

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **MID SUFFOLK CABINET** held in the Britten room, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich on Monday, 8 January 2018 at 2:30pm

PRESENT:

Councillor: Nick Gowrley – Chair
John Whitehead – Vice Chair

Councillors: Gerard Brewster
Julie Flatman
Penny Otton
Jill Wilshaw

David Burn
Glen Horn
Andrew Stringer
David Whybrow

In attendance:

Councillor Roy Barker
Councillor Rachel Eburne
Councillor Diana Kearsley
Councillor John Matthissen
Councillor Suzie Morley

Assistant Director – Housing (GF)
Assistant Director – Finance (KS)
Chief Executive (AC)
Corporate Business Coordinator (SM – Notes)
Corporate Manager – Finance (ME)
Corporate Manager – Democratic Services (JR)
HRA Accountant (TA)
Interim Strategic Director (KN)
Strategic Director (JS)

65 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were none.

66 TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY OR NON-PECUNIARY INTEREST BY COUNCILLORS

Councillor Gowrley queried whether he needed to declare a pecuniary interest in Item 8 on the agenda as a receiver of a Local Government Pension. The Corporate Manager for Democratic Services advised that a dispensation should be in place to cover this.

67 MCA/17/35 - CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4 DECEMBER 2017

67.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2017 were declared as a correct

record subject to the following amendments:

- Minute number 55.10 be amended with the additional wording of “a handout was circulated which showed the current organisation chart of Suffolk County Council’s IT department. Members should not contact the County Council’s IT department directly, this should be done via Sara Wilcock, Assistant Director for Customer Services.”
- In relation to minute number 57.2, The Regal Stowmarket, the following words be added “it was understood the report would come into Cabinet before going to Council. It was requested this be added onto the Forward Plan for 8 January 2018.”

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

None received.

69 **QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS**

69.1 A question had been received from Councillor Matthissen:

Councillor John Matthissen to Councillor Whitehead

69.2 “Please can staff turnover data be provided with regional comparators offered by the Regional LGA.

Christmas Briefing for Mid Suffolk District Council – December 2017

This briefing note provides some examples of the support provided by the East of England LGA to the authority throughout the past year.

Employers Surveys and Benchmarking

Useful HR/Employment data and information has been compiled on behalf of local authorities in the region and analysis disseminated. Ad hoc benchmarking requests have been circulated and a copy of collated responses held so that requests are not repeated.”

69.3 **Response from Councillor Whitehead**

“Thank you for your question. On the back of the details that you have provided, Anne Conway has been speaking to the East of England Local Government Association (EELGA) and been informed that they do not routinely collect regional data. They do ad hoc benchmarking for individual authorities when requested, but nothing on a regular basis. I am therefore unable to provide you with the regional comparator turnover data as requested in your question. Should this information become available in the future then we will make use of it to see how our own data compares with others.”

69.4 Councillor Matthissen, as he had no pre-warning of the answer given, therefore had difficulty in submitting a supplementary question. He requested in the future

answers be circulated in good time.

69.5 Councillor Otton asked:

69.6 "At the Babergh District Council meeting it was agreed to hold a referendum in relation to becoming a Single Council. Therefore would Mid Suffolk District Council be doing the same and if so what would be the associated cost?"

69.7 Councillor Gowley, the Leader of the Council responded by explaining Mid Suffolk already had a mandate to pursue the merger and as such no referendum would be held. Mid Suffolk District Council would therefore await to see the results of the telephone consultation exercise and the result of Babergh District Council's referendum, although no date had been set as yet. It was thought the cost would be £100,000 - £50,000 per authority.

70 **MATTERS REFERRED BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY OR JOINT AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

70.1 Councillor Eburne explained that at the December Joint Overview and Scrutiny meeting there had been an item on the Shared Legal Services Partnership. There had been much discussion, and concerns had been raised. As such it had been recommended there should be a clearer understanding of the Legal Services Partnership. This would be brought back to a future meeting to indicate improvements made to date as the Committee were unhappy with the level of service. Finally, there should be a business case for any future shared services as without one they were not easy to scrutinise. The Leader of the Council felt this was a valid point well made.

70.2 Councillor Eburne also raised the point about how it was unclear as to the process to get recommendations to Cabinet from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee onto the agenda? The Corporate Manager for Democratic Services, the Leader of the Council and Councillor Eburne would meet to discuss and agree a process.

71 **MCA/17/36 - FORTHCOMING DECISIONS LIST**

71.1 The Forthcoming Decisions List was noted, however, the following comments were made:

71.2 There was concern about the amount of confidential items. The Democratic Services Manager explained there was a legal requirement to advertise any key decisions 28 days in advance but an A and a B report should be provided, therefore only the B part was taken in a closed session. In general Members found the Forthcoming Decisions List to be confusing and difficult to read. The Corporate Manager for Democratic Services took on board the comments made and the list would be amended accordingly.

71.3 The Forthcoming Decisions List should indicate a date as to when it was published or have a version number. This should also be updated on Modern.Gov.

71.4 Confirmation required as to whether the Suffolk Growth report should be removed or

not.

72 **MCA/17/37 - DRAFT JOINT MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND 2018/19 BUDGET**

72.1 Councillor Whitehead, the Cabinet Member for Finance, introduced report MCA/17/37 and moved the recommendation subject to an amendment in 2.10 to read "That the proposed Capital Programme in Appendix C be agreed, subject to further consideration at the February meeting for recommendation to Council." This was seconded by Councillor Wilshaw.

72.2 After a lengthy discussion it was agreed amendments the following amendments were **AGREED** and would be applied to the report before the final version was tabled at the February Cabinet meeting:-

- Page 67 graph to be reviewed as in the current format they were not clear, New Homes Bonus should also be reflected and the wording revisited. The fact that this was long term funding to be included.
- Wording to be amended in respect of Business Rates. The report to be made clear when describing additional income.
- Needham Market High School be amended to read Middle School.
- It was noted that a survey had been carried out on the Council's garage sites to determine whether there could be an improved use. A report was in the process of being prepared.
- Employee numbers directly involved in Leisure to be validated.
- In terms of charging points for electric vehicles this would be checked and reported back as the sum of money set aside appeared high.
- A breakdown of figures in relation to Wingfield Barns to be provided. In terms of the customer access points it was noted that as the public could go to either Stowmarket or Sudbury this was why Sudbury had been mentioned. However, it was agreed the narrative should be clearer in terms of the contribution towards these access points.
- Average underspend detail to be provided in the final report.

It was RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the draft Joint Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Budget proposals set out in the report be endorsed, subject to further consideration at the February meeting for recommendation to Council.
- (2) That the final General Fund Budget for 2018/19 be based on a council tax increase of 0.5%, an increase of 81p per annum for a Band D property to

support the Council's overall financial position, which will be considered further at the February Cabinet meeting.

- (3) That the draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Investment Strategy 2018/19 to 2022/23 and draft HRA Budget for 2018/19 be agreed, subject to further consideration at the February Cabinet meeting.
- (4) That the mandatory decrease of 1% in Council House rents, equivalent to an average rent reduction of £0.83 a week, as required by the Welfare Reform and Work Act be implemented.
- (5) That the Sheltered Housing Supported People cost of £3 per week to be removed. Service charges to be increased by £5 per week for each scheme (set at £4 cap per week last year) meaning a net increase of £2 per week to tenants. This will reduce the subsidy by £30k.
- (6) That the Sheltered Housing utility charges be kept at the same level.
- (7) That in principle, Right to Buy receipts should be retained to enable continued development and acquisition of new council dwellings.
- (8) That garage rents be kept at the same level.
- (9) That the revised HRA Business Plan in Appendix D be noted.
- (10) That the proposed Capital Programme in Appendix C be agreed, subject to further consideration at the February meeting for recommendation to Council.

Note: The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Budget will be subject to final determination by Cabinet and Council in February 2018.

Reason for Decisions: To ensure that Members were aware of the progress being made to set the 2018/19 budgets.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 3:40pm.

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Chair (Date)