

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BABERGH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNCIL OFFICES, CORKS LANE, HADLEIGH ON MONDAY, 19 JUNE 2017

PRESENT: Barry Gasper (Chairman)

Peter Burgoyne
Alastair McCraw
Fenella Swan

Bryn Hurren
John Nunn

The following Members were unable to be present:

Clive Arthey, Melanie Barrett and Kathryn Grandon.

1 SUBSTITUTES

It was noted that in accordance with Committee and Sub-Committee Procedure Rule No 20, substitutes were in attendance as follows:-

John Nunn (substituting for Clive Arthey)
Fenella Swan (substituting for Kathryn Grandon)

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None received.

3 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meetings of the Babergh Scrutiny Committee and the Joint Scrutiny Committee held on 22 March 2017 and 19 April 2017 respectively be confirmed and signed as correct records.

4 PETITIONS

None received.

5 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC

None received.

6 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS

None received.

7 WAY OF WORKING FOR THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Ben Staines, Project and Research Officer, gave a presentation on the principles and roles through which the Committee might be expecting to work.

Members were aware of the main elements -

- To provide a 'Critical Friend' challenge to hold the executive to account in a constructive, non-aggressive manner.
- To enable the voice and concerns of the public to be heard, using innovative consultation and communication methods to achieve maximum feedback
- Independent-minded Councillors operating an a-political approach
- To drive improvements

to be exercised through the key areas of Pre-Scrutiny of items identified on the Forthcoming Decisions List, scrutiny of specific Service areas and Projects, Joint Scrutiny, both with Mid Suffolk and other agencies and Call-in of decisions made by the Cabinet.

Members were aware that Call-ins under the procedures as set out in the Constitution could involve additional meetings. The importance of scoping topics for the Forward Plan was recognised, together with identifying the method which would be most appropriate – for example, setting up a Task and Finish Group, commissioning an officer report or tasking an individual member of the Committee to research a topic in detail before reporting to the Committee or a sub group.

The Chairman emphasised the need to be proactive and cited his recent discussions with Katherine Steel around better understanding of the assumptions underlying the Budget process. He also referred to arrangements for Cabinet Members to attend Overview and Scrutiny meetings on a regular basis, as well as for specific items, which would be set up in liaison with the Leader of the Council. The need for appropriate links with the Joint Audit and Standards Committee to avoid duplication was also recognised, and in this connection Members were aware that Councillor McCraw sits on the Joint Audit and Standards Committee as well as Overview and Scrutiny.

Members noted the position.

8 BOS/17/3 - SCRUTINY FORWARD PLAN FOR 2017/18

Members had before them Paper BOS/17/3 which listed the outcomes to date from decisions and recommendations made by the Joint Scrutiny Committee, together with the Forthcoming Decisions List. A discussion then ensued through which Members identified items which they wished to be included in the Scrutiny Forward Plan 2017/18, together with other items which required further consideration before deciding whether to add them to the Plan. Members were advised that a draft Forward Plan would be presented to the next meeting of the Committee for further deliberation on its content and timings.

In the meantime, officers confirmed that Member queries regarding matters raised including terminology / format of the Forthcoming Decisions List; Assets and Investment Business Case; Emergency Planning / Business Continuity would be addressed outside the meeting and reported back where necessary.

RESOLVED

(1) That the following items be included in the Scrutiny Forward Plan:-

- **Regular / annual items eg Budget scrutiny; external funding and grants; outturns**
- **BMBS – after a suitable period of operation**
- **Pre-Application Planning Service – to be scoped after 3 months from introduction on 1 July, and reviewed after six months**
- **CIL**
- **Costs of move to Endeavour House – 3 months after completion of move**
- **Homeless / Bed and Breakfast Accommodation Review**

(2) That the following items be the subject of further consideration as possible areas for scrutiny;-

- **Fuel poverty – whether further action is needed at this stage, in the light of it being incorporated in a Suffolk-wide strategy**
- **Home ownership review**
- **Leisure Strategy – when its timetabling in the Forthcoming Decisions List is known**

9 TRAINING FOR MEMBERS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND OFFICERS SUPPORTING THE COMMITTEE

Ben Staines – Project and Research Officer outlined the proposed training offered by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, which could include the following topics:-

- Role descriptions for Councillors and officers
- Rights of Councillors to seek information
- Powers to support change
- Engagement

Further details would be circulated in due course.

10 BOS/17/4 - THE HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT 30 YEAR BUSINESS AND FINANCE PLAN UPDATE 2017

Jan Osborne - Cabinet Member for Housing introduced this item before handing over to Kevin Jones who referred to the main updates and, together with Ian Winslet – Investment and Development Consultant, answered Members' questions.

Members queried the projected figures for Council House sales and the basis on which the financial information in the Business Plan had been calculated. Officers explained that the Chartered Institute of Housing model had been used and that it provided a stress tested verification process – further information about the model could be provided outside the meeting. In relation to forthcoming Government Regulations, including those anticipated on the high value asset levy, it was confirmed that these would be reflected in the Business Case.

Members were aware of the situation regarding the BMBS element of the Plan and the work that was on-going to refine the data and assumptions on which the original forecasts had been based – as referred to in Minute No 8 above, scrutiny of the Service is being scheduled in the Committee’s Forward Plan, with the likely timings for scoping and review being February 2018 and March 2018 respectively.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET AND COUNCIL

That the updated 30 year HRA Business and Financial Plan (Appendix A to Paper BOS/17/4) be approved.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 11.45 a.m.

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Chairman