

	CORE PRINCIPLES	SUPPORTING PRINCIPLES	BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL EVIDENCE
1	<p>Focusing on the purpose of the authority and on outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area.</p>	<p>Exercising strategic leadership by developing and clearly communicating the Council's purpose and vision and its intended outcome for citizens and service users.</p>	<p>A ten-year strategic plan is in place covering the period 2008-2018. This was developed as a result of extensive consultation with the local community and key stakeholders including surveys of residents, service users, focus groups and specific initiatives to engage with all sections of the community including groups such as young people and migrant workers.</p> <p>This is supported by three-year rolling Medium Term Plans and a one year Delivery Plan, which was developed for the first time in 2009/10 and provides the basis for individual service plans, targets, actions to achieve the desired outcomes the Council is seeking to achieve and work programmes for the Council.</p> <p>The Council also holds an annual State of the District Debate as part of its Policy and Budget Framework. Having undertaken an extensive review in the previous year (development of the Strategic Plan), the 2009/10 debate focused on changes that had occurred over the year and, in particular, the local economy and the continuing impact of the economic recession; access to and provision of services for vulnerable and other specific groups; improving skills and educational attainment; community leadership and value for money.</p> <p>There is consultation with key partners on improvements to service provision and individual projects. Examples include:</p>

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the Local Area Agreement, which looks to ensure that both county wide and local priorities are aligned to the Council’s Strategic Plan, thereby maximising opportunities through the effective deployment of resources. • Through the Local Strategic Partnerships (East and West), which contribute to the planning and greater understanding of community needs. Example of projects in each area include: Provision of mini bus for detached youth work; Advice surgery for young people; Parenting Support Programme. • Other partnerships such as the Haven Gateway and Community Safety Partnerships. Examples of projects in each area include: Significant investment into the Dryport project and a change in the CCTV monitoring arrangements in the district leading to a significant increase in the number of offences being detected.
		<p>Ensuring that users receive a high quality of service whether directly, or in partnership, or by commissioning.</p>	<p>The Council is very pro-active in its approach to the commissioning and procurement of services and the use of the web to drive improvements. Examples of this include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Procurement Strategy and Framework (2008-11) is in place that reflects the Council’s corporate aims and priorities and achieves year-on-year savings. There is an Action Plan to support the strategy and a Procurement Task Group (made up of Members and officers) that monitored, reviewed and updated the Action Plan throughout the year.

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement arrangements are based on a clear set of Contract Procedure Rules, a Code of Practice that was introduced in 2009/10 and the use of an E-Procurement software system across the Council. • The Council has in place clear service delivery standards that are publicised on its website and monitored, with supporting literature for service users/customers made available. • The Customer Access & Service Transformation (CAST) programme has successfully delivered effective customer service and front office arrangements. This has increased the proportion of business completed with customers at the first point of contact. Key outcomes of 2009/10 were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 90% of callers flowing through the front office teams are satisfied with the service they receive. ➤ 80% of calls received are resolved at point of contact. • The Council has improved website content and functionality to enable customers to self-service. e.g. online access for Planning applications; Council taxpayers, Benefit claimants, Council tenants and Business ratepayers have direct access to their personal account; Online forms allow customers to submit benefit claims, report problems; report fraud, make a complaint or submit a compliment. • Waste and recycling customer surveys also indicate a high level of customer satisfaction with the service.

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			<p>The Council is subject to an Organisational Assessment (including how effectively the Council manages the 'Use of Resources') by the Audit Commission with a current overall rating of 3 for 2008/09 (3 = consistently above minimum requirements – performing well). The assessment process for 2009/10 has been suspended following the Government's announcement to abolish CAA (Comprehensive Area Assessments) but external auditors had indicated a strong and continuing improvement in Babergh's arrangements and outcomes under the use of resources assessment.</p> <p>The Council is involved in a wide range of networks and partnerships, including the co-ordination and delivery of the Local Strategic Partnerships for Babergh East and West Suffolk and the Suffolk Strategic Partnership. Governance arrangements for partnerships will always vary depending on the size and scope of the partnership. E.g. LSP's have no legal status but the two covering Babergh area have a constitution. The Haven Gateway partnership manages its activities through a management agreement. In addition, a Significant Partnership Register has been developed and roles and responsibilities of partners are clear. Partnerships are monitored through the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.</p> <p>A Partnership Strategy that sets out the guiding principles to be followed in establishing and reviewing the effectiveness and governance arrangements of these was approved during 2009/10. The East LSP has been reviewed and other key partnerships will be reviewed in 2010/11.</p>

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		<p>Ensuring that the authority makes best use of resources and that taxpayers and service users receive excellent value for money.</p>	<p>The Council's Financial Strategy and Policy and Budget Framework are aimed to ensure Council Tax increases are set at no more than the level of inflation. This has been achieved over the last 6 years, including the Budget for 2009/10.</p> <p>There is a strong leadership, ownership and responsibility for all financial matters through the Corporate Management Team and Members. Financial assumptions are challenged and skills are being continuously developed. The Council has in place a very clear and integrated process for strategic and financial planning. A Member Strategic and Financial Planning (SFP) Task Group, supported by officers oversee this. In 2009/10, this involved dealing with the significant challenge of finding Budget savings of £1.6m 2010/11, which was achieved. A Savings and Efficiencies Plan was developed to guide this work and the savings agreed aimed to ensure the minimum possible impact on the levels and quality of service provision.</p> <p>Internal Audit carry out a risk based programme of inspections ensuring controls are in place and effective. These controls encompass financial systems, corporate governance arrangements, risk management and performance management</p>
2	<p>Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles.</p>	<p>Ensuring effective leadership throughout the authority and being clear about executive and non-executive functions and of the roles and responsibilities of the scrutiny function.</p>	<p>The Council operates streamlined Committee arrangements, which is reflected in the Constitution. There is a Political Leaders Group that meets informally to consider key issues although this is not a decision-making body.</p>

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			<p>Senior Management undertook leadership training in 2009/10 and this has helped to ensure that Management Team and Heads of Service are well equipped to deal with the challenges that the Council is facing.</p> <p>The Council's Constitution clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of Councillors, the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman of Council and Committees. It also details the rules of procedure and Overview & Scrutiny Committee Terms of Reference.</p> <p>The Council's Scrutiny Committees play an important role in that they hold decision takers to account through scrutinising their activities. During 2009/10, they provided challenge to the Council in a number of ways. For example the Overview & Scrutiny (Stewardship) Committee, which also acts as the Council's Audit Committee, scrutinised the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievements against the One Year Delivery Plan; • Service and financial planning/savings proposals; • Internal Audit reports and fraud and corruption arrangements; • Risk Management; and • Quarterly Performance and Financial Management reports. <p>The above, along with other matters that were addressed, are reflected in their Annual Report to Council.</p>

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			<p>The Constitution clearly sets out the roles of Chief Officers and Statutory Officers and the responsibility for functions. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chief Executive as the Head of Paid Service • The Director of Finance is Section 151 Officer (under the Local Government Act 1972) who is responsible for making sure that appropriate advice is given to the Council on all financial matters, for keeping proper financial records and accounts, and for maintaining an effective system of internal control; and • The Monitoring Officer, who is responsible for ensuring that the Council acts in a lawful manner and that it does not do anything that might cause maladministration or injustice.
		<p>Ensuring that a constructive working relationship exists between authority members and officers and that the responsibilities of authority members and officers are carried out to a high standard.</p>	<p>A Standards Committee is in place which is responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct and ethics across the Council, monitoring the operation of codes of conduct for Councillors and staff, developing good practice protocols, overseeing the whistle-blowing procedure and investigations by the Ombudsman into complaints against the Council.</p> <p>Task Groups and Panels, with Member and Officer joint working, are established to deal with key areas and issues. These include (in addition to the SFP and Procurement Task Groups):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR Panel • Housing Panel • Information Management Task Group • Pin Mill Task Group • Constitutional Review Task Group

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			<p>The outcomes of their work are reported to Council annually.</p> <p>In addition, there are Members Seminars throughout the year, which are used to consider key issues and share important information that are relevant to the Council’s activities and achievements. These provide a very useful forum for informal soundings on the direction of the Council and the decision-making process.</p> <p>As in previous years, the Council proactively raised the standards of ethical conduct through providing ethics training, guidance and information. Progress made in developing the ethical environment during 2009/10 was communicated to Members, staff, stakeholders and local people.</p>
		<p>Ensuring relationships between the authority and the public are clear so that each knows what to expect of the other.</p>	<p>The Council provides members of the public with details of service delivery standards on its website and through various literature. These include:</p> <p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once we have all the information we need to assess Housing or Council Tax Benefits, we will complete the assessment within 14 days. • If your circumstances change, or you make an enquiry we aim to amend our records within 6 days.

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			<p>Building Control:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site Inspections to be made within 24 hrs of a request - on the same working day when the request is received before 10.30am. • All plans to be vetted within 5 weeks of receipt (or 8 weeks when an extension of time agreed) <p>Bus passes for elderly and disabled people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to issue bus passes to qualifying persons within 10 working days of application being approved. Application forms are available from the website or by telephoning the above number. <p>Through the Customer Access and Service Transformation (CAST) programme services are well publicised and accessible at times, which reflect customer needs. Access has been simplified and made more understandable. High rates of customer satisfaction are being achieved.</p>
3	Promoting values for the authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour.	Ensuring authority members and officers exercise leadership by behaving in ways that exemplify high standards of conduct and effective governance.	<p>The Council’s governance arrangements are set out in the Constitution and a Local Code of corporate Governance. The Constitution includes the roles and responsibilities of senior officers and members, which are reinforced through induction and training programmes.</p> <p>There is a Members’ Code of Conduct and Confidential Information Protocol, which Members must sign. The Monitoring Officer and Standards Committee manage the Members’ Code of Conduct.</p>

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			<p>For officers, codes and protocols are issued on appointment and reinforced through the induction process and guidance. Breaches of proper standards are investigated and resolved using the HR Disciplinary, Capability or Grievance procedures. Behavioural conduct is also addressed through the annual Performance Appraisal process.</p> <p>The Code of Conduct for Members and staff includes a register of interests and of gifts and hospitality.</p> <p>These are in place to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define the standards of personal behaviour councillors, officers and agents of the Council must follow; and • Ensure that elected Members and officers are not influenced by prejudice, bias or conflicts of interest in dealing with different stakeholders.
		<p>Ensuring that organisational values are put into practice and are effective.</p>	<p>The Council has set out its values within the Strategic Plan as a series of pledges.</p> <p>The Council has adopted an Organisational Development Plan (updated in 2008), which aligns staff, skills development and employment policy and practices to the aims and objectives of the organisation. This assists with future workforce planning.</p> <p>The Chief Executive regularly addresses all staff on the current issues and challenges facing the Council. Similarly the Chief Executive and Management Team briefs and informs the Members through the quarterly seminars.</p>

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			<p>The Council's Financial Regulations and Procedures, contained within the Council's Constitution, make it clear that any suspected irregularities should be reported to the appropriate officers. The Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption and Whistleblowing Policy is available on the Council's website. Arrangements have been strengthened in 2009/10 through newsletters to staff and increased communication through the website.</p>
4	<p>Taking informed and transparent decisions, which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk.</p>	<p>Being rigorous and transparent about how decisions are taken and listening and acting on the outcome of constructive scrutiny.</p>	<p>All Agendas and Minutes of Council meetings are recorded and available to the public (except where there are legal restrictions). There is an active scrutiny function, which plays an active and robust role in managing performance. Training on the Scrutiny function has been made available for councillors in order to ensure a high standard of scrutiny.</p>
		<p>Having good-quality information, advice and support to ensure that services are delivered effectively and are what the community wants/needs.</p>	<p>Council and Committee meetings are supported by trained and qualified staff. Report-writing advice and guidelines have been provided to enable report authors to provide good quality information in plain English to promote transparent, accessible decision-making. This is regularly updated.</p> <p>The Council recognises the importance of having reliable information to support the delivery of excellent services to its customers. For example, the Council has invested in the Local Authority Modernisation Programme (LAMP). This is a national initiative designed to improve the quality and usability of the Council's land and property information.</p>

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			<p>The Council has followed up on areas for improvement identified through last year's data quality audit. The Council has a clear Data Quality Policy and action plan in place to ensure that we continue to secure further improvements, progress on which is reported to the Overview and Scrutiny (Stewardship) Committee. Data quality is promoted by the Data Quality 'champions' (which together form the Performance Indicator Co-ordinators Group) and reinforced corporately through the Manager and Team Leader Forums.</p> <p>The Council's Performance Management Framework outlines the relationship between the Council's various business management and reporting systems. It also sets out accountability arrangements for the collection, recording and reporting of all statutory and business critical data.</p>
		<p>Ensuring that an effective risk management system is in place.</p>	<p>The Overview and Scrutiny (Stewardship) Committee ensures that the Council identifies and effectively manages its significant business risks, which impact on achievement of the Council's corporate aims and priorities.</p> <p>Risk Management action plans are in place in relation to each significant risk and progress made in managing the risks is monitored by Members on a quarterly basis. At service level risk management is incorporated into service plans across the Council. In addition, the Council has provided further training and refresher workshops to staff during 2009/10.</p>

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		<p>Using their legal powers to the full benefit of the citizens and communities in their area.</p>	<p>Decisions taken are in the best interests of the community of Babergh. examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) the needs of the community are realised. The past year has seen further Babergh CSP activities with a number of targeted crime prevention initiatives and high profile events designed to heighten awareness and inform the public about community safety issues. Improvements have also been made in tackling Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) with, for example, the implementation of a structured ASB process and a reporting and recording system at BDC. See also earlier reference to the CSP under Core Principle 1 • The Council has adopted the Government’s Enforcement Concordat which states that good enforcement practice should set clear standards, be carried out in an open, helpful manner and have a proportionate and consistent approach, together with a clear complaints service.

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5	Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective	Making sure that members and officers have the skills, knowledge, experience and resources they need to perform well in their roles.	<p>The Council aims to ensure that Members and staff have the skills, knowledge and capacity they need to discharge their responsibilities and recognise the value of well-trained and competent people in effective service delivery. All new Members and staff undertake a comprehensive induction to familiarise themselves with protocols, procedures, values, aims and priorities of the Council.</p> <p>The Council’s Organisational Development (OD) Plan (updated aligns staff skills, development and employment policy and practices to the aims and objectives of the organisation.</p> <p>Individual training and development needs for staff are systematically identified and activities followed up and evaluated through a performance appraisal system that includes all staff. A corporate training plan is tailored to meet the OD Plan objectives.</p> <p>The annual appraisal also provides a mechanism for assessing key skill areas linked to job requirements and identifying needs. The Scheme was last updated and improved following a review undertaken by a staff-working group in 2008.</p>

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		<p>Developing the capability of people with governance responsibilities and evaluating their performance, as individuals and as a group.</p>	<p>The Council delivers an ongoing training and development programme for Members throughout the year based on the skill requirements as assessed by Members themselves and on topical issues suggested by senior officers.</p> <p>For officers, individual training and development needs are systemically identified and activities followed up and evaluated through a performance appraisal system.</p> <p>In addition, a corporate training plan is tailored to meet the Organisational Development Plan objectives.</p>
		<p>Encouraging new talent for membership of the authority so that best use can be made of individuals' skills and resources in balancing continuity and renewal.</p>	<p>The Council has a clear Member development programme. Skills and talents of Members are identified from which Member 'Champions' are appointed.</p>
6	<p>Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability</p>	<p>Exercising leadership through a robust scrutiny function, which effectively engages local people and all local institutional stakeholders, including partnerships, and develops constructive accountability relationships.</p>	<p>There are two Overview and Scrutiny Committees, (one of which acts as the Council's Audit Committee), which support the work of the Strategy Committee and the Council as a whole. They hold investigations into matters of local concern and developing reports and recommendations and advise the Strategy Committee on policies, budget and service delivery. They monitor Strategy Committee decisions, and have call-in powers as set out in the Council's constitution.</p>

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		<p>Taking an active and planned approach to dialogue with and accountability to the public to ensure effective and appropriate service delivery whether directly by the authority, in partnership or by commissioning.</p>	<p>The Council is committed to listening to local people and involving them in the achievement of these outcomes.</p> <p>All meetings of the Council are open to the press and public. At meetings of the Council, Babergh residents have the opportunity to ask a question of any Committee Chairman which has been submitted in writing at least two days before the meeting. The Agenda sets out the business to be dealt with at the meeting. Some items, usually at the end of the Agenda, may be confidential, and the press and public will be asked to leave before they are discussed.</p> <p>Annual meetings are held with Town and Parish Councils to inform them on key issues and developments that affect the Council’s current and future activities. In 2009/10, these focused on savings and efficiencies</p> <p>As part of developing and monitoring the Council’s Strategic Plan, the Council consults with the public and other stakeholders through the annual State of the District Debate. It also held its annual ‘Business Evening’ meeting with businesses.</p> <p>In addition, the Council conducts regular Place Surveys in relation to National Indicators set by the Government through the Suffolk Speaks partnership. These are used to inform service improvements and future decisions on service delivery.</p>

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		<p>Making best use of human resources by taking an active and planned approach to meet responsibility to staff.</p>	<p>The Council has an Organisational Development Plan in place, which details the Council’s vision of how to develop and support staff in securing the future of the Council and services to the people of Suffolk. An Action Plan sets out the medium term issues that are being addressed and developed.</p> <p>The Council has a well established dialogue with Unison and the HR Panel. In 2009/10 this included regular meetings on the Budget savings that the Council needed to make, which resulted in a voluntary collective agreement on the savings that related to staff terms and conditions.</p> <p>The HR Panel, which includes Members and a Unison representative, receive regular updates on HR issues, including monitoring the establishment.</p> <p>Organisational change is fully recognised and addressed by the Council, being a separate theme within the OD Plan. In staff briefings and team meetings throughout the year, the Chief Executive has personally delivered the message across the Council that Senior Managers recognise the impact of change for staff and the importance of providing support through training and regular communication.</p>

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			<p>The Council operates an EAP scheme for all staff which provides 24 hour telephone counselling and face to face counselling sessions where required.</p> <p>The Council conducts stress and satisfaction surveys of staff from time to time.</p> <p>A stress policy was adopted in 2008 and a programme of skills training for Managers has been delivered in line with that.</p>