

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **MID SUFFOLK COUNCIL** held in the King Edmund Chamber, Endeavour House, Russell Road, Ipswich on Thursday, 26 October 2017

PRESENT:

Councillor: Derrick Haley – Chairman

Councillors:	Roy Barker	Michael Burke
	David Burn	Rachel Eburne
	John Field	Julie Flatman
	Elizabeth Gibson-Harries	Nick Gowrley
	Gary Green	Glen Horn
	Barry Humphreys MBE	Esther Jewson
	Diana Kearsley	Anne Killett
	John Levantis	Sarah Mansel
	Wendy Marchant	John Matthissen
	Lesley Mayes	Suzie Morley
	Dave Muller	Mike Norris
	Penny Otton	Timothy Passmore
	Jane Storey	Andrew Stringer
	Keith Welham	Kevin Welsby
	John Whitehead	David Whybrow
	Jill Wilshaw	

In attendance:

Chief Executive
Strategic Director (JS)
Assistant Director – Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Assistant Director – Corporate Resources
Assistant Director – Investment and Commercial Delivery
Corporate Manager – Democratic Services
Senior Governance Support Officer (LS)

74 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillors Gerard Brewster, James Caston, Paul Ekpenyong, Jessica Fleming, Kathie Guthrie, Lavinia Hadingham, Matthew Hicks and Derek Osborne.

75 TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY OR NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

The following Councillors each declared a local non-pecuniary interest in Paper MC/17/20:-

Roy Barker
John Field
Anne Killett

76 **MC/17/15 CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 JULY 2017**

RESOLUTION

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2017 be agreed.

77 **MC/17/16 CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8 AUGUST 2017**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 August 2017 be agreed.

78 **MC/17/17 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

A revised copy of Paper MC/17/2 was tabled, which included details of the Queen's Award for Enterprise Ceremony to C&K Meats Ltd, which was attended by the Chairman at the invitation of the Lord Lieutenant.

79 **LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The report was tabled.

80 **TO RECEIVE NOTIFICATION OF PETITIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COUNCIL'S PROCEDURE RULE**

None received.

81 **QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC**

None received.

82 **QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS**

Question from Councillor Eburne to the Cabinet Member for Organisational Delivery

On 22nd September 2016 this council voted by a majority to "share accommodation in Endeavour House with Suffolk County Council and other public sector partners" (report C/70/16). No business plan was provided but an annual cost of £633,000 revenue and an estimated £50,000 capital cost was noted in the report. Separate costs were noted for two satellite offices.

Please can you advise what are the costs to date, both revenue and capital, and what are the expected revenue costs for 2018/19?

Note: This should include all costs incurred since the decision was made on 22nd September including all rent (whether locations are fully occupied or not), utilities, consultant time (both for the move to Endeavour House and the work around future use the Needham Market office), removals from Needham Market to Ipswich, security provision for the Needham Market offices, fit out of Endeavour House and other locations in Mid Suffolk (such as Creeping Road) but excluding the satellite office.

Answer

The following costs are total costs, Mid Suffolk will incur 50% of these costs:

Costs incurred to date

- Revenue £419k
- Capital £40k

Expected Revenue Costs in 2018/19 excluding Stowmarket CAP (satellite office)

- £665k

The costs and options for the future of the Needham Market offices have been separated out and will be included in a separate report coming to Members later in the year.

No security costs for Needham Market have been incurred to date, and the consultant's costs for the future use of Needham Market office's will follow from the Assistant Director - Investment and Commercial Delivery.

Supplementary Question:

As previously requested by Council, will Portfolio Holders be reporting to Council on progress within their areas of responsibility?

Answer (given by Councillor Gowrley, Leader)

Yes – I can confirm that a process is being put in place for Cabinet Members to update Council on a regular basis.

Question from Councillor Matthissen to Member for Planning

How many staff have left the planning department since 1/1/17 and how many vacancies are there currently?

Answer (given by the Chief Executive as Head of Paid Service)

13 staff have left the service since 1st January 2017.

There are currently 6 Vacancies across the service, all of which are in the process of being recruited to.

Background and further detail:

While 13 'have left' as of today, a further 5 members of staff are expected to leave over the next three months.

There are a range of reasons for people leaving. It is important to note that of the 8 Planning Officers who have left since the beginning of the year, only 2 of those have moved to another Local Authority – 6 of them have either moved to private practice, retired or changed career.

Recruitment is underway for the following posts:

Development Management:

2 Grade 6 Principal Planning roles – adverts will go out imminently. These roles have been advertised recently and we were only able to recruit one of the applicants so we will be advertising again, with a revised advert.

2 Grade 5 Senior Planner roles – adverts will go out imminently.

Strategic Planning:

1 Grade 6 Senior Spatial Policy Planner (to provide extra capacity to deal with neighbourhood plans) – this is a new role to build capacity and respond to scrutiny review - advert being written

1 Grade 5 Infrastructure Officer – another new role to build capacity (advert about to go out)

1 Grade 4 Administrative officer (recruited, soon to start)

Bill Newman finishes at the end of this month. His replacement has been recruited and begins on 18th December.

Trevor Saunders has also finished his time with us but is not included in the above as that was wholly in line with the term of his interim appointment.

There are currently 3 consultants working within the DM team. We are trying to recruit a further 4 consultants in the immediate term to manage workload and provide cover during the transition from people leaving to being able to recruit their replacements. It is a challenge to find quality and experience in the marketplace, both for consultants and permanent positions.

Some general statistics about the challenges in recruitment:

As of June 2017 there were 147 vacancies for local authority planning staff across the East of England.

Almost 40% of senior planner vacancies across the East of England are covered by Agency staff.

Supplementary Question

Could we receive a regular update on the position?

Answer – Yes

Question from Councillor Matthissen to Cabinet Member for Finance

Question - What advice and information as to the effects on the council and partners of Universal Credit introduction and fuller roll out has been sought and received from areas piloting the changed benefit system, such as Waveney DC, and what measures are under way as Bury St Edmunds and Sudbury Job Centres implement now, and Stowmarket soon?

Answer

Thank You Chairman. I'd like to thank Cllr Matthissen for his question and for giving me the opportunity to update all Members on the great deal of work that is being undertaken by our staff to ensure that we are as fully-prepared as is practicably possible for the roll out of Universal Credit Full Service at Stowmarket Job Centre from February 2018.

First I'll set out what have we done so far:-

- We are part of the Trusted Partner Pilot Scheme which was a DWP initiative to work closely with a range of different landlords to monitor issues and good practice
- Established a Project Group that is meeting weekly to attempt to mitigate the impact of the UC roll out
- Customer Service staff trained to ensure that they are equipped to deal with any questions at the Customer Access Points and prevent customers being turned away
- Housing staff were given in depth training from the DWP this week
- UC added to the Corporate Risk Log
- Working in conjunction with the Communications Team to develop a Communications plan.
- Officers are attending monthly review meetings with DWP, CAB and other local advice agencies
- Officers have held meetings with Waveney DC who have subsequently shared information documentation, which they are willing for us to adapt for our own customers.
- Sharing of best practice with other local authorities.

The implementation of Universal Credit and what actions Mid Suffolk are taking to ensure they are prepared for the significant changes ahead, is to be placed on the agenda for review at Overview and Scrutiny Committee (date TBC).

Looking forward, what will we continue to do? And, what else will we do?

- Ongoing liaison with the DWP Partnership Manager for Suffolk, who is the lead for delivery of the UC LA Learning & Development Pack to LAs
- Officers will continue to attend monthly review meetings with DWP, CAB and other local advice agencies
- Continue to monitor our progress against the project plan on a weekly basis, including careful risk monitoring and take action to mitigate risks as required
- Hold a briefing for all members on what UC is, what the impact is likely to be for our residents and what the impact is likely to be for us.
- All Mid Suffolk tenants to be sent leaflet highlighting the rollout of UC and sign posting to relevant advice services

Supplementary Question

Would you support the House of Commons Committee in its push for reducing the 6 weeks waiting time for Universal Credit to 4 weeks?

Answer

Yes, as it was originally envisaged that the target time would be 4 weeks.

Question from Councillor Killett to Lead Member for Health and Wellbeing

Thank you for your recent update on Health and Wellbeing projects. As a member of the Sustainability and Transformation Partnership, what action is MSDC taking to contribute to the development in Integrated Out of Hospital Care, put forward in the STP's Five Year Forward View, which aims to help people keep their independence, improve their quality of life and to stay at home for as long as possible?

Answer

This is a complex issue which is still being worked on. The schedule of planning within the guidance being produced for the delivery arrangements, workstreams and plans for the different elements of the STP means that the plans for specific elements are still being developed by the partnership.

As a partner within the STP the council will provide support, where it can, for the successful delivery of the STP but this is not yet reflected in a detailed specific plan.

Supplementary Question

Will we use all means possible to secure the delivery arrangements?

Answer – Yes

MC/17/18 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT

Councillor Eburne, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, presented Paper MC/17/18 summarising the Committee's proceedings since her report to Council in July.

Councillor Eburne queried why Babergh Members had been able to call-in for scrutiny the item on the proposed merger, while the Mid Suffolk Members were under the impression that a call-in was not appropriate as the Cabinet had endorsed the proposed consultation and the formal decision would be made by Council at a later date. The Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer responded by outlining the position and clarifying the advice given and the Leader also responded. It was confirmed that any decision of Cabinet, whether a key decision or not, could be subject to call-in. The Babergh O&S Committee will meet to decide whether the call-in is valid within the relevant Procedure Rules.

Other matters raised included the following:-

- Request for a Joint O&S Committee to look at Community transport issues including school transport.

In this connection Members were advised that under the current Constitutional arrangements there is no provision for a Joint Committee to meet. However, Councillor Eburne will raise the transport issue at her Forward Planning meeting with the Babergh O&S Chair.

- The work of the Community Safety Partnership – as well as being scrutinised by both Councils' O&S Committees, this is the subject of scrutiny by the Police and Crime Commissioner.

MC/17/19 REVISING AND UPDATING THE COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION (CTR) SCHEME FOR WORKING AGE HOUSEHOLDS

Councillor Whitehead, Cabinet Member for Finance, introduced Paper MC/17/19, seeking Council approval to undertake a public consultation on proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, with a view to adopting a revised Scheme with effect from 1 April 2018.

By a majority vote

RESOLUTION

That public consultation be undertaken on the following proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction (CTR) Scheme:-

- *Align the MSDC Working Age Council Tax Reduction Scheme with the Housing Benefit Scheme*
- *Introduce a minimum weekly award of £1 per week*
- *Make provision for Universal Credit.*

85 **RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC**

RESOLUTION

That pursuant to Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the business specified below on the grounds that if the public were present during this item, it is likely that there would be the disclosure to them of exempt information as indicated against the item.

The Council was also satisfied that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

86 **MC/17/20 FUNDING APPROVAL FOR ACQUISITION OF LAND (Exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1)**

The Minute relating to the above-mentioned item is excluded from the public record.

A summary of the Minute made by the Proper Officer in accordance with sub-section 2 of Section 100(c) of the Local Government Act 1972 is set out below.

Councillors had before them Paper MC/17/20, which was introduced by Councillor Gowrley, Cabinet Member for Assets and Investments. The Assistant Director - Investment and Commercial Delivery responded to Members' questions.

The recommendation in the report was accepted.

Note

Councillor Whybrow left the meeting during the Questions by Councillors (Minute No 82 refers).

The business of the meeting was concluded at 7.10 p.m.

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Chairman