MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the **MID SUFFOLK COUNCIL** held at the King Edmund Chamber, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich on Thursday, 23 November 2017

PRESENT:

Councillor: Derrick Haley – Chairman

Councillors:

Gerard Brewster	Michael Burke
David Burn	James Caston
Rachel Eburne	Paul Ekpenyong
John Field	Julie Flatman
Jessica Fleming	Elizabeth Gibson-Harries
Lavinia Hadingham	Matthew Hicks
Glen Horn	Barry Humphreys MBE
Diana Kearsley	Anne Killett
John Levantis	Sarah Mansel
Wendy Marchant	John Matthissen
Suzie Morley	Dave Muller
Mike Norris	Derek Osborne
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
Corporate Manager – Democratic Services
Senior Governance Support Officer (LS)

87 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillors Roy Barker, Nick Gowrley, Gary Green, Kathie Guthrie, Esther Jewson and Lesley Mayes.

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

John Field declared a non-pecuniary interest in Paper MC/17/25 as a landowner.

89 **MC/17/21 CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 OCTOBER 2017**

In response to Councillor Otton who wished to ask a question about the costs of the move out of the Needham Market and Hadleigh offices in relation to works to accommodation at Endeavour House and Gipping Court, the Chairman advised that confirming the accuracy of the minutes did not provide an opportunity for this. The Cabinet Member for Organisational Delivery said to email him with her questions and he would respond to her outside the meeting.

Councillor Eburne queried the wording of Minute No 83, which she considered did not fully reflect the debate, and it was suggested that this could be addressed by the inclusion of additional wording.

RESOLUTION

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2017 be agreed, subject to (a) the inclusion of Councillor Brewster's name in the list of apologies and (b) an amendment to Minute No 83 to reflect more fully the proceedings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

90 **LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

In the absence of the Leader, the Deputy Leader Councillor Whitehead gave a brief update as supplied by Councillor Gowrley, which related mainly to the Public Sector Leaders meeting.

Members queried why no reference had been included about the legal opinion requested by the Babergh Council in relation to the process for making decisions on the proposed merger and were advised that this advice would be obtained in writing and made available to the Members of both Councils.

In response to a question as to why information about staffing costs was not being shared across both Councils, Councillor Whitehead confirmed that a full response to questions about the differences between Babergh's and Mid Suffolk's costs and variances would be supplied outside the meeting. The absence of a Chairman's Announcements paper was commented on, together with the cancellation of the September Council meeting without the Chairman's consent to which Councillor Haley replied that although annoying he considered it a genuine oversight.

Members also queried why only two Portfolio Holder reports had been provided for this meeting, and had not been sent with the agenda, bearing in mind the need for all Members to be kept informed in this period of considerable change, and the Council's previous decision to accept unanimously a Motion for reports from all Portfolio Holders to be supplied at least quarterly. Councillor Horn, Cabinet Member for Organisational Deliver, referred to the information which was updated regularly on the internet and confirmed that future Cabinet Member reports would be sent out with the agenda. He also outlined the reasoning behind limiting the number of Portfolio reports submitted to every meeting, to avoid 8-10 reports being read out each time.

The Chief Executive explained that it had been agreed with the Leader that the submission of 2-3 reports on a rotational basis at each meeting would include the flexibility to allow pertinent key issues to be reported to Members in a timely manner. It was suggested that the Chief Executive should talk to the Leader about brief quarterly updates from all Portfolio Holders, with a bullet point-type format taking up in the region of one side of A4. A Member referred to the Council not being obliged to carry out a Motion. In the absence of the Leader, Councillor Whitehead stated that the Administration would take on the messages from both sides and would look to ensure a transparent process and outturn.

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

A petition signed by 959 residents had been received objecting to the proposed erection of 250 dwellings, School Road, Elmswell.

In accordance with the Council's Petitions Scheme, the petition has been dealt with as a Consultation Petition in connection with Planning Application No DC/17/03853 and its receipt will be reported to the relevant Committee in due course. The contents of the petition will be taken into account when the planning application is determined.

92 **QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC**

None received.

93 **QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS**

Question from Councillor Matthissen to Councillor Gowrley
How long has Paddock House remained empty in Mid Suffolk ownership, when is it anticipated re-development work will begin, and has the Council considered short-life use of the building for emergency homelessness or as a convalescent home managed rent free by an appropriate agency?

Answer (given by Councillor Whitehead, Deputy Leader)
The Council completed the purchase of Paddock House in February 2017.

Following work with the Town Council, and engagement with residents and other interested groups of people on the proposals for the site, we anticipate submitting a planning application in the spring next year and beginning development of the site once planning permission is achieved.

The Investment and Development team consulted with colleagues in Housing prior to purchase of the site. The building wasn't considered suitable for emergency homeless accommodation because of its location and configuration (bedsits); making access to support services and organisations difficult for people without transport.

Supplementary Question
What about a temporary use as a convalescent home, which is not covered in the above response?

Answer
My understanding is that this particular use was not considered at the time. Proposals with the aim of providing affordable social housing are now moving forward.

94 **TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM CABINET MEMBERS**

Members had before them updates from the Cabinet Member for Housing (Paper CMU1) and the Cabinet Member for Economy (Paper CMU2) which were circulated to Members the day before the meeting.

Questions were asked of the Cabinet Members on their reports as follows:-

To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Paper CMU1)

Councillor Otton
How much is it costing to keep the Needham Market Middle School site secure?

Answer to be provided outside the meeting.

Councillor Eburne
1. In the Budget, the borrowing cap for HRAs was lifted for councils in areas of high affordability pressure. Given we have a median house price to average salary ratio of 9.2, how does this affect Mid Suffolk?
2. Also in the Budget, the Government is going to increase Local Housing Allowance rates where private rents have been rising fastest. How does this affect Mid Suffolk?

Answer to be provided outside the meeting.

Councillor Stringer
Paragraph 3.15, it mentions the MSDC has bought 8 new build properties etc, how many houses is Mid Suffolk targeting to buy or build each year?

Answer
A development pipeline of 38 homes for rent and shared ownership is already underway, and there is financial capacity within the HRA to develop a further 60 homes. A pipeline for this delivery is currently being produced.

Councillor Stringer
I wasn't just referring to HRA financing.

Answer
We are using assets from outside the HRA

Councillor Stringer
Para 2,4.1 Housing delivery, it states that we are working to make average voids 10 days less, what is the average at the moment?

Answer
The current average void time is 45 days

Councillor Matthissen
During 2017/18 how many empty homes have been returned to occupancy as a result of council intervention, and what is the estimate of the number currently empty?

Answer
31 homes have been returned to occupancy in the first two quarters of 2017/18

The current number of empty properties stands at
182 properties: empty 6 months to 2 years
71 properties: 2 years+

Councillor Welham
No report back has been received with reference to the Passivhaus investigation – could this be key to provision**?**

Answer
Passivhaus is not on the agenda at present – too expensive but we are building properties which are more energy efficient

Comment from Councillor
Passivhaus need not be more expensive.

Councillor Ekpenyong
Bearing in mind the number of houses empty for a long time – what are the plans for bringing them back into use?

Answer
We are on the case – full answer to be provided outside the meeting.

Follow up question
Will you come back to Council with a plan to bring vacant properties back into use?

Answer
We will look into that**.**

Councillor Field
What about the 8 empty properties in Great Blakenham?

Answer to be provided outside the meeting.

Cabinet Member for Communities – I'm also in discussion about this issue with the Cabinet Member for Housing

To the Cabinet Member for Economy (Paper CMU2)

Councillor Stringer

Given the chancellor's budget declared some support for electric vehicle infrastructure, and the fact that midsuffolk has manufactures of electric vehicle charging, what specific measures are Mid Suffolk taking to ensure government funding helps midsuffolk reach its full potential in the migration from Fossil fuel to electric fuelled vehicles?

Answer

Iain Farquharson from Environmental Management is leading a 7 authority bid for Highways England funding in relation to rapid charge points along the strategic road network. One point will be in Mid Suffolk. Iain has already instigated the Kingfisher (Sudbury) fast charge point.

The (budget) £400m has only just been announced so not clear yet what that means. Iain will be following the government's pledge and see what we can draw down. Biggest issue is connection to electric network which is constrained and costs from UKPN can easily be tens of thousands. There are difficulties in establishing take up so modelling payback on investment is tricky.

Iain is exploring options with partners to identify potential charge points. Suffolk Councils policy on parking for new development requires a minimum provision of EV infrastructure.

We also support businesses by signposting support available for energy efficiency audit and grant through initiatives such as BeeAnglia and Growth Hub.

Local 'space to innovate' enterprise zone work also potentially supports feasibility and other project work to encourage electric vehicle charging points etc.

There is also a potential legislation development to require petrol stations to include charge points, in addition to a national OLEV grant scheme that funds up to 75% of the cost of installing a charge point in a domestic property.

Councillor Matthissen

When did the Council's members adopt a policy of supporting the Ipswich northern by-pass, as included in the draft Joint Local Plan?

Answer

The Joint Local Plan Consultation Document was approved by Full Council on 20th July 2017. On page 12 of the document it states that one of the *proposed* objectives for the Economy is "to support the 'Ipswich Northern Route' project and the strengthening of Ipswich and the surrounding area as the key economic driver of the County." Councillors unanimously approved this document for consultation. The questions that followed this section in the document included the question, "Do you agree with the identified objectives?" and as such it was part of the consultation that has just finished. Officers are still working through the many responses that have been received as part of that consultation.

Councillor Otton
Do we have the name of the Company which might be involved in unlocking the potential of Eye Airfield (para 3.6 of the report)?

Answer
To be advised when known.

Questions relating to other Cabinet responsibilities

Councillor Welham
Requesting update on Public Realm review, Joint Leisure Strategy and Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre Management?

Answer to be provided outside the meeting

Councillor Mansel
Queried the arrangements for phones and computer use in Endeavour House.

Answer
The Cabinet Member for Organisational Delivery referred to forthcoming member training and the Assistant Director – Law and Governance confirmed that the phones in the Members' area can now be accessed without the need for a log in.

95 **MC/17/22 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT**

Councillor Eburne, Chair of the Mid Suffolk District Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee, presented Paper MC/17/22 updating Members on the October and November meetings of the Committee. She also referred to the Joint meeting of Mid Suffolk and Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Members which would be held on 18 December. Members who were not on the Committee were welcome to come along.

The report was noted.

96 **RECOMMENDATION AND REPORT FROM JOINT AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

JAC/17/10 MID YEAR REPORT ON TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2017/18

Councillor Morley, Mid Suffolk Chair of the Joint Audit and Standards Committee, introduced the Committee's recommendation to note the Mid Year position.

The Assistant Director – Corporate Resources answered questions from Members as follows:-

Review of Funding Circle performance (Page 27 – paras 2.4 and 2.10)

Review concluded – No new investments to be made and as repayments come in from existing investments that money will instead be invested elsewhere.

Regulatory updates – qualifications/experience of person authorised to make investment decisions, possible delegation of technical detail (Pages 19-20 – paras 4.1.1, 4.1.2 and 4.2.3)

Further guidance and the outcome of the current consultation awaited.

Current value of CCLA (long term investment) – (Page 26)

Impact of current performance under consideration.

Current value of CCLA (long term investment) – (Page 26)
Impact of current performance under consideration, but always anticipated to be a long term investment, so confident that the market value will increase again before the Council needs to redeem the investment.

RESOLUTION

That it be noted that Treasury Management activity for the first six months of 2017/18 was in accordance with the approved Treasury Management Strategy, and that, except for one occasion when Babergh District Council exceeded its daily bank account limit with Lloyds by £120k for one day, as mentioned in Appendix D, paragraph 1.1 of Paper JAC/17/10. Both Councils have complied with all Treasury Management Indicators for this period.

Note: It is a requirement of the Code of Practice on Treasury Management that the full Council notes the Mid Year position.

97 **MC/17/23 BOUNDARY REVIEW - RESPONSE TO STAGE TWO CONSULTATION ON WARDING PATTERNS**

Councillor Whitehead introduced Paper MC/17/23 which had been circulated with the agenda. Members also had before them the Administration's response to the LGBCE which Councillor Whitehead had circulated prior to the meeting and which he read out. The draft proposals had generally received the Administration's support except in two ward areas for which counter-proposals had been put forward. He referred to the recommendation in Paper MC/17/23 which allowed for further comments arising from the meeting to be included in the Council's response.

During the course of the ensuing debate, Members put forward views and comments on various aspects of the proposals, as referred to below, for inclusion by the Chief Executive as part of the Council's formal response.

- Councillor Eburne – Haughley and Wetherden – proposals are based on an erroneous number for the electorate because an incorrect boundary with Stowmarket has been used – if not corrected, this would lead to a further review being triggered almost immediately after the current one because the population could be 26% under the required number.
- Councillor Matthissen – Harleston – Onehouse, Shelland and Harleston work together and have a number of shared community facilities – concern about the percentages if the current proposals go ahead unless changes are made to Haughley and Wetherden – request for concerns to be included in the response.

- Councillor Mansel – disappointed at basic spelling errors in the LGBCE's report and that the East had been confused with the west. Supported comments about Haughley and Harleston, also general concern about western parishes expecting considerable planning growth potentially leading to significant increases in electorates.
- Councillor Otton – queried the wording 'best reflected the communities in this area' under para 35 on page 49 of the report as she agreed with the views expressed about Harleston as above. She also had reservations about the suggested ward name of Onehouse.
- Councillor Stringer – would have preferred to see a joint response with the administration.
- Councillor Norris – queried the Creetings being put with Needham Market – they have little in common.
- Councillor Whybrow and others – agreed that the Haughley issue should be raised.
- Councillor Gibson-Harries – concerned about the distance north-south in some of the proposed wards to be covered by one Member eg Hoxne / Horham / Redlingfield, but understands the difficulties in the very rural areas.
- General concerns were expressed about the effect of planning growth on electoral numbers, the balance between community interests and electoral equality, and whether some of the single member larger wards, eg Needham Market, should have two Members, also the inaccuracies in some of the figures used by the LGBCE.

Councillor Whitehead responded to the comments made by reiterating that the LGBCE was particularly focussed on electoral equality, although he recognised the concerns expressed about the community interest aspect. He was happy to work with the officers on the Council's response, and would include the comments about Haughley / Harleston in the administration response, and general support was expressed for this approach. He indicated that Needham Market on its own is too large to be a single member ward but too small to be a standalone two member ward. Accordingly some of the hinterland villages must be included in the new Needham Market ward to produce good electoral equality.

The Assistant Director – Law and Governance referred to a consequential amendment that would be required to make the county division boundaries co-terminous with the town and district ward boundaries.

Councillor Haley referred to Members making their own submissions about matters of particular concern to their Wards, particularly in relation to areas where considerable growth was anticipated.

RESOLUTION

That the Chief Executive be authorised to submit the Council's formal response to the stage two consultation on warding patterns, including the comments appended to Paper MC/17/23 at Appendix 2, together with the further comments of the Administration as circulated to Members at the Council meeting and points made by Members as above.

98 **MC/17/24 DRAFT TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS 2018/19**

Members commented on various matters and requested that the following be taken into account when finalising the Timetable:-

- To avoid clashes of evening meetings with Ipswich Town FC home fixtures, because of parking issues
- To avoid clashes with Suffolk Council meetings (22 March 2018 was quoted as an example)
- The information on page 26 regarding room capacities was queried – in particular, the Britten Room capacity was referred to as being inadequate for a recent Committee meeting
- Mid Suffolk Licensing and Regulatory Committee meetings to be scheduled for10.30 a.m., as agreed
- Corporate link to Councillor diaries requested (the Corporate Manager – Democratic Services confirmed that this would be implemented through the Modern.Gov Committee system)

RESOLUTION

That the draft Timetable of Meetings for 2018/19 (Paper MC/17/24) be agreed, subject to amendments as necessary to reflect the comments made at the meeting, as set out above.

99 **RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC**

That pursuant to Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act1972, 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.

100 **MC/17/25 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 OCTOBER 2017 (EXEMPT INFORMATION BY VIRTUE OF PARAGRAPH 3 OF PART 1)**

RESOLUTION

That approval of Confidential Minute No 86 of the meeting held on 24 October 2017 be deferred to allow the inclusion of additional detail.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 8 p.m.

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Chairman

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL MEETING 23 NOVEMBER 2017

Minute No 90 – Leader's Announcements

presented by Councillor Whitehead, Deputy Leader

I received a brief update from Councillor Gowrley regarding last Friday's Suffolk Public Sector Leaders meeting which he asked me to share with you.

They are developing a proposal for Suffolk – Age Friendly County which I'm sure Members will agree is an important topic given that in the medium term 1/3rd of our population will be over the age of 65, with many significantly older.

The group discussed how to move the SPIF forward – the next steps about how it will inform our infrastructure needs and planning decisions in the future will come to a future Council meeting.

They then discussed a 'very disappointing' letter from SoS Chris Grayling advising that the Government will not be able to meet our timetable for taking on Civil Parking Enforcement. We see this as a priority so will continue with the work, stick to our timetable to 'put it on the SoS's desk' and seek the support of our Suffolk MPs to try to then find the parliamentary time to get it in place.

Finally on a different topic – during the move a number of photos came to light of past Chairmen. Sadly only 2 or 3 of these past Chairman are still with us, as none of the photos are particularly recent, so we intend to put them into a Council and Chairmen album unless members have any other suggestions.

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