

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **BABERGH CABINET** held in the Mead Room (Rose) - Endeavour House on Tuesday, 7 November 2023

PRESENT:

Councillors:	Jessie Carter	Sallie Davies
	Derek Davis	Alastair McCraw
	Daniel Potter	Deborah Saw
	John Ward	Helen Davies

In attendance:

Councillor(s): Mary McLaren

Officers:

- Chief Executive (AC)
- Deputy Chief Executive (KN)
- Director – Planning and Building Control (TB)
- Director - Economic Growth & Climate Change (FD)
- Director - Housing (DF)
- Corporate Manager - Governance & Civic Office, Deputy Monitoring Officer (JR)
- Corporate Manager - Strategic Policy (JH)
- Corporate Manager - Internal Audit, Risk and Data Protection (Deputy Monitoring Officer) (JS)
- Assistant Manager – Governance (HH)

Apologies:

David Busby (Chair)

43 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

None received.

44 BCA/23/22 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3 OCTOBER 2023

It was **RESOLVED: -**

That with the following amendment the minutes of the meeting held on the 3 October be confirmed as a correct record of the meeting:

To add Councillor Mary McLaren to the attendance list.

45 TO RECEIVE NOTIFICATION OF PETITIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COUNCIL'S PETITION SCHEME

None received.

46 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS

None received.

47 MATTERS REFERRED BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY OR JOINT AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEES

There were no matters referred from the Overview and Scrutiny or the Joint Audit and Standards Committees.

48 FORTHCOMING DECISIONS LIST

There were no comments made for the Forthcoming Decisions List.

49 BCA/23/23 BUILDING SERVICES TRANSFORMATION

49.1 The Chair, Councillor John Ward, invited the Cabinet Member for Housing to introduce the report.

49.2 Councillor Jessie Carter introduced the report and proposed the recommendation, as detailed in the report.

49.3 Councillor Derek Davis seconded the recommendation.

49.4 Councillor Sallie Davies queried whether additional funding would clear the back log of repairs and the Cabinet Member for Housing confirmed that it would and that the Housing team had already stated looking at the housing stock.

49.5 The Director for Housing added that the target for the stock condition survey had been to complete 50% by next year, however, the team was now working towards completing 100% of surveyed properties by next year.

49.6 Councillor Derek Davis stated the Council was using reserves for this year and question how long the Director for Housing anticipated, it would take to get this work done. In addition, Councillor Davis queried how resources would be provided for the future.

49.7 The Director for Housing provided details of how the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) would be managed including that a full data sift would be undertaken, as some of date was inaccurate. Up to date data would be more efficient and would save money. Job management would allow the Housing team to have the right skills and knowledge and work efficiently thus saving money to balance the HRA. Further discussion would be undertaken with the Portfolio Holder for Housing to ensure that there was a balance budget in the HRA business plan.

49.8 Councillor Alastair McCraw referred to the report and that this was a two-year

programme, drawing on reserves and he questioned how funding the programme would be undertaken going forward. The Director for Housing responded that the funding reserves for the programme were for this year. However, work was being undertaken to work towards a balanced budget for next year and confirmed that the HRA was still in a strong position.

- 49.9 Councillor Deborah Saw queried how the Council would track contractors' performance against tasks, and whether it was difficult to find contractors with the right price point. The Director for Housing responded that the process started with a contract that included key performance indicators (KPI), this had not been included before, but was now. Contract managers could then hold the contractors to task and if they were not performing to the KPIs, the contract would be terminated. In the past, the issues had been contract management and getting the right contractor to undertake the work. The transformation work was addressing these issues.
- 49.10 Councillor Daniel Potter referred to paragraph 1.10 in the report and enquired how many outstanding repairs there are for the first year.
- 49.11 The Director for Housing detailed that there were currently slightly more than 2000 cases. However, this number was likely to be reduced, as the tables given to the operatives were not fit for purpose, and jobs had not been closed off when finished. Officer was working through the job lists now and by sending the oldest jobs and high risk works to contractors, the list had been reduced by one third. The Repairs Service was a send and mend service, and contractors would be deployed to undertake other repairs. In addition, new tables were on order to ensure that operatives were working efficiently.
- 49.12 Councillor Alastair McCraw referred to risk management in section 5 of the report and that he had identified four key risks. Cllr McCraw asked how the Council would monitor these risks and how these risks could be escalated and deescalated. Councillor McCraw requested that Cabinet had an active role in monitoring these high risks. The Director for Housing responded that the Council held an operational risk register for Building Services in addition to the Corporate Risk Registers.
- 49.13 The Director for Housing responded to questions from other Members attending the meeting including that although there was a number of outstanding repairs, there were enough resources to respond to emergencies. In addition, there existed a number of options for emergency accommodation including the Council's own temporary accommodation. When addressing specific estates which required repairs, a whole estate approach could be financially more viable for the Council and the stock survey would identify those estates.
- 49.14 During the debate Councillor Derek Davis stated that at the beginning of this administration he had been uncertain of the Council's ability to manage the Building Services, however he had received responses from tenants, who had been full of praise for contractors. He stated that there was now better planning in terms of contractors, and he could see tangible results already.

49.15 Councillor John Ward stated that here was a comprehensive Asset and Stock register, and that data was crucial, as there were some long standing issues, which had to be addressed.

49.16 Councillor Alastair McCraw drew Members attention to paragraph 4.7 and that these were areas that were being addressed to ensure that long-term improvements were sustainable.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

That Babergh Cabinet agreed to the release of £943k from reserves to expedite the completion of outstanding repairs and enable delivery of the next phase of the Building Services Transformation and Improvement Programmes.

REASON FOR DECISION

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

2.2 *Delay the request for release of the required resources until February 2024, when the HRA budget for 2024/25 is agreed* – This option is not recommended because it would slow down improvements to the quality of tenants' homes by taking significantly longer to clear outstanding repairs, while also risking greater deterioration of the Council's housing assets. A delay in the release of resources to deliver long term change would mean losing several months of lead in time required for commissioning of contracts and staff recruitment; in turn this would delay positive impacts for tenants and their homes.

2.3 *Do nothing* - This option is not recommended because it would not help to clear the backlog of outstanding repairs to tenants' homes. In addition, the more fundamental, long term transformational improvements to service provision referred to above could not be taken forward because these also require additional resource.

Any Declarations of Interests Declared: None

Any Dispensation Granted: None

50 BCA/23/24 POTENTIAL LOCAL LISTED BUILDING CONSENT ORDER FOR INSTALLING ENERGY EFFICIENCY MEASURES

50.1 The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for People and Places to introduce the report.

50.2 Councillor Deborah Saw introduced the report and proposed the recommendation as detailed in the report, which was seconded by Councillor Jessie Carter.

50.3 During the debate Councillor Deborah Saw stated that this was an innovative

proposal and that no other rural authorities had done this before. This was not a free for all and there would be standards to adhere to as heritage buildings required sensible measures. Technology had come a long way and could be used to protect these building, as those properties build pre 1990s had the biggest carbon emissions.

- 50.4 Councillor John Ward stated that there was a lot that could be done in listed buildings to make them more energy efficient and cheaper to live in and still maintain the fabric of the buildings.
- 50.5 Councillor Derek Davis queries if the consultation included grade 1 listed buildings and how this consultation would be delivered.
- 50.6 The Director for Planning and Building Control advised that this did not include grade one listed buildings. Individual property owners would not be contacted, as there were over 3000 properties across the two districts, and this was not an effective way of approaching this consultation. Instead, the consultation would be mediated through social media, parish and town councils and notices on notice boards. The Listed Building Owners club would also be contacted to encourage their members to respond the consultation. The Director for Planning and Building Control detailed the process for the Building Consent Order Consultation and that there was a genuine desire to balance sensitively care in relation to statutory requirement to conserve heritage with the need to address the climate emergency. Officers were prepared to receive different views from property owners of listed buildings, and these would have to be handed carefully to give confidence for owners to partake in the consultation.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

That Cabinet approved to commence a seven-week period of consultation, commencing 10th November 2023 and ending 29th December 2023, on the proposed scope and conditions of a Local Listed Building Consent Order.

REASON FOR DECISION

A Local Listed Building Consent Order would make it easier for the owners of designated heritage assets to implement energy efficiency or other improvements to their buildings, in line with the Council's commitment to reach its net zero carbon commitments by 2030. Such improvements would also be beneficial to the buildings, in improving resilience to climate change.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

- 2.1 The first option is to continue relying on the traditional Listed Building Consent application process. Whilst this approach has been and remains the standard, feedback from councillors and the public suggests that it is perceived as inefficient and burdensome in terms of time and cost. Many works may of themselves be unobjectionable and therefore a streamlined

approach would be advantageous in those circumstances.

- 2.2 The second option involves preparing for a seven-week consultation period to explore the feasibility and appropriateness of implementing a LLBCO. It is crucial to clarify that initiating this consultation does not automatically imply that such an Order will be enacted. Rather, the consultation aims to gather opinions on the LLBCO as a potential tool for achieving our carbon neutrality goals and assisting homeowners in making energy-efficient upgrades and other improvements to their properties. In that regard the benefits are various and would include energy efficiency and cost savings, as well as protecting these important historic buildings from the worst effects of climate change.
- 2.3 Given the district's rich heritage landscape, characterised by a diverse range of assets varying in age and significance, a prudent approach may involve piloting the LLBCO in a specific parish, village, or Conservation Area initially. This would allow for a more controlled evaluation of the Order's impact recognising that there may not be a 'one size fits all' solution.
- 2.4 The adoption of a LLBCO would signal the Council's ambition to meet its net zero carbon targets, particularly given the high proportion of listed buildings within the district. The Order would delineate explicit conditions aimed at minimising harm to affected heritage assets such that the works in question would be clearly and convincingly justified. Legal requirements mandate the annual review and monitoring of the LLBCO, providing an opportunity to assess effectiveness and make necessary adjustments. Should the Order result in unintended negative consequences for our historic buildings, options to amend or rescind it are available. Furthermore, this approach offers the advantage of co-designing the LLBCO details with external organisations and the community, thereby ensuring that the policy is shaped in a manner that addresses concerns related to the protection of listed buildings.

Any Declarations of Interests Declared: None

Any Dispensation Granted: None

51 BCA/23/25 HEALTH BEHAVIOURS PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

- 51.1 The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for People and Places to introduce the report.
- 51.2 Councillor Deborah Saw introduced the report, which was for noting.
- 51.3 Councillor Ward queried whether it would still be possible to get referrals via a GP and the Interim Director for Communities and Wellbeing confirmed this and that residents could also self-refer to the services through the website, which acted as a portal.
- 51.4 Counsellor Jesse Carter queried if there was a way to monitor the referrals, the uptake of services and when clients did not follow through on their

respective referrals. In addition, would it be possible to identify the reasons and find alternative offers instead.

- 51.5 The Interim Director for Communities and Wellbeing responded that Public Health would be capturing the data for this service to identify areas for improvement, and he detailed the programme structure.
- 51.6 Councillor Alastair McCraw queried the funding for the programme and the interim Director for Communities and Wellbeing advised that the external funding came from Public Health, as it was a commissioned service as partnership agreement.
- 51.7 Councillor Derek Davies questioned how the Healthy Behaviours service fitted with the Council's Strategy and the Interim Director for Communities and Wellbeing responded that the Service was building on what was currently provided, physical activities was already being delivered. There was an inherent synergy linking to existing services, supplement what was already in place. This was a very focused approach in term of referrals. The One Life Suffolk came to an end and the Council was now delivering these services instead.
- 51.8 Councillor Daniel Porter referred to the Governance arrangement on page 40 of the report and how the Partnership would set itself up.
- 51.9 The Interim Director for Communities and Wellbeing responded that this had yet to be confirmed and would provide a response outside of the meeting.
- 51.10 In response to questions from other Members attending the meeting, the Interim Director for Communities and Wellbeing clarified that there had been some issues around closing the contract with the previous organisation, making the availability of delivery date challenging. Going forward delivery checks were included in the governance arrangements on page 50 of the report.
- 51.11 The Cabinet Member for People and Place, Councillor Deborah Saw stated that the Healthy Behaviour service had received around 200 referrals that had not been dealt with by the previous organisation.
- 51.12 During the debate Councillor Daniel Potter stated that he liked the delivery model, as it had options for face to face and telephone contact too and that in post covid times the timing for this service was crucial.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

To note the report and the Healthy Behaviours Partnership Agreement.

REASON FOR DECISION

So that Cabinet is updated on progress made with the partnership and development of a new Feel-Good Suffolk Healthy Behaviours offer for Suffolk and understands the principles by which the partnership will operate and its key objectives to co-produce, deliver, and support the Healthy Behaviours offer for Suffolk, including:

- (a) Reducing smoking prevalence.
- (b) Reducing inactivity; and
- (c) Reducing the number of adults who are overweight or obese

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None

Any Declarations of Interests Declared: None

Any Dispensation Granted: None

The business of the meeting was concluded at 5:13 pm.

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Chair