reality.

We will do things differently and we make a measurable difference.”

21.6 Councillor Busby summarised with the following:

“We must now turn these priorities into meaningful actions to achieve our aims. Alongside this, work is getting underway to establish the Council’s corporate plan objectives. Our Residents Survey, which is so important to help us understand the views and needs of our communities, launches this week, and our State of the District report will be published soon.

There are also lessons to be learned from the exemplary Councils we heard from at the LGA Conference a couple of weeks ago and during a visit to the best Council in 2022 – South Staffordshire. These will all influence and shape what we do to improve our district in the next four years.

I’d also like to take this opportunity to welcome the news that the Tour of Britain will be coming to Babergh on Thursday 7th September, passing through a number of towns and villages including Hadleigh, East Bergholt, and Holbrook. It is a great opportunity to showcase our district and for communities to come together.”

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

22.1 None received.

23 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

23.1 None received.

24 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

24.1 None received.

25 BC/23/8 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23 AND DRAFT WORK PLAN 2023/24

25.1 The Chairman invited Councillor Whyman, Vice Chairman of Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee to introduce Paper BC/23/8 which was for noting.

- 25.2 Councillor Whyman invited Mr John Hinton to present the report to Council as the previous Chairman of the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 25.3 Councillor Maybury raised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should look into Babergh District Council's impact on river quality when the review on current levels of untreated sewage discharges into waters in Babergh comes before the Committee in September.
- 25.4 Councillor Davis thanked Mr Hinton for the work he conducted during his time as a Councillor and for his work as the previous Chairman of the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 25.5 Councillor Busby praised the Officers involved in writing the report and encouraged all Councillors to attend Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings in the future.
- 25.6 The report was noted.

26 BC/23/9 CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

- 26.1 The Chairman invited the Monitoring Officer to introduce Paper BC/23/9.
- 26.2 The Monitoring Officer explained the purpose of the report and asked for a proposer and a seconder.
- 26.3 Councillor Maybury **PROPOSED** the recommendation which was **SECONDED** by Councillor Plumb.
- 26.4 Councillor Busby queried the flexibility of setting a timescale for when the position of Leader of the Council will rotate. The Monitoring Officer responded that the rotation of the position could only happen in yearly timeframes.
- 26.5 Councillors Holt, Parker, McCraw, and Beer asked for an update on the proposed debate on the governance structure of the Council that was agreed upon by the previous administration. The Chief Executive responded that a further review of the governance structure was agreed upon by Full Council in March 2022 and that Officers would seek to bring that debate before the Constitution Working Group as soon as possible.

By a vote of 27 For, 1 Against, and 1 Conflict of Interest

It was RESOLVED:

- 1.1. **That Council approves the following words to be added "or as the Council shall decide" to Articles 2 and 6 of the Constitution. The relevant sections will read as follows:**

Election and Terms of Councillors "2.2 Election and term. The regular election of councillors will be held on the first Thursday in May every four years. The terms of office of councillor will start on the fourth day

after being elected and will finish on the fourth day after the date of the next regular election with the exception of the Leader who will hold office in accordance with the statutory provisions until the next scheduled election or as the Council shall decide. Provisions for the resignation or removal of the Leader at other times are set out in Article 4.”

The Leader “6.3.1 The Leader will be the Councillor elected to the position by the Council at its first annual meeting following the district’s local government elections. The Leader will hold office until a) The next post-election annual meeting of the Council or as the Council shall decide...”

- 1.2. That the Monitoring Officer makes all consequential changes to the Constitution to give effect to the decision of the Council to appoint a Leader on an annual basis or as the Council shall decide.

27 BC/23/10 GREENHOUSE GAS REPORT 2021-22

- 27.1 The Chairman invited Councillor Potter, Cabinet Member for Environment to introduce Paper BC/23/10.
- 27.2 Councillor Potter explained the purpose of the report and **MOVED** the recommendations detailed in the paper.
- 27.3 Councillor Regester **SECONDED** the proposal.
- 27.4 Councillor Malvisi asked what the acronym “PSD” stood for. The Director for Economic Growth and Climate Change responded that it stood for “Public Sector Decarbonisation”.
- 27.5 Councillor Regester questioned what the definition of a “touchdown point” is. Councillor Potter responded that a touchdown point was a designated remote working location for officers.
- 27.6 Councillor Beer asked for an update on the evaluation of the performance of the solar car ports project. The Director for Economic Growth and Climate Change responded that the solar car ports are now operational and that a further update on the performance of the project will be detailed in an additional report to Full Council in the future.
- 27.7 Councillor Maybury questioned if progress had been made concerning moving council estate properties from natural gas to air source heat pumps. The Director for Economic Growth and Climate Change responded that this was being looked into as part of the Council’s Carbon Reduction Management Plan.

- 27.8 Councillor Maybury questioned what work was being done to reduce the emissions and energy efficiency of Endeavour House. The Director for Economic Growth and Climate Change responded that the Council is a leaseholder within Endeavour House and that changes would be controlled by Suffolk County Council.
- 27.9 Councillor Maybury further questioned if any work was being conducted to help reduce mileage from all staff. The Director for Economic Growth and Climate Change responded that conversations were currently being had with staff through the Council's Carbon Reduction Management Plan and the Sustainable Travel Plan regarding support mechanisms that need to be put in place to reduce staff car journeys.
- 27.10 Councillor Riley questioned when the Council would receive an update report on the 2022/23 figures. The Director for Economic Growth and Climate Change responded that an updated report was currently being put together and is due to be presented to Full Council later in the year.
- 27.11 Councillor Riley queried whether the Council was currently meeting its targets for emissions. The Director for Economic Growth and Climate Change responded that current progress towards the Council's goals is much more positive and is slowly getting back on target.
- 27.12 Councillor Jamieson questioned if pressure was being put on our contractors to be carbon neutral. The Director for Economic Growth and Climate Change responded that pressure was being put on contractors where possible and appropriate.
- 27.13 Councillor Saw asked if a carpooling initiative for staff had been explored. The Director of Economic Growth and Climate Change responded that staff have been encouraged to car share through internal communications and that there are now pool cars that are available for staff to use.
- 27.14 Councillor Holt queried if there were plans in place to modernise the current photovoltaic panels on council properties to improve their efficiency. Councillor Potter responded that there were plans in place considering this and that it would be covered in more detail in the upcoming 2022/23 report.

By a vote of 28 For and 1 Abstention

It was RESOLVED:

- 1.1 That the contents of the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report 2021-22 at Appendix A to the report be noted.**
- 1.2 That a Task and Finish group is established to review and refresh actions in the Carbon Reduction Management Plan.**

28 BC/23/11 REVIEW OF THE DELIVERY OF THE 2023 DISTRICT, TOWN & PARISH ELECTIONS

- 28.1 The Chairman invited the Chief Executive to introduce Paper BC/23/11.
- 28.2 The Chief Executive explained the purpose of the report and asked for a proposer and a seconder.
- 28.3 Councillor Hurren **PROPOSED** the recommendation which was **SECONDED** by Councillor Beer.
- 28.4 Councillor Beer asked for the total number of people within Babergh that were denied their vote due to not having appropriate voter ID. The Chief Executive responded that he did not have the specific number for Babergh to hand.
- 28.5 Councillor Parker questioned if the software and programmes used to deliver the election were the standard technology used by a majority of local authorities nationally. The Chief Executive responded that the software used by Babergh District Council was one of four options available nationally but that the Council had only run one election on this software prior to the 2023 Local Elections.
- 28.6 Councillor Beer raised that a lack of staff supporting the delivery of the election could have led to some of the issues detailed in the report.
- 28.7 Councillor Riley raised a need for the provision of better training and support for polling station staff.
- 28.8 Councillor Regester questioned if the software used to deliver the elections was tested thoroughly before the 2023 Local Elections were underway. The Chief Executive responded that testing of the software is required before conducting an election but that testing was perhaps conducted too late as detailed further in the external report.

By a unanimous result

It was RESOLVED:

To note the content of Appendices A and B, and request that the Joint Audit & Standards Committee review the draft action plan arising from those reviews.

29 COUNCILLOR APPOINTMENTS

- 29.1 The Chairman introduced the item and asked for a proposer and seconder.
- 29.2 Councillor Busby **PROPOSED** the appointments and Councillor Jamieson **SECONDED** the proposal.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED:

That the Councillor appointments as detailed in the agenda be approved.

30 MOTIONS ON NOTICE

31 TO CONSIDER THE MOTION ON NOTICE RECEIVED FROM COUNCILLOR JAMIESON

31.1 The Chairman invited Councillor Jamieson to introduce and **PROPOSE** his motion as detailed in the agenda.

31.2 Councillor Potter **SECONDED** the motion.

31.3 Councillor Maybury expressed her party's endorsement of the motion as detailed in the agenda but that they were inclined to not accept the additional part of the motion as detailed in the tabled papers due to limitations with access to sustainable transport within the district.

31.4 Councillor Jamieson raised that joining the UK100 cross-party membership organisation would give the Council access to UK100 Countryside Climate Network which intends to support rural Councils with their ambitions to achieve net zero emissions.

31.5 Councillor Riley expressed that he could not support the motion due to the lack of detail provided regarding funding.

31.6 Councillor McCraw endorsed the motion in full and expressed his support for the continued commitment towards the Council's climate goals.

31.7 Councillor Parker endorsed the motion but queried how the motion would be financed and resourced within the organisation.

31.8 Councillor Holt raised concerns that the motion was too ambitious and would require too much change to be successful.

By a vote of 24 For, 3 Against, and 2 Abstentions the motion was **CARRIED**.

It was RESOLVED:

This Council notes that since the carbon emergency acknowledgment, made in 2019, an election has occurred – with 14 new Councillors across all parties now in post.

With no improvement in the Climate or biodiversity emergencies I would like to take this opportunity for this Council and new councillors to reiterate, once again, its commitment to make its services carbon neutral by 2030.

I would also like to propose that the council join the UK100 cross-party membership organisation that supports the most ambitious councils to go further and faster on their Net Zero and Clean Air targets. UK100 facilitates knowledge-sharing between members, partnership-building and provides leadership and outreach mentoring. To accelerate action, they bring together the most influential local leaders across the country to learn together and agree on priorities for legislative and regulatory change while empowering them to engage with national decision-makers.

There is no cost involved in joining this organisation and no policies are forced on the council. There are numerous councils already signed up to this organisation including Suffolk County Council.

32 TO CONSIDER THE MOTION ON NOTICE RECEIVED FROM COUNCILLOR WARD

32.1 The Chairman invited Councillor John Ward to introduce and **PROPOSE** his motion as detailed in the agenda.

32.2 Councillor Busby **SECONDED** the motion.

32.3 Councillor Holt left the meeting at 19:30pm.

32.4 Councillor Maybury proposed the following amendment to the motion:

“[...] appropriate management of construction activities to effectively minimise and mitigate harm to Suffolk’s communities, environment, *and tourism*.

Whilst the Council will be making a formal response [...]”

32.5 Councillor Beer seconded the proposed amendment.

32.6 Councillor Ward agreed to the proposed amendment of the motion.

By a unanimous vote the motion was **CARRIED**.

It was RESOLVED:

For the avoidance of doubt, Babergh District Council considers its role of protecting and promoting the interests of the district’s communities, businesses, and environment to be of utmost importance and we recognise the contribution Babergh makes to the unique character and quality of Suffolk and the wider eastern region.

The Council acknowledges the national importance of strategic energy infrastructure for the transition to net zero. We have previously stated a preference for a coordinated, offshore approach to the delivery of transmission reinforcement, import and export objectives including consolidation of offshore connections and onshore infrastructure together with appropriate management of construction activities to effectively minimise and mitigate harm to Suffolk’s communities, environment, and tourism.

Whilst the Council will be making a formal response to the non-statutory consultation on the Norwich to Tilbury overhead line project (formerly East Anglia Green) in due course, through this motion we re-state publicly, on behalf of our communities, our objection to the proposed pylon line, and our strong preference for an integrated offshore approach.

We therefore agree that the Chair of the Council will write to the relevant government minister to communicate these objections.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 7.35 pm.

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Chair