

## Joint Scrutiny Committee Report

### 1. Joint Scrutiny Committee Meeting of 6 December 2016 (Chaired by Mark Newman – Babergh District Council)

A summary of key items follows - for full details of all the discussions please see the reports and the minutes.

**1.1 Community Engagement:** In order to best achieve the councils' objectives, effective engagement with local communities and stakeholders is vital. This item is the start of looking at the process of how to improve this and get the best possible engagement.

**1.2** Members of the committee agreed the area of housing tenants demonstrated good engagement and discussed members' role in engagement, business needs, channel access, engaging on changes to services, liaison with Parish Councils and communication.

**1.3** It was agreed to discuss two or more council services at the next meeting and call external partners to give evidence on how engagement in these areas could be best undertaken.

**1.4 Neighbourhood Plans:** The Committee considered which element of the neighbourhood plans process needed additional support or improvement. And this was then to be reviewed at the next meeting.

**1.5** Members discussed with officers some of the key aspects of neighbourhood plans, such as the legal weight a neighbourhood plan has, the Local Plan and the principles of development, in order to understand better the support needed.

**1.6** Questions were asked regarding whether the absence of a Local Plan hindered the development of Neighbourhood Plans, the awareness of the financial benefits of the Community Infrastructure Levy, the amount of staffing needed to support Parishes and the general complexity of producing a neighbourhood plan.

**1.7** Officers advised on the importance of parishes embracing neighbourhood plans and members felt further investigation should be made into the level and type of support needed for community groups.

**1.8** It was agreed to invite several parishes to the next Committee meeting to give evidence – including one that had successfully completed a plan, one that was in the process and one that had decided not to undertake one – in order to get the widest range of opinions.

**1.9 Planning Appeals:** Following up from the previous Committee meeting, members heard from officers in relation to appeals and the impact on the councils that changes in Government's definition of quality (of decisions) may have.

**1.10** After some discussion, including a vote on a proposal, it was felt that greater clarity was needed and that this matter should be followed up, via the minutes, with the Executive and Strategy Committees.

**1.11 Next meeting:** The meeting on 15 February 2017 will be held at Needham and chaired by Councillor Rachel Eburne . The agenda includes the next stage in the review of the councils' approach to community engagement; a report on the councils' support for Neighbourhood Plans and a scoping review of the Open for Business initiative.

Councillor Rachel Eburne  
Joint Chair (Mid Suffolk)