

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

FROM: Overview and Scrutiny (Community Services) Committee

REPORT NUMBER F3

TO: COUNCIL

DATE OF MEETING 11 April 2006

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

1. SUMMARY

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. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny (Community Services) Committee's Annual Report for 2005/06 be noted.

2.2 That the Overview and Scrutiny (Community Services) Committee's Work Plan for 2006/07 be approved.

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 2006/07. The position for future years will be addressed through the Service and Financial Planning Process, if that is necessary.

4. KEY INFORMATION

4.1 WORK IN 2005/06

Appendix 1 outlines the Committee's main areas of work in 2005/06. The majority of items included in the Committee's original work plan have been progressed by the Committee and the following is a brief summary of its other main achievements:-

- A considerable amount of work was undertaken by the Service and Financial Planning Member Group and the Overview and Scrutiny Committees to ensure that draft budgets reflect the Council priorities and approved policies. A joint meeting of the two Overview and Scrutiny Committees was held to consider the Budget Framework.
- The current year's capital expenditure has been regularly monitored.
- The Committee played a major role in drawing up responses to the formal consultation exercises relating to the delivery of health services in Suffolk and the proposed police force re-structuring.

- The draft Corporate Plan for 2006/07 has been scrutinised.
- A Youth Strategy Action Plan has been approved, as has an updated Race Equality Action Plan. In relation to the former, the Committee has been very pleased to note that the Babergh Be Active Project has won a Beacon Award in the category of 'Culture and Sport for hard-to-reach groups'.
- As a result of a recommendation made by the Committee, the Council has agreed that Members of the Development Committee should be required to undertake a minimum of 4 half-day training sessions per year.
- Policy documents have been examined relating to housing and refuse collection.
- Progress on waste management and recycling has been reviewed, and the Committee has noted with pleasure that the Council, jointly with the other Suffolk authorities has won a Beacon Award for its achievements in the field of recycling.
- The Committee has studied the implications of new legislation such as the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 and the Children Act 2004. In connection with the latter, the Committee has examined a new Safeguarding Policy.
- The Committee carried out a review of procedures for undertaking works that are re-charged to former Council owned properties, and as a result a number of changes have been agreed.
- A number of different performance indicators have been monitored throughout the year.

4.2 WORK PLAN FOR 2006/07

4.2.1 Appendix 2 sets out a list of items of work that Members and Officers have identified for consideration by the Committee during 2006/07.

4.2.2 At the Committee's meeting on 28 March 2006, it was agreed that as part of the 2006/07 Work Plan the Committee should review the new free bus pass scheme for the Over 60s and Babergh's role in promoting energy efficiency, with particular reference to the Council's roles as a planning authority, as an energy consumer and as a property owner and landlord. Further consideration is to be given to the terms of reference of the latter review.

4.2.3 In addition, a joint Working Group has been established to review the Council's call-in procedures. The Group will consist of two representatives of the Overview and Scrutiny (Stewardship) Committee and two representatives of the Overview and Scrutiny (Community Services) Committee. The representatives of the Overview and Scrutiny (Community Services) Committee will be Mr C Hunt (with Mr J R A Sayers as substitute) and Mr D Grutchfield.

5. APPENDICES :

- (a) Appendix 1 – Overview and Scrutiny (Community Services) Committee: Resume of Work in 2005/06.
- (b) Appendix 2 – Overview and Scrutiny (Community Services) Committee: Proposed Work Plan for 2006/07.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS REFERRED TO

None.

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (COMMUNITY SERVICES) COMMITTEE

RESUME OF WORK IN 2005/06

1. HEALTH SERVICES

Formal Consultation on the Delivery of Health Services in Suffolk

- 1.1 At its meeting on 4 October 2005 the Committee spent several hours discussing plans for services changes which had been produced by the NHS Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) in Suffolk.
- 1.2 The Council had previously expressed grave concern about the proposals by the Suffolk West PCT to withdraw all current patient services from Sudbury's existing hospitals and to exclude in-patient bed provision from the proposed new Health and Social Care Centre due to open in 2007.
- 1.3 The Committee was tasked with examining the plans in detail and drawing up the Council's response to them. Members received presentations from representatives of Suffolk West PCT, Suffolk East PCTs, the Walnuttree Action Committee, the Sudbury Health and Social Care Steering Group lay members and from Dr M R Miller, Babergh's representative on the County Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. There was an extensive question and answer session, at the close of which Members agreed a number of points on which they wished to express concerns to the PCTs. Mike Hammond was authorized to submit a response, in consultation with the Chairman of Council, the Chairman of the Strategy Committee and the Political Leaders Group.
- 1.4 The proposed closure of the Walnuttree Hospital in Sudbury had previously (at the meeting on 12 July 2005) been the subject of a question posed by Mr Kemp in accordance with Council Procedure Rule No. 15.4 – (a) and (b).

2. POLICE SERVICES

Police Force Restructuring

- 2.1 At its meeting on 29 November 2005 the Committee received a presentation by the Chief Constable of the Suffolk Constabulary concerning proposals for a restructuring of the police forces in the East of England. The Suffolk Constabulary was seeking the views of local residents and key partners but needed to receive them within a very tight time frame. The Chief Constable answered a variety of questions and Members agreed a number of points which they wished to see incorporated in Babergh's response. Mike Hammond, Corporate Director, was authorised to submit a response, in consultation with the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny (Community Services) Committee and the Chairman of the Strategy Committee.

Local Crime and Community Sentence Project

- 2.2 At its meeting on 23 August 2005 the Committee received a presentation from a Board Member of the Suffolk Probation Area, about a Local Crime and Community Sentence Project. The Committee concluded that it would be of benefit to the Council to accept the offer of Workshops to be run by the Suffolk Magistrates Association, and two of these have now been run. It was also agreed that relevant officers should explore the potential for Babergh becoming involved in possible community sentences.

3. YOUNG PEOPLE AND DIVERSITY

Youth Strategy

- 3.1 At its meeting on 5 July 2005 the Committee considered a report summarizing the actions achieved in 2004/05 with regard to young people and recommended for approval by the Strategy Committee an Action Plan for 2005/06. This was subsequently approved. It was agreed that in future the Overview and Scrutiny (Community Services) Committee should be the lead Committee for the Youth Strategy. The Sports Development Officer and the Be Active Leisure Inclusion Officer made presentations to the meeting on their work with young people.

The Children Act 2004

- 3.2 At its meeting on 29 November 2005 the Committee considered a report advising Members of the impact on district councils of the Children Act 2004. Members approved an Action Plan relating to the new legislation.

Safeguarding Policy

- 3.3 At its meeting on 28 March 2006 the Committee considered a Safeguarding Policy for young people across the Council's services. The policy had been prepared by specialist officers in the field of safeguarding at District and County level. With one minor amendment, Members recommended the policy for approval by the Strategy Committee.

Race Equality

- 3.4 At its meeting on 24 May 2005 the Committee received a report concerning a review of the updated Race Equality Scheme and Action Plan for the period 2005 - 2008. Members approved the draft Race Equality Scheme and Action Plan for publication as a consultation document. They recommended to Strategy Committee that the Scheme and Plan be approved subject to any amendments considered necessary as a result of the consultation process. This was subsequently approved by the Strategy Committee.

4. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Conservation

- 4.1 At its meeting on 24 May 2005 the Committee received a report on conservation, priorities and resources for the future. Officers were asked to continue to lobby for a change permitting charges for listed building consent.

Annual Report of the Development Committee for 2004/05

- 4.2 At its meeting on 4 October 2005 the Committee considered the Annual Report of the Development Committee and recommended to Strategy Committee and Council that Members of the Development Committee should be required to undertake a minimum of 4 half-day training sessions per year. This was subsequently approved by the Council. Members also suggested that future training sessions for Members should focus on the existing policies relating to holiday homes, pub closures and the retention of employment sites. In this regard, successful training sessions for Members (including Members from other local authorities) have been held on 30 September 2005 and on 16 March 2006. A further session is planned for 16 June 2006.

5. HOUSING

Review of the Council's Housing and Homelessness Strategies and HRA Business Plan

- 5.1 At its meeting on 23 August 2005 the Committee received a report from the Housing Panel concerning the review of the Council's Housing and Homelessness Strategies and HRA Business Plan. Members made recommendations for approval by the Strategy Committee and the Council relating to the updated Affordable Housing Programme, the establishment and composition of a Choice Based Lettings Development Group, the allocation for Registered Social Landlords to provide affordable housing, provision for asylum seekers and the funding of the temporary posts of Estate Ranger and Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator. These were subsequently approved by the Council.

Review of procedures for undertaking works that are to be recharged to former Council owned properties

- 5.2 At its meetings on 23 August and 29 November 2005 the Committee considered reports from the Joint Member Officer Working Group reviewing procedures used to undertake rechargeable estate maintenance/improvement work. Members considered the Group's proposals on improved procedures used to re-charge Council tenants, lease holders and owners of former Council owned properties for any works where they have a payment liability. Members recommended to the Strategy Committee that improved procedures be implemented wherever relevant to rechargeable works and shared costs. This was subsequently approved by the Strategy Committee.

Flooding in Toppesfield Close

- 5.3 At its meeting on 12 July 2005 the Committee considered a question posed by Mr Grutchfield in accordance with Council Procedure Rule No. 15.4 – (a) and (b). He asked what plans were in hand to protect Council owned properties in Toppesfield Close, where heavy rain had again caused flooding. He received a reply stating that the flooding was to the highway not to the properties, and that Babergh officers would be giving the County Council any assistance it required.

6. LEISURE SERVICES

Babergh Leisure Trust

- 6.1 At its meeting on 4 October 2005 the Committee considered a report setting out progress on the establishment of a trust to be responsible for the future management of the Kingfisher Centre and the Hadleigh Swimming Pool.

Future Use and Occupation of East House

- 6.2 At its meeting on 24 May 2005 the Committee agreed that a review of the future use and occupation of East House should be carried out and on 4 October 2005 Members received a report that Suffolk County Council had advised that at the expiry of their lease in January 2006 they would not be looking to enter into a new lease for the occupation of East House. Further discussions have been held with all interested parties and a report outlining alternatives options was submitted to the Strategy Committee at its meeting on 9 February and Council on 23 February 2006.

Quay Theatre

- 6.3 At its meeting on 28 March 2006 the Committee considered a report detailing progress in the first year of the current three-year funding agreement with the Quay Theatre. Mr R Benton, the Manager of the theatre, attended the meeting to answer Members' questions.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Progress on Recycling and Waste Management

- 7.1 At its meeting on 7 February 2006 the Committee received a report updating Members on the Council's current recycling activity and identifying current issues and future challenges.

Review of Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005

- 7.2 At the February meeting the Committee also considered the implications of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. The Act gives local authorities powers to impose fixed penalty fines in a number of areas, and the Committee recommended to the Strategy Committee that at the appropriate time it should support the adoption by the Head of Environmental Services of a number of powers and levels of fines. It is envisaged that this recommendation will be considered by the Strategy Committee at its meeting scheduled for 11 May 2006.

Review of Refuse Collection Policy

- 7.3 Also at the February meeting the Committee reviewed the Council's Refuse Collection and Waste Management Policy. Members recommended approval of the revised Policy and it was subsequently approved by the Strategy Committee at a meeting on 9 March 2006.

8. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Best Value Performance Indicators and Performance Management

- 8.1 At its meetings on 12 July, 23 August and 29 November 2005 and on 28 March 2006 the Committee considered reports setting out Best Value Performance Indicator data. At the July meeting the final position for the 2004/05 BVPIs and targets for the period up to 2007/08 were examined. Members expressed their deep concern about the Council's performance relating to BVPI 109 concerning the determination of planning applications. They highlighted in particular the situation with regard to loss of planning delivery grant.
- 8.2 At the November meeting Members expressed concerns at the length of time some properties were standing empty and have called for a report on steps to be taken to reduce this time. They agreed changes to targets relating to homelessness and empty properties.
- 8.3 At the March meeting the Committee considered the Council's performance and position in relation to the Audit Commission's figures for PIs for English authorities in 2004/05. Members requested further information about areas of poor performance relating to planning, street cleaning and contaminated sites.

Complaints Monitoring

- 8.4 At its meeting on 29 November 2005 the Committee received a report summarizing the complaints received in 2004/05 concerning the services coming under its responsibility. Members expressed concern that many of the complaints involved planning matters, and noted that the Business Process Re-engineering exercise underway in Planning Control was aimed at improving efficiency and reducing the number of complaints.

9. FINANCIAL MATTERS

Service and Financial Planning and Draft Budget

- 9.1 At its meeting on 24 May 2005 the Committee nominated Mr Hunt, Mr Hurren and Mr Grimsey to serve on the Service and Financial Planning (SFP) Group and recommended that a joint meeting of the two Overview and Scrutiny Committees be held in December, solely to consider the recommendations of the Group.
- 9.2 This joint meeting took place on 12 December 2005 to consider a report from the SFP Group setting out proposals for the 2006/07 Budget. Members recommended these for approval by the Strategy Committee, with the proviso that costs relating to the CAST budget and funding arrangements would only be incurred with the agreement of the Strategy Committee and with staged reviews of the position every six months by full Council. They also recommended that a Council Tax increase at the rate of inflation of 2.7% be approved. The Strategy Committee subsequently recommended that any costs relating to CAST budget and funding arrangements would only be incurred with the agreement of full Council.
- 9.3 At its meeting on 7 February 2006 the Committee scrutinized the draft budget for 2006/07. Members recommended that the level of Council Tax for 2006/07 should not be increased by more than 2.7%. They also made a number of recommendations relating to issues which had recently arisen and would affect the Budget.

Capital Programme Monitoring

- 9.4 At its meetings on 29 November 2005 and 7 February 2006 the Committee considered reports setting out progress on the current year's Capital Programme.

10. CORPORATE PLAN

- 10.1 At its meeting on 7 February 2006 the Committee considered the draft Corporate Plan for 2006/07. They recommended the Plan to the Strategy Committee for approval and also recommended that in the 2007-11 Corporate Plan more attention should be paid to issues of sustainability and energy use.

11. REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Babergh East Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

- 11.1 At the Committee's meeting on 29 November 2005 Mrs S P Clarke, Babergh's representative on the Babergh East LSP Board presented a report updating Members on the progress made to date.

Haven Gateway Partnership

- 11.2 At its meeting on 7 February 2006 the Committee received a report from Mr D L Wood, Babergh's representative on the Haven Gateway Partnership's Management Committee.

West Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership (WSLSP)

- 11.3 At the Committee's meeting on 28 March 2006 Mr D Wood, the Manager of the WSLSP, presented a report by Mr C Spence, Babergh's representative on the WSLSP, updating Members on the impact and progress of the WSLSP and the Community Strategy.

12. OTHER MATTERS

Review of Overview and Scrutiny Role and Approach

- 12.1 At its meeting on 24 May 2005 the Committee appointed Mr Wood and Mr Grutchfield to serve on a joint Working Group to carry out a review of the Overview and Scrutiny role and approach.

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL**FROM: HEAD OF LEGAL AND
ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES****REPORT NUMBER****TO: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
(COMMUNITY SERVICES)
COMMITTEE****DATE OF MEETING****DRAFT WORK PLAN FOR 2006/07****DATE OF COMMITTEE – 30 MAY 2006**

Topic	Overview of Decision	Decision or Recommendation to Strategy/Council	Lead Officer
Service and Financial Planning	To consider arrangements for 2006/07	Decision	Helen Style
Review of Babergh's overview and scrutiny role and approach	To consider a report from the Working Group	To be determined	Pauline McBride
Capital Programme Outcomes 2005/06	To note overall performance on 2005/06 Capital Programme as compared to targets for the year	Decision	Barry Hunter/Ryan Jones
Final Position on 2005/06 performance indicators and future targets	To note the final position for 2005/06 and targets for the period up to 2008/09	Decision	Andrew Hunkin
Babergh's Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership	To receive an update.	To be determined	Chris Foti
Conservation – priorities and Resources for the future	To receive an update.	Decision	Rich Cooke/Richard Watson

DATE OF COMMITTEE – 25 JULY 2006

Topic	Overview of Decision	Decision or Recommendation to Strategy/Council	Lead Officer
Annual Report of Development Committee	To consider report	Decision	Richard Watson
Babergh's Housing Strategy, Homelessness Strategy, HRA Business Plan and Housing Stock Options Appraisal Review	To consider the Housing Panel's review.	Recommendation to Strategy	Chris Foti
Review of Call-In procedures	To consider a Working Group report	To be determined	Helen Style

DATE OF COMMITTEE – 5 SEPTEMBER 2006

Topic	Overview of Decision	Decision or Recommendation to Strategy/Council	Lead Officer
Capital Programme Monitoring	To note position	To be determined	Barry Hunter/Ryan Jones
Performance Management – Quarterly Report	Update on 2006/07 Performance Indicators	Decision	Andrew Hunkin

DATE OF COMMITTEE – 17 OCTOBER 2006

Topic	Overview of Decision	Decision or Recommendation to Strategy/Council	Lead Officer
Choice Based Lettings Scheme	To consider amendments to the policy	Recommendation to Strategy	David Clarke
Reports from representatives on outside bodies	To receive six-monthly reports	Decision	Various Members

DATE OF COMMITTEE – 5 DECEMBER 2005

Topic	Overview of Decision	Decision or Recommendation to Strategy/Council	Lead Officer
Capital Programme Monitoring	To note position	To be determined	Barry Hunter/Ryan Jones
Performance Management quarterly report	Update on 2006/07 Performance Indicators	Decision	Andrew Hunkin

DATE OF COMMITTEE – 11 DECEMBER 2006
JOINT MEETING WITH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
(STEWARDSHIP) COMMITTEE (IF REQUIRED)

Topic	Overview of Decision	Decision or Recommendation to Strategy/Council	Lead Officer
Report of the Service and Financial Planning Group	To consider the Group's recommendations	To be determined	Helen Style

DATE OF COMMITTEE – 6 FEBRUARY 2007

Topic	Overview of Decision	Decision or Recommendation to Strategy/Council	Lead Officer
Budget Scrutiny	To scrutinise draft budgets for 2007/08	Recommendation to Strategy	Helen Style
Capital Programme monitoring	To note position	To be determined	Barry Hunter/Ryan Jones
Corporate Plan Scrutiny	To scrutinise draft revised Corporate Plan for 2007/11	Recommendation to Strategy	Andrew Hunkin
National Performance Indicator Comparisons 2005/06	To note position	Decision	Andrew Hunkin

DATE OF COMMITTEE – 27 MARCH 2007

Topic	Overview of Decision	Decision or Recommendation to Strategy/Council	Lead Officer
Performance Management – Quarterly Report	Update on 2006/07 Performance Indicators	Decision	Andrew Hunkin
Reports from representatives on outside bodies	To receive six-monthly reports	Decision	Various Members

OTHER TOPICS IDENTIFIED FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Topic	Lead Officer	Proposed Committee Date
Review of Process for Managing Void Properties	Chris Foti/Ryan Jones	To be undertaken when Council agrees to a full Business Process Re-engineering exercise.
Review of Council’s contribution to promoting healthy living and reducing health inequalities	Malcolm Firth	To be carried out when current re-allocation of duties is completed.
Service cost comparisons with other local authorities	Barry Hunter	To be determined
Progress on the implementation of the Children Act	Tim Mutum	To be determined
Report on the possibility of Babergh becoming involved with community sentences, following seminars delivered by Suffolk Magistrates Association	Chris Foti	To be determined
Progress report on free travel scheme for senior citizens	Dawn Williams	To be determined
Review of Grants	Tim Mutum	To be determined.
Annual Report on Quay Theatre	Tim Mutum	Summer 2007
Review of Babergh’s energy efficiency	To be determined	To be determined.

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