

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNCIL OFFICES, CORKS LANE, HADLEIGH ON WEDNESDAY, 19 APRIL 2017

PRESENT: Mark Newman – Chairman

Peter Burgoyne	James Caston
Rachel Eburne	Alan Ferguson
Lavinia Hadingham	Bryn Hurren
Wendy Marchant	Fenella Swan
Kevin Welsby	

The following Members were unable to be present:

Barry Gasper, Elizabeth Gibson-Harries, Lesley Mayes and John Nunn.

In attendance:

Gerard Brewster  
Julie Flatman  
Margaret Maybury

20 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None declared.

21 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

**RESOLVED**

**That the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2017 be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to the list of those present being amended as follows:-**

**BABERGH**

**Delete the name of Margaret Maybury  
Add the name of Alan Ferguson**

**MID SUFFOLK**

**Correct the spelling of 'Dereck' Osborne to read 'Derek' Osborne.**

22 PETITIONS

None received.

23 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC

None received.

24 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS

None received.

25 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Liz Perryman, Chairman, and Gerry Crease, Secretary, of the Tenants Forum together with Oliver Paul from Suffolk Food Hall addressed the meeting about their experiences of how the Councils have engaged with them or their groups. The speakers responded to Councillors' questions on various aspects and the Tenants Forum representatives gave specific examples of poor communication experienced by some tenants, which in some instances, such as re-scheduling the timing of rent arrears letters, had led to improvements in the way in which officers communicated with tenants. Mr Paul gave generally positive feedback, particularly in relation to Open for Business, tourism support and environmental health advice, both from his own personal experience and that of the various groups with which he is involved on the Shotley peninsula. However, he also expressed some concerns about communication, particularly regarding email usage. The Chairman on behalf of the Committee thanked the speakers for their frank and informative contributions.

The main areas of concern raised at the meeting were summarised as relating to the following:-

- Asking officers to ensure they are respectful in their dealings with all customers
- A pragmatic approach where this will improve response times
- Speed of all forms of communication to be improved – Councillors were aware that the availability of a variety of communication methods was the preferred option, including the ability to talk to officers instead of relying on time-consuming emails
- Some confusion caused by unclear job titles, departmental descriptions
- Need for a cultural change in some areas of the organisation
- A recognition that the positive message about the Councils' move to Endeavour House had not been communicated as effectively to our public as had been hoped.

Mike Evans, Strategic Director, assured the Committee that he would pursue the concerns raised at the meeting with the Senior Leadership Team.

**RESOLVED**

**That the Senior Leadership Team be asked to take into account the feedback from the Community Engagement exercise as presented to the meeting, including the particular aspects summarised above.**

## **RESOLVED**

**That the recommendations listed in 10.3 of Paper JSC/16/16 be supported and that SLT reports back to this Committee or its successor(s) in 6 months regarding those recommendations.**

### **26      DISABLED ADAPTATIONS TO PROPERTIES**

The Corporate Managers for Safer Communities (Jonathan Seed) and Property Services (Heather Worton) gave an oral update on the areas of delayed transfer of care where the Councils can make an impact.

The conclusion was that Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils are not contributing to delayed transfer of care but are working proactively with the various agencies, specifically to assist transfers by prioritising adaptations to Council properties to enable patients to return home. More generally, officers are working to improve transfer of care by collaboration with, and stronger linkages to, relevant agencies; supporting initiatives for flexible and innovative ways of working to improve response and to seek early notification of clinician requirements.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the current position as reported to the meeting be noted.**

### **27      PAPER JSC/16/16 - REPORT FROM THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP SET UP TO LOOK AT NEIGHBOUR PLAN SUPPORT BY THE COUNCILS**

Bryn Hurren introduced the Task Group's report (Paper JSC/16/16) and its five recommendations as set out in the report. Paul Harrison, Heritage Enabling Officer responded to Councillors' questions about various matters including the effect of differing periods of housing land supply on an adopted plan.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the recommendations listed in paragraph 10.3 of Paper JSC/16/16 be supported and that the Senior Leadership Team reports back to this Committee or its successor(s) in six months' time regarding those recommendations.**

### **28      PAPER JSC/17/16 - DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT OF THE JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2016/17**

Councillors had before them a draft annual report attached to Paper JSC/17/16.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the draft document attached as Appendix 1 to Paper JSC/17/16 be adopted as the Joint Scrutiny Committee Annual Report for 2016/17 and submitted to the Annual Council meetings in May 2017 subject to:**

**(a) the following amendments to add / change wording as shown in italics:-**

- 10.5 – ... no 2017/18 Work Plan *'due to changes to governance'*
- 10.8 and 10.9 - ... to scrutinise *'the approach to'* the HRA etc and 2015/16 to read *'2016/17'*
- Page 13 – 'Planning Appeals – proposal to set up a Working Group *'was not taken forward'*

**and**

**(b) the approval of the Joint Chairs of the Committee to the inclusion of items relevant to this meeting (paragraph 10.2 of Paper JSC/17/16 refers).**

At the conclusion of this meeting, the last in its current format, Mark Newman, Babergh Joint Scrutiny Committee Chairman thanked Councillor Eburne, Committee members and officers for their support, and his comments were echoed by the Mid Suffolk Joint Chairman, Rachel Eburne.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 7.05 p.m.

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Chairman