

Joint Scrutiny Committee Report for Council – 24 June (Babergh) and 26 June (Mid Suffolk) 2014

1 Joint Scrutiny Committee Meeting of 28 May 2014

A summary of key items follows (and for full detail of the meeting, please see the minutes):

- 1.1 **Review of Community Rights:** This report was to help assess what had been the impact of the Localism Act, what were the community benefits and whether there were any barriers to communities using the rights as legislated for in the Act.
 - 1.2 Three community groups were invited to the Committee to discuss their experiences with Community Right to Bid and listing Assets of Community Value (ACVs) within their localities – Redgrave Community Shop; The Red Lion car-park and public toilets at East Bergholt; and The Bull at Thorpe Morieux.
 - 1.3 It was clear that being in at the start of enacting new legislation meant that both the community groups and the Councils had to learn as they went. This led to issues as fundamental as whether use of the Community Right to Bid was the best approach for a particular circumstance (such as in Redgrave) to what were the processes for an appeal and how did it work (such as for The Bull pub).
 - 1.4 Members asked several questions in relation to permitted development rights and change of use. There were also questions on the appeal process and the effect of the ACV listing on the value of a property; viability of the ACV and hence chances of “success”; the type of group that could put forward a listing; and the overall process.
 - 1.5 Ultimately the view of the Committee was that the listing of ACVs should be encouraged and the Councils should continue to do what they can to assist with this – but more guidance would be useful both from the Councils and from Government on specific processes to follow and on interpretations of the Act.
 - 1.6 The Councils had recently had a request from the Department for Communities and Local Government for evidence on how the scheme was being used and it was agreed to send a response from the Joint Scrutiny Committee.
- 2 Scoping of review on Planning Enforcement:** many Members had raised this as an issue and the scoping document was discussed to establish which aspects of Planning Enforcement would be reviewed.
- 2.1 Members commented that there is often concern within the Towns or Parishes on what is enforceable, whether enforcement will take place and on what grounds – and what is a priority. It was felt that there were differences between the community perception and the reality.

- 2.2 It was noted that Planning training was being undertaken on enforcement however the Committee was more concerned with the expectations of communities and how this could be addressed. This would not repeat areas covered in the training.
- 2.3 The Committee agreed that the review needed to cover i) public perception; ii) actual performance; iii) guidance and iv) publicity.
- 3 Scoping of review on Fuel Poverty:** Members noted that there was not currently a specific fuel poverty strategy but that this cut across many areas of the Councils' responsibilities.
- 3.1 Members raised many aspects specifically in relation to energy efficiency and the issues within different areas of the housing sector (council, social, private rental and private ownership).
- 3.2 Members were keen to understand whether the situation was improving, what evidence was available and how this would help in other areas such as improving rent arrears and enabling healthier communities.
- 3.3 It was agreed a review would be undertaken for the next Committee meeting.
- 4 Workplan:** Members discussed the current list of potential topics.
- 4.1 Members asked for an update on partnership working.
- 4.2 It was suggested that, for the topic on youth homelessness, young people who had been homeless should be invited to the meeting to share their experiences. Babergh Members also wanted to review the sports partnership and it was felt this should be done at a Babergh only Scrutiny meeting.

The next Joint Scrutiny Committee is on Wednesday 23 July 2014 at Babergh District Council offices.

Councillor Rachel Eburne
Joint Chair (Mid Suffolk) and Chair of this meeting

Councillor Peter Burgoyne
Joint Chair (Babergh)