

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

From: Head of Corporate Organisation	Report Number: N5
To: Council	Date of Meeting: 23 April 2013

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (COMMUNITY SERVICES) COMMITTEE

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 In accordance with the Constitution, the Committee must report annually to Council on its work during the last year and make recommendations for future work programmes and if appropriate, amended working methods.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny (Community Services) Committee's Annual Report for 2012/13 be noted.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 There have been no financial implications to date other than the costs of officer time and normal allowances for Members that are included in the budget.
- 3.2 Any development of the work of in-depth scrutiny, including items such as the payment of out of pocket expenses for expert and other witnesses, can be accommodated within existing budgets for 2013/14. The position for future years will be addressed through the Strategic Financial Planning Process, if that is necessary.

4. Risk Management

- 4.1 This report is an update on work completed during 2012/13. Risk management considerations for individual topics will be included in reports to the Committee as the year progresses.

5. Consultations

- 5.1 Members have been invited to identify any topics for consideration during 2013/14.

6. Equality Analysis

- 6.1 There are no equality implications with this report. Equality analysis considerations for individual topics will be included in reports to the Committee as the year progresses.

7. Shared Service/Partnership Implications

- 7.1 A Joint Scrutiny Committee has been established to keep the overall implementation plan under review. Shared Service/Partnership implications for individual topics will be included in reports to the Committee as the year progresses.

8. Key Information

8.1 Work in 2012/13

The following is a summary of the Committee's main achievements during the year:

- a) The Committee considered the Suffolk Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and noted that this will become a statutory document affecting all flood and coastal risk Management Authorities and will influence Planning Authorities.

Jane Burch, Flood and Coastal Policy Manager at Suffolk County Council was present at the meeting to make a presentation on the Suffolk Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and to answer Members' questions which included the following:

- Responsibility of landowners to clear gulleys/ditches
- Sustainable drainage
- Dispersal of water from new developments
- Powers to enforce legislation
- Engaging communities
- Responsibilities of Planning Authorities.

- b) The Committee considered a report relating to how best to encourage work experience and apprenticeship schemes for young people in Mid Suffolk and Babergh with private, public and voluntary sectors. The following were among the questions raised:

- Potential role for Councils acting as co-ordinator for the schemes
- Guidance under Section 106 powers
- Potential funding issues and nature of the evidence based for the report.

- c) The Babergh Community Safety Partnership Review was received setting out the Partnerships activities during 2011/12.

Sergeant Kevin Horton was present at the meeting to answer Members' questions which included the following:

- Night time economy
- CCTV system and volunteers manning this
- Reduction In budgets
- Issues relating to turning off of street lights
- Police and Crime Commissioner
- Profile of Community Safety Partnership
- Link between Community Safety Partnership and Safer Neighbourhood Team.

- d) The Committee received a presentation on the HRA Business Plan providing Members with:

- An overview of the Housing Revenue Account arrangements under the new self-financing system
- The role our tenants play in deciding the services we deliver
- Key elements of HRA Business Planning
- Objectives for the next 12 months.

The following were among the issues discussed:

- Potential increases in Right to Buy sales
- Stock Condition Surveys
- Green Agenda
- Possibility of Appointing a Member Champion.

- e) The Committee considered a report detailing the performance and development of a key strategic and operational partnership between the District Council and South Suffolk Leisure (SSL), an independent leisure trust with responsibility for operating the Kingfisher Leisure Centre in Sudbury and Hadleigh Swimming Pool.

Tracey Copping, Chief Executive of SSL was present at the meeting to introduce the report and to answer Members' questions which included the following:

- Marketing/publicity
- Olympic legacy – Be Inspired.

- f) The Annual Report of the Development Committee for 2011/12 was received. During the course of the discussion Members requested that future reports include the following:

- Information/data regarding applications not determined on time in table 5 of the report
- Details of business developments in commercial areas in Appendix 1
- Parish details in Appendix 2
- Green Agenda/Conservation issues
- Building Control finances.

The following issues were also discussed:-

- Member Training
- Staff resources
- S106 agreements
- Planning Improvement Plan.

- g) The Committee considered a report providing an overview of the activity funded under the Council's Community Grants Scheme in 2011/12 and setting out future plans for the scheme in broad terms.

It was noted that the Council's current criteria/policy for the allocation of grants will not continue beyond 2012/13 and that a joint Grants Policy and allocation process is being developed with Mid Suffolk DC following a review of both Councils' grant policies.

The following were among the queries and issues raised:

- More information to be provided in the appendices to the report
- Funding of Sudbury CAB
- Dual Use Leisure facilities.

h) An update was received on Emergency Planning and Business Continuity activity since January 2012. The following were among the issues raised:

- Training for Members
- Maintenance of water courses
- Sandbags.

A further update was considered at the March meeting.

i) The Committee scrutinised a report from the Strategic and Financial Planning (SFP) Task Group on the Financial Outlook and 2013/14 Draft Budget. It was noted that the Committee's views would be reported to Strategy Committee. The following were among the points discussed:

- Contracts – is the process of contract scrutiny robust enough?
- Community Grants – consideration should be given to the use of the New Homes Bonus for community grants.
- Charity Shops – the Committee discussed the proliferation of charity shops within the district and asked for officers to review eligibility for rate relief.
- Growth - Members offered differing views about the meaning of growth and the part it would play as part of the council's future vision.
- Office space utilisation – the Committee commented on the available space in BDC offices and the accommodation strategy, noting that this was currently being reviewed.
- Car Parking – the following points were made:
 - Consider transferring the car parks to local businesses for them to take on responsibility for running them and bearing the cost.
 - Changing the free parking policy would not be a good idea and the net cost of the present policy was worth it for the business it supported.
 - The current system is confusing and difficult to understand for users.
- New Homes Bonus – using the New Homes Bonus to support the Budget generally was not seen as its best use and it was suggested that it should be used across a range of strategic priorities. It was also suggested that, although NHB could be used for building new (local needs) homes, the Council will be able to use the HRA self-financing funds also.

j) The Annual report of the Haven Gateway Partnership (HGP) has been considered providing Members with an overview of the issues tackled by the HGP in 2011/12 and enabling them to scrutinise the work carried out.

9. **Appendices**

None.

10. **Background Documents**

None.

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