

**9<sup>th</sup> Annual iESE Awards 2018**  
***Celebrating public sector innovation and transformation***

**DATE: Tuesday, 6<sup>th</sup> March 2018 at Church House, Westminster, London**  
 The **deadline for submission is FRIDAY, 26<sup>th</sup> January 2018**

*For help completing this Nomination Form please read the notes section at the end of this document*

<b>Award</b> (See Note 1)	7. Innovation Award 2. Reinventing Local Services 3. Working Together	
<b>Organisation</b> (See Note 2)	Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils	
<b>Nominee</b> (See Note 3)		
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<b>One paragraph overview of your nomination (no more than 100 words).</b> This text will be used in the Awards Nominations Shortlist document, should you be shortlisted for an award by the judges.		
<p>Babergh &amp; Mid Suffolk District Councils are pioneering the way the public sector works together in a fully integrated way.</p> <p>With a shared Chief Executive and joint workforce, the Councils have become the first districts nationally to move to a joint headquarters and democratic base outside of the areas they serve. Doing so, and using agile working, has revolutionised the way the Councils work - creating a single Suffolk 'public service hub', with the County Council and two CCGs located in the same building.</p> <p>To support these improvements, a revised Public Access Strategy was implemented; making it quicker, easier, and more convenient for residents to contact and engage with Babergh &amp; Mid Suffolk.</p>		
<b>Overview of your nomination – maximum 2000 words</b> (See Note 4)		
<p>The districts of Babergh and Mid Suffolk form the heart of Suffolk and cover an area of over 1,400 square kilometres. They are predominantly rural in nature, with a number of market towns. Mid Suffolk was recently identified as the 3rd happiest district in England, based on the ONS's headline estimates of personal well-being. According to growth forecasts, the population in Babergh will grow by 10% to 96,400 and that of Mid Suffolk by 20% to 116,700 by 2035. The highest level of increase will be those aged over 65 (an increase of 40%) and by 2025 the number of people aged over 85 is expected to double. To enhance the skills and knowledge of the future workforce in Suffolk, the Councils are investing with their partners to improve educational attainment, with more focus on social mobility.</p> <p>Facing the challenges of the economic downturn, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils were at the forefront in the new forms of collaborative working. Since 2011 the two Councils have adopted shared approaches and priorities, with a single workforce supporting innovative new ways of working. Major milestones in the past six years include:</p> <p>2011 Appointment of a shared Chief Executive for both Councils</p>		

2013 A single Joint Strategic Plan and Vision that identified shared challenges and solutions (refreshed and reconfirmed in 2016).

2013 The integration of two Councils' staff into one fully integrated workforce saving £2m per annum.

2016 The two Councils adopted a Joint Public Access Strategy (JPAS)

2017 Both Councils adopted the new Leader/Cabinet governance model.

2017 Two new 'One Stop Shop' customer service points were opened in each district.

2017 The two Councils moved into a shared Headquarters at Endeavour House, Ipswich.

In the last six years, the Councils have achieved £13m of cumulative savings. There is now a shared Joint Strategic Plan and outcome-based approach which marks a fundamental shift for both Councils.

The JPAS takes a whole system approach, it celebrates the collaborative commitments with partners enabling early intervention, in doing so this prevents the need for more expensive outcomes which help to reduce demand within the system. It reflects the authenticity of the relationships which the Councils have with their communities to support them to do what they need, whether to create a neighbourhood plan, to deliver much needed affordable homes for local people or to help them preserve and enhance local assets at risk of closing. Together with developing self-service options, this approach allows the Councils to focus more attention on those communities that really need our help.

The Councils are delivering the aims of the JPAS (in support of the outcomes in the Joint Strategic Plan) and have created a enabled, efficient, flexible, agile, innovative, collaborative, and accessible staffing culture.

Delivering this approach and completing such an ambitious and complex transformation to both Councils' ways of working included:

- Assessing different customer segments and how the Councils tailor their offer to give people what they value (which varies according to segment) and focusing resources towards those in need and the vulnerable.
- Developing a customer focussed culture and using this to drive efficiency and productivity.
- Making things 'easier' for both customers and staff.
- Delivering what the public value from the Councils rather than what is not seen as important by them.
- Utilising the power of data, technology and insight through closer collaboration with our ICT partners at Suffolk County Council.
- Implementing and driving consistency in the way the Councils work, requiring a move away from old ways of working to a new operating model.
- Identifying efficiencies and improvements by developing and using a consistent change methodology that supports agile.
- Making system wide interventions across the public sector that reduce cost and deliver better, more targeted, outcomes for our customers.

This strategic approach concentrated on five key access channels, each remaining available for the full term of the strategy. However, through deepening insight into customer capability and behaviour, and supporting communities to support themselves, the Councils are shifting towards more productive channels by stimulating customer interest in easier ways of doing business with the Councils.

These channels are developed based on a whole Suffolk System so that over time complexity about 'who does what' for the customer is reduced. These access channels are:

## **Face to Face**

The creation of a new 'One Stop' Customer Service Point within each district to provide facilities for staff and Councillors to meet the public was paramount to the delivery of the JPAS following the decision to move both Councils headquarters to a shared site which was outside the boundaries of both districts. The Stowmarket site also houses the call centre for both districts. Support from both Leaders of the two Councils was unanimous:

*"From day one of this important project we have been clear that for those residents who need it face to face contact will remain sacrosanct. Our work to introduce modern and friendly digital services will ensure communicating with the Councils is easier and more cost effective than ever. We do remain passionate though about providing walk in advice and guidance. That's why we're delighted that we will have a continued presence at the heart of our communities"* Mrs Jennie Jenkins, previously leader of Babergh District Council.

*"We will be delivering modern and customer friendly digital services to our local residents, many of whom will already be using online services on a regular basis for their banking and their shopping. We have made the decision to end the expensive and inefficient maintenance of two headquarters, but we also recognise the need to continue to have customer service points in the communities we serve."* Councillor Nick Gowrley, leader of Mid Suffolk District Council.

Continuing to develop innovative collaboration Babergh District Council Customer Service Point is located in Sudbury Town Hall and is manned by Sudbury Town Council staff who have received training and support from a number of Council staff during the initial opening period this collaboration will continue and develop over time. This provides customers with a 'One Stop Shop' for assistance and contact with all Town, District, and County services.

## **Telephone**

Previously the telephone system used by both Councils included a plethora of numbers causing confusion and frustration for the customers. To streamline the process and ensure the cost of making a call was charged at a local rate, the Councils moved to one phone number which is channelled exclusively through the Contact Centre. This has given the Councils a greater understanding of call handling times, abandonment rates, types of enquiry and the effectiveness of transfers to other parts of the business. Early indications are that progress has been made in reducing the average time to answer calls, and significantly reducing the abandonment rate by 27% comparing April – June 2017 to September - November 2017.

## **Email**

The creation of a single email address for both Councils which are received in the Contact Centre has enabled the service to be improved.

## **Online – Digital Services**

The two Council websites have also been merged to create one clearer, simpler site that improves access from mobile and tablets to existing online services and information that the Councils have. This is an on-going project with further developments in the pipeline.

## **Webchat and SMS**

This will become the final access channel to be developed in the future.

Arthur Charvonia, Chief Executive of Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, said: *“We aim to make any contact our residents have with the councils as swift and simple as possible.*

*“Our new website will ensure that residents can access any service, at any time, from anywhere, while our new phone number will cut down the amount of time callers spend on hold and put residents in touch with the officers they need to speak to. We want everyone in our district to be able to contact us quickly and easily and these new channels make sure that goal becomes a reality.”*

Alongside the Public Access Strategy, a review was commissioned on the location of the two Council offices. Following consultation, the decision was taken to have a single location for the integrated workforce. Councillors decided the best option was to move to Endeavour House in Ipswich. This was an ambitious programme involving Councillors and Officers across both Councils working in conjunction with workstream leads from Human Resources, Procurement, Property, Finance, ICT and Information Management, Facilities Management, Governance and Assurance and Communications. As well as working closely with Union Representatives both on the preparation and implementation of the move; and also bringing in new and updated policies for an integrated workforce, with a new Agile Working and Home Enabled Policy.

Below is an indication of the work involved in delivering this major project.

In order to move both Councils into new accommodation at Endeavour House, two new Customer Service Points (as above) and a network of ‘Touchdown points’ were also developed. These are fitted with fully functioning IT equipment and Wi-Fi enabling staff to work in an agile approach across the districts. The Touchdown points are deliberately located within a seven-mile radius from each other across both districts.

All staff have received IT bundles and communication technology which enables agile working.

The philosophy that “Work is something we do, not somewhere we go – it is an activity not a place” has been adopted by staff across the organisations, examples of agile working taking place include:

- Spending a lot of time with residents and communities in the ‘field’
- Working from home on either a frequent or occasional basis
- Using the same office nearly every day, but using different workstations
- Making use of workspaces in partner organisations’ offices or accessing the Touchdown points
- Going to where the work is and working with the people you need to liaise with
- The removal of core working hours

Jointly occupying premises with Suffolk County Council and Clinical Commissioning Groups has provided opportunities to work in collaboration with a number of partners and to further develop links already built across the public sector in Suffolk. A main contributor to this was the IT infrastructure resource required to move existing servers and IT resources across to the one system. However, the main priorities across this project were the welfare of the staff and the business continuity for our communities. These will be covered in more detail in the following sections.

#### **How has the initiative demonstrated innovation? – maximum 1000 words**

(See Note 5)

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils had been considering their headquarters accommodation options since the integration of the Councils workforce began in 2013. As a result of work undertaken as part of the JPAS the opportunity to reconsider the location for the headquarters was discussed raising the following recommendations:

- That the status quo was not an option for accommodation and the occupation of both buildings resulted in inefficiencies and costs; and was a block to full integration, and collaboration.

- Future savings and costs were important factors, but more important was the quality of the arrangements for the public, staff, Councillors, and partners.
- Future accommodation must be able to support agile working, team working and collaborative working. There was a strong desire to move on from a traditional local government style.

There were 4 options considered. Appraisals were undertaken for financial viability, benefits, disadvantages, and risks. Each appraisal was compared against a baseline of the current shared running costs under the existing accommodation arrangements. A Socio and Economic Impact Assessment was also carried out in advance on the impact on both Needham Market and Hadleigh (the towns housing the current headquarters) in the event that a decision was made to vacate one or both of the existing offices.

Following Babergh and Mid Suffolk Council meetings the decision to share accommodation in Endeavour House was approved. This is an innovative move to a single location which is outside of the catchment areas of both Councils, and presently only the second such case across the country. Not only has it allowed the Councils to redeploy the workforce to a modern location, it affirms their approach to co-design and work alongside partners within the Suffolk system; the CCG, Public Health, ACS and the VCS with whom they have developed strong and successful partners and whose involvement and cooperation are key to all supporting system change.

This raised several unique issues, with a workforce of over 500 previously based in a variety of locations across both districts the logistics of streamlining these resources could have been seen as an onerous task. However, with the support of the Councillors, the Senior Leadership Team accepted and rose to the challenges.

For this project to be successful communication and ownership was paramount. A number of staff volunteered to be 'Change Champions'. The objective for the Change Champion Project was to provide an opportunity for colleagues across both organisations to become actively involved in finding new ways of tackling problems and dealing with critical issues of real importance to the communities served. The team of colleagues from all different parts of the organisations and with lots of varied expertise and experience explored issues and sought to find new solutions for shaping the new ways of working.

Embracing different ways of working has seen the greatest change undertaken and has had one of the most significant impacts on staff and Councillors. As part of this a policy and working Strategy for agile working was developed, this has led to staff reviewing their existing working pattern and exploring the use of more flexible working within the business needs.

For those who have relocated to Endeavour House a fully integrated hot desk system is in place encouraging staff to move more freely around the footplates, getting to know colleagues who may have been based at other offices. Taking the opportunity to share best practice and work collaboratively with other service areas more naturally.

Suffolk County Council provided IT services to both Councils hence the Senior Leadership Team seconded their Strategic Manager for IT to the project team as it was recognised that a major part of the success of the move to new headquarters was dependant on the redeployment of the IT servers and major IT projects to streamline the services provided to both staff and communities. Following this, alignment was made with SCC's ICT Strategy to make investment under four key themes, namely mobile working, cloud, big data, and social and collaboration tools.

Moving offices also raised the question of how to deal with the number of documents stored across the organisations, with the ambition to work in an agile way. A major project was undertaken to scan all paper records, a total of 1.2 million pages were scanned with 900 boxes of documents being placed into archive storage. To continue with the day to day post a

centralised corporate scanning team was created to scan all post as it arrives and email to teams directly.

Alongside the changes to staff working patterns the use of technology to remain in contact with colleagues regardless of location was also a major factor to the business continuity, with all staff and Councillors being issued with smartphones, laptops / tablets, headsets and Skype for Business. These changes have been well received with numerous teams now regularly using these resources to hold team meetings, and keep in touch with colleagues and Councillors who have chosen to work from home or at one of the touchdown points.

The health and wellbeing of officers and Councillors was also important to the Councils during the months to the run up to the move and subsequently since the move has taken place there have been many initiatives and support groups made available to all including mental and physical wellbeing – for example a lunchtime walking group has evolved and regularly meets to encourage staff to get know the surrounding areas of the new headquarters.

**Demonstrate how the initiative has had an impact – maximum 1000 words**

(See Note 6)

The move to Endeavour House has provided a platform from which to develop collaborative working within the Public Sector. The 'Public Sector Village' now includes Suffolk County Council, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, and NHS Choices – Ipswich, in one building; alongside Ipswich Borough Council and the Crown Court. This has not only been an advantage for our communities but is also enabling a closer working experience for staff, encouraging sharing of best practice as well as creating efficiencies within departments where collaborative working is essential.

*"Being responsible for Housing Strategy early on, I saw the benefits of sharing our new work space with key delivery partners such as Public Health, Adult and Community Services, Spatial Planning and Education, to name just a few higher tier authority functions"* Gill Cook, Housing Strategy.

As a result of the move to Endeavour House the Councils' former HQ buildings are being appraised for redevelopment. The Councils' are aiming to provide long term housing, social and economic benefits for the local communities and also generate financial return for the Councils'. £50,000 has been received from the One Public Estate Programme to support with feasibility work for options.

In mitigation of the effects of the economic downturn, the Councils will realise estimated savings of approx. £13m over a 10 year period. These efficiencies will enable us to do more for less and continue to provide high quality services to those that need them most.

As part of addressing the needs of the communities a new joint service called BMBS (Babergh and Mid Suffolk Building Services), was introduced within the districts providing all of the housing maintenance services to all of the Councils housing stock, dealing with the day-to-day repairs services, out-of-hours emergency services, empty or 'void' property repairs, and planned maintenance works for kitchens and bathrooms. This new service superseded the previous service which was delivered by both Council staff and external contractors.

The move has also involved a change in working practices for the Councillors, with the incorporation of new technology and the change of location.

An example of a further technological development within this new way of working includes the way customers can now self-serve within the planning department. A new system enables all customers to complete documents online and make payments within the same single transaction. This has been an ambitious project which has included the realignment of back office processes to ensure the finance and planning departments have all the information required. This system will also be developed further for use in other departments such as licensing.

**How has the initiative improved the skills and capabilities? – maximum 1000 words**

(See Note 7)

The major concern for both Councils was the health and wellbeing of staff. To assist in the smooth transition a number of initiatives have been undertaken, with staff being offered a range of leadership and management courses, as well as coaching and mental health first aider courses to key personnel. Over the past 5 months 52 members of staff have enrolled onto training courses which will enhance the culture of support and nurture within the organisations.

Following the staff consultation process a number of concerns were raised in relation to the move, the implications of agile working, and working in isolation. Collaboration with the Unions produced updated and new policies in relation to these and other HR issues. Further concerns raised included transport, travel arrangements and car parking. The Council again worked alongside the Unions and with the support of ACAS to reach a mutually acceptable solution.

With a greater emphasis on self-service for the communities it was essential that staff and Councillors were comfortable with the change. Briefings were provided to highlight the changes to telephony, and websites, as well as various training sessions on the use of Skype for Business, guides on making the most of the new smartphones, and understanding the capabilities of IT packages available to assist in the day to day life of everyone.

Alongside the improvements made in technology the move also raised challenges in connection with the storage and archive of documents which had be held for a number of years. A major initiative was undertaken to scan and save all documents necessitating new skills and training in the use of document management and information governance.

Having now set up new customer service points, the skills of front line staff have been enhanced to support customers to access Council services. Changes include for example enhanced knowledge around housing repairs, including the development of a diagnostic tool to request works, planning knowledge and support for the completion of forms on line etc, etc.

**What was the quality of delivery of the initiative? – maximum 1000 words**

(See Note 8)

A measure of the quality of delivery for the move is the success of business continuity for the communities that are served. As a pre-cursor to the move was a questionnaire for all directors and corporate managers in relation to the continued provision of all major front line services ; at which time there were no major issues envisaged.

*“As cabinet member for communities I personally found the move to Endeavour House swift and efficient one day I was talking to the team in Needham via email and the next day they were all at Endeavour House. I know any move to any new establishment can have teething problems, but I have only had positive feedback. The building is new and the facilities for staff and Councillors are fantastic. We have IT specialists on site and remotely to keep all staff connected wherever they are working. Officers within the team are working across the district so it really isn’t an issue where the base is situated, and it makes liaising with County staff so much easier and time efficient.”* Cllr Julie Flatman, Cabinet Member – Community Capacity Building & Engagement MSDC.

Risk management of such a large and diverse set of projects required robust risk management, this was managed through the programme board, which involved all managers of the workstreams, with regular updates and reviews taking place during the transition.

The improvements to IT services have been noticed across the board, with faster internet connection when working from Endeavour House, the accessibility in person of the helpdesk during office hours has also proven to be a benefit. Changes to the telephony, the use of Skype for Business for all incoming and outgoing calls, has also ensured that the potential for missed calls has been reduced with the use of desk static telephones becoming obsolete.

The housing and tenancy teams have made great strides in the use of digital technology. Reviewing previous working practices has highlighted that each Council worked in slightly different ways. Developing a new system has streamlined and enhanced the service offered, moving away from paper based time consuming processes to a fully automated electronic option.

*“Feedback has been very positive from tenants, they are able to complete everything they need without having to come into the office. Tenants can get all the information they need online well in advance including the tenancy agreement. The time saved by the housing team is significant. For example; 8 electronic sign-ups were completed in 1 hour 15 minutes whereas the old manual process would have taken over 10 hours. The new process has helped to free up time for the housing team allowing them to work closer with tenants. Officers can spend more time visiting tenants at the start of their tenancy and addressing any concerns or problems early on. Allocations Officers can simply send a template email rather than having to call tenants to arrange sign-up meetings.”* Luke Godley – Involvement and Improvement Support Officer.

For a number of staff the opportunity to redress work life balance through agile working has been an extremely positive step; no longer being restricted to core hours and having the flexibility to work across both districts at various locations, or alternatively if able to work from home has given staff the opportunity to tailor their working arrangements to fit more closely with the communities they serve. For example:

Staff within the Communities team have always had a flexible approach to working with customers, working to accommodate their needs. This has not changed since the move to new headquarters. However, the team recognised that the agile working, e.g. working from home has positively results in a change to their working pattern. A newly found advantage is better time management such as arranging bookings for full days within the communities, leaving from home rather than ad hoc appointments during office days. Varying hours to suit has given staff the freedom to start earlier when working from home, or starting their days later to cover evening appointments. This has had a positive impact on personal time and in some cases negated the need to work additional hours. These changes equate to savings in both staff time and travel costs, with a positive outcome for communities.

#### **How has the initiative made a contribution to the sector – maximum 1000 words**

(See Note 9)

With the phasing out of the Revenue Support Grant all Councils face the challenge of continuing to provide first class services to their customers whilst becoming financially self-sufficient.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have taken strides to ensure that they are at the forefront of innovative changes in the delivery of services in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Moving and consolidating all staff into shared premises with the County Council, the CCG and Public Health whilst enhancing the way in which we do business with our Communities has been bold and will provide the important platform to transform the way in which the whole ‘Suffolk system’ will meet its challenges and opportunities. Communities have been enabled to become more self-sufficient, tools have been provided for staff and Councillors to work from home, and resources used more effectively to support communities in the most appropriate way.

Ensuring that the Councils remain both resilient and effective within this economic climate is paramount and working collaboratively with partners and our communities allows us to plan strategically, making best use of people and resources. It also brings us much closer to what customers want and expect; better outcomes regardless of who is responsible for delivering the service. It is not only about systems and processes but also Babergh and Mid Suffolk’s willingness to invest to save, to tackle difficult decisions, to understand and utilise intelligence and insights, and to work honestly and authentically with our communities. This will help the Councils to get it right more often, and work more effectively and efficiently to impact positively on the financial health of the organisations. Through a number of working partnerships,



collaboration provides customers with an enhanced service, bringing together services to support, maintain and grow communities.

The use of digital technology across the organisations offers customers a swift, versatile way of communicating and paying for the services they require. Introducing new telephony across the organisations was a bold move, enabling enhanced communication with our customers. This has been supplemented by the use of Skype for Business making best use of our resources. Business continuity was maintained during the busy transition period.

It is imperative to remember however, that a physical presence within the districts is equally important. The introduction of 'touch down' points for staff, Councillors, and members of the public to use to arrange meetings, get advice and support or deal with issues face to face without being restricted to travelling to either public access point, is both beneficial and convenient.

Having undergone these significant changes there have already been many gains as described above for all concerned, these will continue to be realised and monitored. As you would expect Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils will not sit on their laurels, there are a number of further initiatives in the pipeline which will complement and continue to enhance the Customer Access Strategy and drive the Councils forward over the coming years.

A final quote from a member of staff;

*"Having some flexibility over where and when I work is something I really value here. I get the job done and with Skype I can keep in touch. It's so much more than what many other employers offer their staff."*

**Please provide a copy of your organisation's logo and at least 2 images that can be used on the evening**

Please check this box if you do not wish your information to be used as case study material for future iESE knowledge share events/publications. If used, all information will be attributed to the author organisation.

Please return forms by email to [enquiries@iese.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@iese.org.uk).

If you have any queries regarding the iESE 2018 Awards, please do not hesitate to contact Teresa Skinner on 07889 001266. You can download the form by visiting <http://awards.iese.org.uk/>.

## 1. Award Category

Your submission may be nominated for more than one award category. The judges reserve the right to move the submission to a category they deem more appropriate. The judges reserve the right to nominate the submission for additional award categories that they deem appropriate.

## 2. Organisation

The organisation / department or individual that is the subject of the submission.

## 3. Nominee

If different to the Organisation in note 2, the organisation that is making the nomination.

## 4. Overview of the nomination

A description including the purpose of the initiative, its start date and the current status.

## 5. Innovation

A description of why the initiative should be considered innovative. Has the approach taken to delivering the project been original? Will the initiative be deemed to have set new standards for local public service delivery and if so why? Are their best practice lessons from this initiative, if so what and how are they planned to be shared?

## 6. Impact

Has the initiative in question proven results? Are those results outstanding and do they exceed targets; for example in comparison to other similar initiatives by individuals, departments or organisations?

## 7. People

Has the organisation shown its commitment to its staff, the customer and its community? Has the initiative developed skills and created a platform for further transformation?

## 8. Quality of delivery

Was the project well conceived and planned as well as executed well and professionally? Have any big changes in working culture or customer service been implemented smoothly and without disruption?

## 9. Contribution to the Sector

How has the authority's work positively contributed to local government as a whole? Have they made significant progress in overcoming the issues facing local public services whether financial constraints, regeneration or in helping local businesses? Have they raised the bar in their service area? Will local government now be viewed more positively as a result of this initiative?

### Scoring key as follows:

- 0 No reference to the criteria at all
- 1 – 3 Mention of criteria somewhere in the nomination
- 4 – 6 Described at some length, with the relevant information
- 7 – 10 Evidence has been given that it has been done