

## **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, 14 June 2018

### **PRESENT:**

Councillor: Keith Welham - Chair

Councillors: James Caston Elizabeth Gibson-Harries  
John Field Kevin Welsby  
Lavinia Hadingham

### **In attendance:**

Councillors: Cabinet Member for Organisational Delivery (GH)  
Cabinet Member for Housing (JW)

Officers: Chief Executive (AC)  
Strategic Director (KN)  
Assistant Director – Corporate Resources (KS)  
Assistant Director – Housing (GF)  
Corporate Manager – HR & OD (AC)  
Corporate Manager – BMBS (JWN)  
Corporate Manager – Democratic Services (JR)  
Leadership and Organisational Development Business Partner (RG)  
Governance Support Officer (HH)

Note: The Committee held a one-minute silence at 12.00 noon for the victims of the fire at Grenfell Tower.

### **1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies were received from Councillors Mayes and Osborne.

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

There were no declarations of interests.

### **3 MOS/18/1 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 MARCH 2018**

**It was RESOLVED: -**

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 15 March 2018 be confirmed as a correct record with the following amendment:

Minute number 26.10 to read as follows: 'Currently the Mid Suffolk's Land Supply for

the previous two years was as at 70% of five years'.

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

None received.

**5 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TRAINING FOR MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE**

The meeting was adjourned at 9.30 am to 9.50 am for Member training.

**6 MOS/18/2 INFORMATION BULLETIN**

- 6.1 The Assistant Director- Corporate Resources introduced the Information Bulletin on Staff Turnover and Welfare and drew Members attention to the tabled paper, which replaced the table 'Reasons for Absence', on pages 10 to 11. She said that the total lost days for absence was 4470 and that 50% of these days came under the top three reasons for absence. The Assistant Director said that the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) figures were the total number of workers and that these figures were only available data from the HSE.
- 6.2 Councillor Gibson - Harries suggested to the Committee to get the Health Scrutiny Board involved and that Officers could make a referral if Members felt this was appropriate.
- 6.3 Councillor Caston enquired if Human Resources (HR) collected any data on presenteeism and the response was that currently this kind of data was not collected, but that the Council was working with the HR Business Partner to include staff presenteeism in future data collection.
- 6.4 The Chief Executive said that it was the job of the Manager to identify any issues related to staff, and that Managers had to have a good relationship with staff to be able to do so. According to the Staff Survey presenteeism did not appear to be a problem and staff had embraced both the move to Endeavour House and Agile Working. He pointed out that for Managers, Agile Working had generated other issues to watch for such as loneliness and monitoring of productivity.
- 6.5 The Corporate Manager – Human Resources & Organisational Development (HR & OD) informed Members that staff had access to a variety of counselling services including a 24 hours, 7 days a week helpline, which was advertised in various places for staff to see.
- 6.6 Members debated the issues and it was generally felt that it would be beneficial to compare the Council's data with data from other public-sector authorities. Others felt that further comparison to the private sector would add value to the data. It was also suggested that the data on how many staff, who joined the Council and left after three months would contribute to the understanding of staff turnover and welfare.

- 6.7 Councillor Welsby said that he believed that it was recognised by the Senior Leadership Team that there had been a transitional period caused by the move to Endeavour House and he asked, when did the leadership expect things to return to normal.
- 6.8 Councillor Glen Horn, the Cabinet Member for Organisational Delivery said that everything had been done for staff to mitigate the move to Endeavour House and that it was recognised that some staff, who had considered leaving anyway, had made the decision to leave before the move to Endeavour House.
- 6.9 Councillor Gibson-Harries asked about vacancies within the Council and whether the Council was recognised as a good place to work. She believed that if the staff was well looked after, it would contribute to the smooth running of the Council. She said that Members relied on the Leadership Team to inform them, if this was not the case.
- 6.10 The Chief Executive responded that the Corporate Risk Register was presented to the Joint Audit and Standards Committee on an annual basis. This risk assessment had identified the Planning Department as an area of risk due to the issues with recruiting and retaining planning staff. This and similar information was available in the Organisational Service Plan and that each department produced service plans looking at staff levels, recruitment, sickness and welfare. However, should there be a serious problem with staff issues, the relevant Cabinet Member would be informed to brief the Members.
- 6.11 Members agreed that the recruitment issues in the Planning Department were of concern and they discussed ways of receiving data from the officers to enable them to review this.
- 6.12 The debate continued, and Members discussed the increase in mental health data in the table 'Reasons for Absence'. This indicated an increase in this type of absence. The Corporate Manager – HR and OD reassured Members that work was being undertaken to raise awareness of mental health issues and she explained a work programme had been put in place to support staff and managers dealing with issues in connection with staff with mental health issues.
- 6.13 The Chief Executive explained that there had been a reduction in the stigma surrounding mental health issues and that this and increased awareness were contributing factors to the increase of absence for mental health reasons.
- 6.14 Members considered if further data was required regarding staff turnover and welfare. It was agreed that currently the main area of concern was staff recruitment and retention in the Planning Department. They felt that retention of staff, vacancies and sickness required further data collection and that this should be presented in a comparable format with other similar Councils to

provide a form of benchmarking for the Council's own data. This data was to form part of a report and be presented to the Committee in three to four months' time.

By a unanimous vote

**It was RESOLVED: -**

- 1.1 That a report be forwarded to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October with comparison general data for the Planning Department and one other department on sickness and absences for a period of three years up to the end of June 2018 and that the comparison be for Mid Suffolk District Council and four other rural district authorities.**
- 1.2 That the report forwarded to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October includes details on vacancies in the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Planning Department.**
- 1.3 That the report forwarded to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October includes detailed information relating to planning staff, who have left within three months of joining the Council, and reasons for leaving the post if available.**

## **7 MOS/18/3 MEMBERS TO AGREE MSDC WORK PLAN FOR 2018/19**

- 7.1 Members discussed items to be added to the Work Plan and concerns were raised regarding Community Transport and if the Committee could add any value to scrutinise this item. Community Transport was under the remit of Suffolk County Council and had been scrutinised recently by them.
- 7.2 The Committee raised questions regarding the Community Grant item and considered if a report of the breakdown detailing, who had accessed the Grant, how much had been spent on each item and what type of organisations had received grants should be presented to the Committee.
- 7.3 The Chief Executive suggested that officers scoped this issue to see if scrutiny should be undertaken.
- 7.4 Scrutiny of Universal Credit was added to the Work Plan for December.
- 7.5 Members made the following changes:
  - The items 'HQ Sites' and 'Review of public attendance at public meetings' to be moved to August
  - The report on Voids in August to be an information Bulletin
  - The pre-planning Application report to be moved to September
  - The Update on the Homelessness Reduction Act to postponed to November
  - The Waste Strategy to be included in September

- The report on Staff Turnover and Welfare for the Planning Department to be included in October

By a unanimous vote

**It was RESOLVED: -**

**That the Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan be confirmed subject to the above changes.**

## **8 MOS/18/4 MSDC OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TIMETABLE**

- 8.1 Members discussed the timetable and agreed that joint meetings with Babergh District Council were to be alternated bi-monthly.
- 8.2 Members discussed the possibility that Babergh was considering changing the start time of the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 8.3 It was pointed out that the meeting on 28 October was at the same time as Suffolk County Council's Full Council meeting.

By a unanimous vote

**It was RESOLVED: -**

**That the Timetable be confirmed.**

## **9 MOS/18/5 FORTHCOMING DECISIONS LIST**

**It was RESOLVED: -**

**That the Forthcoming Decisions List be noted.**

## **10 MOS/18/6 BDC OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN**

**It was RESOLVED: -**

**That the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan be noted.**

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

By a unanimous vote

**It was RESOLVED: -**

**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 Committee was also satisfied that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

**12 MOS/18/7 BABERGH AND MID SUFFOLK BUILDING SERVICES (BMBS) - A REVIEW OF FIRST YEAR TRADING AND NEXT STEPS**

The Cabinet Member for Housing introduced Report MOS/18/7.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 12.35 pm.

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Chair &(Date)