

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **MID SUFFOLK OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in the The John Peel Centre, Church Walk, Stowmarket, IP14 1ET on Thursday, 27 June 2019

PRESENT:

Councillor: Keith Welham (Chair)
Keith Scarff (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: James Caston Andrew Mellen
David Muller Harry Richardson

In attendance:

Officers: Governance Support Officer
Corporate Manager - Democratic Services

Apologies: Lavinia Hadingham

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

2.1 Councillor Muller declared a local non-pecuniary interest in his role as a Member of the Board of Trustee of Stowmarket Citizen Advice.

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

3.1 None received.

4 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC

4.1 None received.

5 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS

5.1 None received.

6 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TRAINING FOR MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

6.1 The Corporate Manager for Democratic Services provided training to Members on good scrutiny, Councillor Call for Action and the Call-in procedure.

6.2 Members then discussed a couple of case studies which focussed on topics covered in the training.

6.3 Members asked if they could receive some examples of Councillor Call for Action which had involved issues such as community use of land.

7 CHAIR'S UPDATE ON THE CFPS SCRUTINY SYMPOSIUM

- 7.1 The Chair provided briefing on the Centre for Public Scrutiny Symposium:
- 7.2 I attended just last week a Scrutiny Symposium with the Chair of Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee and two officers: Jan Robinson and Henriette Holloway. The main purpose of the symposium was to introduce new Statutory Guidelines for Scrutiny recently published by the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government.
- 7.3 This is statutory guidance on what Government expects of us. All O&S committees must comply. It should be read alongside the Overview and Scrutiny Protocol set out in Mid Suffolk's Constitution.
- 7.4 Some key points from the presentation and the workshops held during the afternoon:
- We should only choose to scrutinise topics when we can expect an outcome which will improve the lives of some or all or some of our residents. The outcomes should be in the form of SMART objectives.
 - The policies and procedures that we scrutinise should be 'owned' by Cabinet and the relevant Cabinet Member should be held to account and tasked with considering and, where appropriate, implementing the recommendations of Scrutiny Committee. It is helpful if the relevant Cabinet member is present to hear the debate and, where appropriate, to give a view.
 - The culture around the scrutiny function is key. We should be viewed by Cabinet and officers as a critical friend. We should not appear to be confrontational or looking for mistakes.
 - Committees are advised to carry out an early scrutiny of budgets and financial planning; not wait until the budget and covering report has been virtually finalised so all we can do is check the arithmetic and look for typographical errors.
- 7.5 I asked whether or not we should instigate a scrutiny of the Local Enterprise Partnership to be carried out by representatives of the local authorities in Norfolk and Suffolk. Little is known about where their money comes from and how they decide where to spend it. New legislation now requires, within the governance framework of the LEP, an external review by local authorities. Perhaps we need to find out more about this.
- 7.6 Work Planning is key to good scrutiny. Up to now we have left forward planning to late in our agendas and we have had very little discussion. Members are usually packing up their briefcases and bags. In future this item will be moved up the agenda.
- 7.7 We are fortunate to have two members of staff able to give a significant portion of their time to researching, collating information and briefing other officers as well as on work directly associated with our meetings.

- 7.8 It was stressed that we must remain independent of the administration, not seen as opposition to the administration or, indeed, defending decisions on political grounds.
- 7.9 This committee has power to access all the information it needs to carry out scrutiny. We will often be dealing with confidential information and must therefore occasionally debate with the public and press excluded.
- 7.10 Topics can be scrutinised in several ways – at a single meeting; by way of a longer-term task and finish review by the whole committee; or by setting up a task and finish group to report back to committee.
- 7.11 Following on from the training earlier this morning and my quick run through what I picked up at the symposium, I hope you all have a reasonable idea of what is expected of this committee. In addition to our separate meetings, we will be having joint meetings with Babergh Scrutiny Committee from time to time when topics are of common interest. And I'm happy to talk to any member about our work.

8 MOS/19/1 MSDC OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN

- 8.1 The Members discussed the workplan and it was suggested that the draft General Budget and the Housing Revenue Budget were pre-scrutinised in December.
- 8.2 Councillor Caston suggested scrutiny of planning enforcement, in relation to the efficiency of the enforcement and to identify any issues relating to Planning Enforcement.
- 8.3 Councillor Welham suggested that Community Transport Service was included in the Work Plan and that an officer could be invited to provide a briefing, which should include transport to leisure services and access to town centres.
- 8.4 Citizens' Advice (CA) was discussed by the Committee and whether there was sufficient funding for the organisation after the Suffolk County Council's funding ceased next year.
- 8.5 Councillor Muller declared a Local Non-Pecuniary interest as Member of the Board of Trustee for Stowmarket CA suggested that Sudbury and Stowmarket CA were invited as witnesses to the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee in August
- 8.6 He said that the CA could also provide statistics and further information to the committee.
- 8.7 Members ask for information regarding the various CA organisations in the Districts.
- 8.8 It was agreed that the Managers of Stowmarket and Sudbury CA should be

invited to provide a presentation.

- 8.9 Councillor Welham suggested scrutiny of Assets and Investments in the Districts in relation to the strategy of purchasing commercial properties such as the old Aldi Building in Stowmarket.
- 8.10 Councillor Scarff enquired how the monitoring of the performance outcome of the two Police Community Support Officers recently appointed in Stowmarket was reported to the Council.
- 8.11 The Committee was informed that a six-month update would be provided to Full Council on the 27 July 2019

It was RESOLVED: -

That the Stowmarket and Sudbury Citizens Advice Managers be invited to attend at the Committee meeting on the 19 July 2019 to provide a presentation on the work of the Citizen Advice

9 MOS/19/2 MID SUFFOLK OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TIMETABLE 2019/20

It was RESOLVED: -

That the Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Committee Timetable be agreed

11 MOS/19/3 FORTHCOMING DECISIONS LIST

It was RESOLVED: -

That the Forthcoming Decisions List be noted

12 MOS/19/4 BDC OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN

It was RESOLVED: -

That the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan be noted.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 11.56 am.

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Chair (& Date)