

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **MID SUFFOLK OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in the King Edmund Chamber, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich on Thursday, 16 November 2017

PRESENT:

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| Councillors: | Rachel Eburne – Chair | Lavinia Hadingham |
| | James Caston | Derek Osborne |
| | John Field | Kevin Welsby |

In attendance:

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| Councillors: | Gerard Brewster |
| | Nick Gowrley |
| | Strategic Director |
| | Assistant Director – Corporate Resources |
| | Assistant Director – Housing |
| | Assistant Director – Law and Governance |
| | Assistant Director – Open for Business |
| | Corporate Manager – Homeless Prevention and Financial Inclusion |
| | Corporate Manager – Law and Governance |
| | Governance Support Officer |

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/SUBSTITUTIONS

An apology of absence was received from Councillor Lesley Mayes.

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

There were no declarations of interests.

3 MOS/17/23 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 OCTOBER 2017

It was **RESOLVED:-**

- (i) That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2017 be confirmed as a true record.**

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

None received.

5 MOS/17/24 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HOMELESS REDUCTION ACT (HRA)

- 5.1 The Corporate Manager – Homeless Prevention and Financial Inclusion, introduced report MOS/17/24 and listed the main implications of the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA), including:
- The HRA was to be implemented 3 April 2018;
 - An increase in the number of successful homelessness applications were expected to increase to 300 by the end of the financial year (reference table 7.7.2);
 - Restructuring of the team and recruitment were to be completed by the start of 2018;
 - The introduction of the HRA would bring significant changes to how applications were managed, and would have a major impact on the work load.
 - Introduction of one protocol across Suffolk in 2018 were to ensure a better application process;
 - Corporation with Solo Housing had so far place three people successfully in privately rented rooms, four people were awaiting to be referred and two applications were being processed for a match for a privately rented room;
 - A new BMSDC Joint Homelessness Strategy was being developed for 2018;
 - The Council was undertaking negotiations to rent a property to provide temporary accommodation for homeless people, which would reduce the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation;
 - A Homelessness Act Implementation Project would monitor the work and the risks associated with the preparation work for the HRA on a weekly basis.
- 5.2 Two advisors from Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) were to be seconded to the Homelessness team and work as part of the team. Previously the cost of the CAB service had been £650 per case but by brining the service in-house this would be reduced to between £350 - £400 per case. This new way of working would also enable officers and team members for CAB to visit clients together.
- 5.3 The Council was obliged to place homeless people in suitable accommodation and the team was working closely with for instance the Housing Association to achieve this as quickly as possible and local allocation rate was lower than the national average.
- 5.4 Members discussed the Flexible Homeless Support Grant (FHSG), which had not been spent this year. It was noted that new staff costs were to be funded from this grant and from the Financial Inclusion Budget.
- 5.5 Members raised concerns that not enough funding was allocated to allow for the creation of temporary accommodation in Stowmarket and the extra work involved with introducing the HRA. Members suggested that a recommendation was made to Cabinet to ensure there was enough money allocation in the Housing Revenue budget.

- 5.6 It was anticipated there would be an increase in demand for temporary accommodation once the Homelessness Reduction Act was implemented and that the proposed development of temporary accommodation would help to alleviate this demand.
- 5.7 It was planned that this new temporary accommodation would be used across both Councils and charges would be made to Babergh District Council for the use of the service in Mid Suffolk District.
- 5.8 A business case for the development of the temporary accommodation was to be presented to the Senior Leadership Team in due course.
- 5.9 Funding for cleaning the property and a warden were to be funded from the General Fund budget.
- 5.10 Members agreed that it was important that the Housing Team and the Council could move quickly to develop this opportunity for temporary housing as it was a better service and would save money for the Council.
- 5.11 Members agreed that an update was to be provided for the New Homelessness Reduction Act six months (October 2018) after implementation.
- 5.12 Members agreed to forward a recommendation to Cabinet to ensure that there was enough funding for the proposed rental of a property in Stowmarket for temporary accommodation and for the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act.

By a unanimous vote.

It was RESOLVED:-

- i) The information contained within the report be noted**
- ii) That a recommendation to Cabinet be made to ensure there is enough funding to support the implementation of The Homelessness Reduction Act and the rental of temporary accommodation in Stowmarket**
- iii) That the Homelessness Reduction Act implementation to be review in October 2018**

6

MOS/17/25 SCOPING A REVIEW OF THE LEGAL SERVICES PARTNERSHIP

- 6.1 The Assistant Director, Law and Governance, presented the tabled papers to Members, they were:
- Babergh/Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Committees – Review Scoping Document;
 - Appendix 1 – Objectives for the Shared Legal Services;

- Diagnostic report for West Suffolk and Mid Suffolk and Babergh Legal Services.

6.2 Members discussed the scoping document and raised various questions including:

- Did the Shared Legal Services operate within the budget;
- How was service delivery measured;
- How quickly did the Shared Legal Services respond to cases and what was the impact these responses on other services within the Council;
- What was the level of expertise;
- How did Members access Shared Legal Services;
- Section 106

Members agreed that the tabled scoping document was completed.

It was RESOLVED:-

(i) The scoping document be noted.

7 MOS/17/26 INFORMATION BULLETIN

7.1 The Assistant Director, Corporate Resources, gave a brief explanation of the Information Bulletin Mid Suffolk Business Rate Relief Summary 2017/18.

7.2 In response to Members questions it was explained that the Pub Relief 2017 was a Government grant up £1000 provided for a period to help pubs during the recession and the Public House Relief was a standard relief, which Public House Landlords could apply for.

7.3 The Assistant Director, Corporate Resources was to provide Members with the figure for Total Rateable Value for Small Business Rates Relief.

It was RESOLVED:-

(i) That the Information Bulletin Mid Suffolk Business Rate Relief Summary 2017/18 be noted.

8 MOS/17/27 FORTHCOMING DECISIONS LIST

8.1 Members requested confirmation that the Leisure Strategy report was presented to Cabinet in December.

It was RESOLVED:-

(i) That the Forthcoming Decisions List be noted.

9 **MOS/17/28 MSDC OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY FORWARD PLAN**

9.1 Members requested that the item Community Transport Services was added to future items for the Committee for review.

It was RESOLVED:-

(i) That the forward Plan for Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny be noted.

10 **MOS/17/29 BDC OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY FORWARD PLAN**

It was RESOLVED:-

(i) That the Forward Plan for Babergh District Council be noted.

11 **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC (WHICH TERM INCLUDES THE PRESS)**

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED:-

(i) That under section 100(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and the press be excluded from the meeting for item MOS/17/30 on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of schedule 12A of the Act in the paragraph registered against the Item.

12 **PART II - MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED WITH THE PRESS AND PUBLIC EXCLUDED**

12.1 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 MOS/17/30, which was presented by the Corporate Manager – Open for Business and who responded to Members' questions and concerns.

The report was noted.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 11.35am.

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The Chair