

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **MID SUFFOLK OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**
held in the Giles room - Endeavour House on Thursday, 19 October 2017

PRESENT:

Councillors: Rachel Eburne – Chair
Derek Osborne – Vice Chair
John Field
Lesley Mayes
Kevin Welsby
Lavinia Hadingham

In attendance: Strategic Director
Assistant Director – Corporate Resources
Assistant Director – Law and Governance
Corporate Manager – Law and Governance
Corporate Manager – Open for Business
Business Support Officer
Project and Research Officer
Governance Support Officer

45 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were no apologies received.

46 **TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY OR NON-PECUNIARY INTEREST BY MEMBERS**

There were no declarations of interests received.

47 **MOS/17/16 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 SEPTEMBER 2017**

The minutes of the meeting 14 September 2017 were confirmed as a correct record.

48 **TO RECEIVE NOTIFICATION OF PETITIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COUNCIL'S PETITION SCHEME**

None received.

49 **MOS/17/17 UPDATE ON JOINT SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS - NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING**

Paul Munson, Planning Consultant – Strategic Planning, introduced the report and said that the Neighbour Planning process was constructed across both Babergh and Mid Suffolk Districts. For both Councils there were three completed Neighbourhood Plans including the most recent from Mendlesham.

A further nineteen Neighbourhood Plans were in different stages of completions and ten of these plans were from parishes in Mid Suffolk District. Two new applications had been received, one from Mid Suffolk District and a further seventeen parishes had expressed an interest in creating a Neighbourhood Plan.

The Officer updated Members on the action points outlined in Appendix A. It was confirmed that external consultants would continue to provide support on current Neighbourhood Plans but that new plans would be allocated to an officer in the Planning Policy. The Senior Leadership Team had approved an additional Senior Planning Policy officer to join the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Team. However, until this post had been filled, one full-time and one part-time officer continued to provide the support for Neighbourhood Plan applications, and with additional help from consultants.

Members questioned the use of consultants and Officers responded that in the early stages of the Neighbourhood Planning process not many applications had been received, but a rise in applications had increased the workload for both officers and consultants and they were busy providing support to the parishes. This support included supervising Neighbourhood Plan groups and it was confirmed that a 'Memorandum of Understanding', which clarified the roles of parishes and district council in the Neighbourhood Planning process, was being rolled out to all new Neighbourhood Planning groups and, as appropriate, retrospectively to existing groups. Officers are also having one to one meetings with Neighbourhood Planning groups as part of a wider consultation exercise on the draft Joint Local Plan. The role of the officers included responding to questions, explaining the processes and time scales and as a result, many of the larger parishes had begun to allocate sites for housing developments.

The Neighbourhood Plan Website was kept up to date, outlining how the Council supported the Neighbourhood Plan process and the role of the parish council. There were also examples of the existing Neighbourhood Plans. The biggest challenge was to inform parishes of regulations, the substantial work in relations to referendums, the length of the process and timescales, which many parishes were unaware of. Officers said that the latest Neighbourhood Plan regulations had attempted to streamline and clarify the timescale for an application.

Members then discussed the requirements to proceed a Neighbourhood Plan to local referendum within five weeks of the receipt of the examiner's report. This had to be approved by Cabinet and officers felt it was not always possible to meet the various committee deadlines, and they asked members to consider whether more delegation arrangements needed to be put in place at key stages of the Neighbourhood Planning process to meet the deadlines.

The Assistant Director of Law and Governance informed the Committee that the Chief Executive had the 'Power of Emergency Delegation' and could approve Neighbourhood Plan applications if necessary. An extraordinary Cabinet meeting could also be called if necessary to approve a Neighbourhood Plan, in between the regular monthly Cabinet meetings.

The Officers continued with an update on the website, and said that the Council's Neighbourhood Planning webpages signposted readers to the My Community website. The latter contained the most up-to-date information on all aspects of Neighbourhood Planning and was the route through which Neighbourhood Planning groups accessed grant funding. The site also contained the Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap Guide and Roadmap Worksheets.

Discussions continued and Members were concerned the smaller villages were less likely to participate in the neighbourhood planning process. The officers said that smaller villages were encouraged to take an interest locally and cross parish Neighbourhood Plans were possible for these villages. Alternatively, smaller villages could rely on the Local Plan.

Members were reminded that there was a Members' briefing on Neighbourhood Planning on the 29 November 2017.

Councillor Eburne was to check the regulations for the delegation of timing and email all Members to remind them of the importance of Neighbourhood Plans for villages.

Councillor Eburne was to remind Cabinet of the five weeks turn around for a neighbourhood plan application.

RESOLVED

The Committee noted that progress had been made on delivering against the actions arising for the Task and Finish Group

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MOS/17/18 SCOPING - SUPPORTING BUSINESS GROWTH

Katherine Steel, Assistant Director – Corporate Resources, began by informing Members that the timetable for moving from the current 50% retention scheme to 100% retention of business rates had changed following the election this year because the legislation required to introduce it was not on the current statute list for Parliament. It was therefore currently unknown when this would be introduced, but the Government said that it remained committed to allowing greater local control of resources.

The Government had asked for bids from local authorities to pilot 100% retention of business rates growth in 2018 – 2019, to test further elements of the system. They were particularly interested in two tier rural areas because the pilots to date had been Combined or Unitary Authorities. Suffolk was going to bid to become part of the pilot scheme. If successful it would mean that all of the growth would be retained in Suffolk resulting in a potential additional £10 million being available to invest in Suffolk if the bid was accepted.

Lee Carvell, Corporate Manager – Open for Business, informed Members that the Babergh and Mid Suffolk draft Economic Development 'Open for Business' Strategy document was to be published soon. Members requested that all Members received a copy before the press relief.

Members discussed the possibility of inviting owners of small and micro businesses to the Committee but it was generally agreed that time restraint was an issue. It was also suggested that other organisations, who were involved with small and micro businesses should be invited to the committee.

Members were reminded of the Open for Business survey conducted in 2016 and that the analysis of the 400 responses was to be published on the website.

Members felt it was difficult to scope an area in which they felt they needed more information and that when the Local Economic Strategy was published it would be beneficial to the Committee to invite responses from small and micro businesses.

The Corporate Manager, Open for Business, said that his team helped small and micro businesses, with all areas of business related issues amongst these regulations, premises, grants and business rate. They answered queries, looked at the growth of the business, help with apprenticeships and support network. They could also assist with expansion of businesses.

Councillor Eburne said that it was difficult to define needs for small and micro businesses and asked how it was possible to measure the impact of the Local Economic Strategy.

The Officers responded that they collected business survival rates data and from this data it could be concluded that for instance, Mid Suffolk District had less business failure than the national average. The data collected was to be divided into sector, locality, type of business and scale of the business. This would be published with the Open for Business survey.

Emily Yule, Assistant Director - Law and Governance, advised Members that since the Committee felt that the Local Economic Strategy would provide a better understanding of the need of small and micro businesses they could carry out a pre-scrutiny on the strategy at the Committee Meeting in November. If members then felt a further review was necessary, a Task and Finish Group could be set up to enable Members to spend time with small and micro businesses and report back to the Committee.

Councillor Eburne recommended pre-scrutiny of draft Economic Development 'Open for Business' Strategy at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 16 November 2017.

The recommendation was seconded by Councillor Field.

By a unanimous vote

RESOLVED

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to a pre-scrutiny of the draft Economic Development 'Open for Business' Strategy at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 16 November 2017.

51 **MOS/17/19 INFORMATION BULLETIN**

The Information Bulletin was noted.

52 **MOS/17/20 FORTHCOMING DECISIONS LIST**

Members were advised that the Public Realm Transformation Project item was no longer on the Forthcoming Decisions list.

The Forthcoming Decisions List was noted.

53 **MOS/17/21 MSDC OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY FORWARD PLAN**

Members were reminded that a joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting was scheduled for the 18 December 2017.

The report on Supporting Business Growth was replaced by the Local Economic Strategy Review in November.

The report on CIL was moved to December and the purpose was changed to:

A Review of the impact and delivery of CIL regime for infrastructure, including a framework for spending CIL.

The Forward Plan was noted.

54 **MOS/17/22 BDC OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY FORWARD PLAN**

A report on the use by the Council of interims, temporary staff and consultants was be included for the Babergh Council's November agenda and Members requested a copy of this report.

The Babergh Forward Plan was noted.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 10:57am.

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Chairman