

MINUTES OF THE JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL, NEEDHAM MARKET ON WEDNESDAY 21 OCTOBER 2015 AT 5.30 PM

PRESENT:

BABERGH

MID SUFFOLK

Peter Burgoyne
Barry Gasper
Kathryn Grandon
Bryn Hurren
Margaret Maybury*
Alastair McCraw*

David Card
James Caston
Rachel Eburne (Chairman)
Elizabeth Gibson-Harries
Glen Horn*
John Levantis
Wendy Marchant
Suzie Morley

1 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillors Glen Horn, Alastair McCraw and Margaret Maybury were substituting for Councillors Jill Wilshaw, John Nunn and Harriet Steer respectively. Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dave Muller, Mark Newman, and Fenella Swan.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None declared.

3 MINUTES

Members asked to record special thanks to Gavin Fisk for his comprehensive update on the Review of Current Housing Revenue Account Income Collection Performance (Minute 16 on page 2).

Members noted that an update about planning-related information with regards to the Complaints Annual Report (Minute 18 on page 3) was still outstanding and asked that it be provided as soon as possible.

Members also expected to see updated financial data with regards to Minute 17, ICT Scrutiny Review, on page 3.

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 August 2015 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

4 PETITIONS

None received.

5 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None received.

6 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

None received.

7 PROCUREMENT AND COMMUNITY VALUE

The Corporate Manager – Commissioning and Procurement introduced Report [JSC/14/15](#), the purpose of which was to provide an overview of how the Councils' commissioning and procurement process accounted for best value, how collaborative working across Suffolk was used and also described the expenditure undertaken with suppliers local to Babergh and Mid Suffolk. She gave an overview of the Councils' commissioning and procurement practice and how Officers worked with local suppliers. The Corporate Manager – Commissioning and Procurement informed that a joint Commissioning and Procurement Manual had been drafted and would be launched following Full Council. The Manager answered Members' questions with regards to Best Value and how it was achieved, what formulas and methods were used to promote an ethical approach to sourcing local suppliers and encourage a mutual pre-market engagement.

Members asked whether tender and 'expression of interest' forms were user-friendly as they felt that owners of small businesses would be put off by the prospect of dealing with complex paperwork. Officers confirmed that the initial pre-market engagement forms were more comprehensive to allow Officers an opportunity to collect all relevant information; however, tender forms were not complicated. It was also noted that procurement forms were regularly reviewed and tested to ensure they were fit for purpose.

Members asked whether there would be a conflict of interest if the Councils were to invest in Funding Circle. The Head of Corporate Resources informed that the Finance team managed the investment side of the business and their line of work did not cross with Procurement, therefore the risk of a conflict of interest in that respect would be minimal.

Members also noted that the proportion of the expenditure undertaken locally was lower at Babergh than at Mid Suffolk and asked for an explanation. The Corporate Manager – Commissioning and Procurement explained that historically it was not always possible to source local suppliers to deal with some procurement needs and contracts, for example social care. Members suggested that there might be a scope for promoting the skills that were in demand locally through schools and colleges in the area, to raise awareness of what skills were needed and to future-proof and upskill young people.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in report JSC/14/15 be noted.

8 SUPPORTING BUSINESS GROWTH

The Corporate Manager – Economic Development and Tourism introduced Report [JSC/15/15](#), the purpose of which was to provide Members with an overview of the business profile within Babergh and Mid Suffolk, outline the challenges for the Councils in facing the growth agenda and to describe the measures which were in place to support business growth in the districts and sought Members' support for these measures. The report would contribute to the delivery of the Councils' strategic priorities, key outcomes and medium-term financial strategy:

- Growth in new homes, jobs and businesses
- Support for local businesses to thrive and grown
- Ensuring the right skills for business and enterprise
- A thriving tourism sector and vibrant market town.

The Corporate Manager – Economic Development and Tourism introduced Peter Down, representing Stowmarket and District Chamber of Commerce. Mr Down advised the Committee of his professional background, outlined the profile of members who had joined the Chamber and explained how it supported them through networking opportunities and business management advice. Mr Down emphasised the problems the majority of small local businesses experienced when looking for skilled staff, as a result of poor broadband coverage and transport links. He also expressed a view that there had been unnecessary delays in granting planning applications for larger business developments.

Officers informed Members that various apprenticeship programmes for young people were operating to promote development of skills that were in high demand. Members noted more needed to be done to explore options for delivering a faster and more reliable broadband service. They also suggested that Officers should consider a new joined-up approach between tourism and agriculture, how best to support the horse racing and breeding industry and ensure that it was retained in Suffolk and how to promote Suffolk's tourist destinations to visitors of Stansted Airport and Harwich International Port. The Head of Economy – Investment and Development undertook to provide Members with an update on broadband at the next meeting.

RESOLVED

That the Committee note the content of Report JSC/15/15 and support the measures that are promoted in it.

9 FORWARD PLAN

The Chairman informed Members that the Forward Plan had not been included on the Agenda because it was to be discussed during the Workshop after the meeting.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 7:05 pm.