

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL** held as a Virtual Teams Meeting on Thursday, 25 March 2021 at 5.30 p.m.

PRESENT:

Councillor: Barry Humphreys MBE (Chairman)
Paul Ekpenyong (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Oliver Amorowson Gerard Brewster
David Burn Terence Carter
James Caston Rachel Eburne
John Field Julie Flatman
Jessica Fleming Dr Helen Geake
Peter Gould Kathie Guthrie
Lavinia Hadingham Matthew Hicks
Sarah Mansel John Matthissen
Andrew Mellen Richard Meyer
Suzie Morley David Muller
Mike Norris Penny Otton
Timothy Passmore Dr Daniel Pratt
Harry Richardson Keith Scarff
Andrew Stringer Wendy Turner
Rowland Warboys Keith Welham
John Whitehead

In attendance:

Officers: Chief Executive (AC)
Strategic Director (KN)
Assistant Director Corporate Resources (KS)
Monitoring Officer (EY)
Assistant Director – Environment and Commercial Partnerships (CC)
Assistant Director – Planning for Growth (TB)
Head of HR and OD (SH)
Corporate Manager – Governance and Civic Office (JR)

Apologies:

Stephen Phillips

Prior to the start of the meeting, the Chairman asked Councillors to observe a minute's silence to mark the anniversary of the first lockdown.

67 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

There were no declarations made by Members.

68 MC/20/27 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 FEBRUARY 2021

68.1 The Chairman advised Members that Councillor Warboys and Councillor Mansel had identified some inaccuracies in the Minutes and those amendments had been made to the Minutes.

68.2 Councillor Matthissen advised that paragraph 65.4 of the Minutes should read Environmental Social and Governance report, not Environmental Social and Government report.

It was RESOLVED:-

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 18th February 2021 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

69 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

69.1 The Chairman invited the Leader of the Council to make her announcements.

69.2 Councillor Morley announced the following:

Covid-19

69.3 The Leader expressed her support for all those who have been directly and indirectly impacted by the pandemic over the last year with thoughts and prayers going to those who have lost family and friends across the world, and of course, in particular to residents in Mid Suffolk.

69.4 The Leader thanked all of the Council's staff, partners, particularly in the NHS, Police and County Council, and fantastic communities and local volunteers; who had worked tirelessly over the last year to tackle Covid 19.

69.5 Progress with the distribution of the vaccine across Suffolk, and particularly in Mid Suffolk continued to be extremely effective. The Leader stated she was confident that all those who have not yet been offered the vaccine would do so in line with the Government's roadmap, and also that this would be the case for all second doses and any boosters that may be required. She would continue to meet regularly with the Chief Executive of the CCG and through the regular Local Outbreak Engagement Boards to ensure this remained on track.

69.6 The infection rates, hospitalisations and deaths continue to fall in Suffolk; but it is essential that people don't become complacent now. There was no such thing as a 'post Covid' world and people needed to learn to adapt to living with Covid.

69.7 It was essential that the Council had effective recovery plans and in particular an economic recovery plan. This work was developing well, in line with the timetable for the roadmap out of lockdown, and the Leader would ensure that it was shared with all Councillors, and progress reported to all Councillors during the pre-election period, which started today.

Gateway 14

69.8 The Chancellor's Freeport announcement, which included the Council's site at Gateway 14, was really welcome news, this will inevitably help strengthen economic recovery; enabling the district to 'thrive' rather than just 'survive'.

69.9 The Leader was pleased to have launched the Council's business Innovation Network. This built on the success of Innovation Labs in Stowmarket, which the Council had helped fund; and the inaugural Innovation Awards which was hosted virtually before Christmas. Innovation formed a key plank of the Council's economic recovery plan; and subject to planning, the Council looked forward to seeing a new Innovation Centre coming forward at Gateway 14.

69.10 The Leader took the opportunity to remind local businesses to recheck whether they were eligible for additional financial support from the Government's Covid-19 Business Support Grant schemes that closed on 31 March 2021.

Environment

69.11 The Leader commented that it was reassuring to see the Garden Waste service restart again on 8th March. The service was paused for a short period earlier in this year due to the impact of Covid. The Leader reassured all of the Council's customers that they will not be charged whilst the service was not being delivered.

69.12 The Leader was pleased to share two environmental projects which the Council have been able to secure with external funding. The first was the £1.4m of Government grant received jointly with Babergh District Council for carbon-saving measures at leisure centres and other buildings. Cabinet has also now confirmed funding of £300k for a pilot solar carport scheme at Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre in Stowmarket; match funded by the Government's Getting Building Fund.

69.13 This project will enable the Council to produce energy through solar panels to help run the leisure centres, as well as providing battery storage, and a number of electric vehicle charging points. The work was due to be completed by Spring 2022.

69.14 The Cabinet had also recently approved £50k to enable the Council's transfer from diesel to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil fuel which will reduce the Council's carbon emissions from vehicles by up to 90%.

Communities

69.15 Despite the impact of Covid, and the huge pressure that this had placed upon on the Environmental Health Officers, the Council has successfully prosecuted a company selling baked goods at various Suffolk markets, including Stowmarket. The company in question had been fined nearly £10,000 for food hygiene offences including failure to maintain high risk foods at safe temperatures, selling unfit food, failure to provide adequate hand washing facilities and failure to protect food from contamination.

69.16 Cabinet has also awarded £370k of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to support the Council's vision to build communities with bright and healthy futures. This included over £239,000 towards the expansion of Mendlesham Health Centre, to provide increased clinical space for a variety of health care professionals, including clinical pharmacists, physiotherapists, chiropodists, phlebotomists and counsellors. It is hoped that the expansion will encourage hospital consultants to have outpatient clinics at the health centre, providing vital services for local residents on their doorstep and alleviating the need for them to travel miles to the nearest hospital. Sustainable transport options will also be promoted with patients benefitting from the installation of two new electric vehicle charging points and cycle racks.

69.17 The Cabinet had also invested in a number of health and wellbeing projects through CIL. These include:

- £18k to help fund a running track at Gislingham's Church of England Primary School, that will be used for the Daily Mile initiative and by the wider community, outside of school hours, for local clubs.
- £62,532 for Haughley to improve and expand the Ron Crascall Pavilion and to revitalise King George's Field. This will support multiple local organisations, including the football club, bowls club, Scouts, Royal British Legion, and Haughley Parish Council.
- And it was fantastic to see that the work at the new sixth form centre at Stowupland High School, which the Cabinet supported with £2.4m of Community Infrastructure Levy, had recently been completed.

69.18 Finally, the Leader shared the news that the Council has been shortlisted for 3 different awards at this year's iese awards. These nominations reflect the improvements and innovation with regard to planning enforcement, virtual high streets programme, and most proudly, shortlisting for 'Council of the Year'.

69.19 For those who haven't already seen them, you can watch the Chief Executive and other officers being interviewed by iese online and the video submissions. This is a wonderful endorsement for the Council, for how the Council works, for the priorities and direction set by Councillors, and for the amazing skill and effort of all Officers. The actual awards will be decided at a ceremony (which will hopefully be face to face) in September.

69.20 Councillor Eburne acknowledged the work of John Grayling (Corporate Manager for Environmental Services) who was retiring after 38 years of service with the Council.

69.21 Councillor Eburne then asked whether the Council would support tourist destinations to install electric vehicle charging points on their premises.

69.22 Councillor Morley advised that she was uncertain whether the Council was able to install electric vehicle charging points on private premises and confirmed she would clarify this after the meeting.

70 TO RECEIVE NOTIFICATION OF PETITIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

70.1 A petition with 214 valid signatures asking the Council to save the School Road Oak Tree in Elmswell had been received and would be dealt with through the planning process.

71 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

Councillor Matthissen to Councillor Morley, Leader of the Council

71.1 Noting that the Endeavour House lease has a break clause which can be triggered later this year, are you prepared to consider alternatives to Mid Suffolk District Council headquarters remaining in Ipswich until at least 2027?

Councillor Morley, Leader of the Council

71.2 I feel as though this is a question you have asked in different ways many times and has been answered before. But as you know this is a topic on which your group and the conservative group couldn't agree when we were considering a coalition arrangement after the last elections. This isn't an issue at the forefront of my mind at the moment. I do not have sleepless nights thinking about having our HQ at Endeavour House, not least of course because we haven't really been based there for over the last 12 months. I do have sleepless nights about the pandemic, about the tragic loss of life, about the devastating direct and indirect impact Covid has had on so many of our residents lives, about what we are doing to support our residents and communities, about what more we could do, about the health and wellbeing of our communities and our businesses, and about the other really important issues facing our residents such as those raised in Councillor Otton's question, and the wider safety of women on our streets and in society as a whole. But I respect your right Councillor Matthissen to ask this question and your wish to receive an answer. The break clause on the lease, if we were to exercise it, would need to be served by this time next year, March 2022. As things stand, I have no intention of asking Officers to exercise that break clause. As you know we have successfully negotiated revised lease terms that phase the contractual increase in service charge costs. We have successfully negotiated the relinquishing of the lease for the Councillor area on the second floor. This has been backdated to be with effect from November 2020 and we are reviewing the other areas that we occupy so that we can build on the societal changes that have come about because of the pandemic. This will mean that we only occupy what we need but also that we have spaces to come together, to collaborate, and to be creative rather than lots and lots of desks. We are reimagining the purpose of our office space. Ultimately though in answer to your question it would be wrong for me to ever rule out any options and so the answer to your question is yes but I personally will take significant persuasion to change my mind to move away from all of the benefits which drew us to move to Endeavour House together with our Clinical Commissioning Groups and the County Council in the first place. I should also add of course as a footnote to my answer that this is not a decision that Mid Suffolk can take alone as our staff, who are the ones that predominately occupy Endeavour House rather than us as Councillors, of course also work for and are employed by Babergh District Council and therefore any such

decision would have to be made in conjunction with Babergh District Council and with our staff foremost in our mind.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Matthissen to Council Morley

71.3 What plans are there for more meeting places for Members and Officers out in the district?

Councillor Morley, Leader of the Council

71.4 I haven't ruled out anything and I haven't ruled in anything. At the moment we do not need meeting spaces out in our district, I am happy with the way things are progressing but of course I will keep an open mind on the matter.

Councillor Stringer to Councillor Brewster, Cabinet Member for Economic Growth

71.5 Given the agreed motion from Suffolk County Council to applaud the introduction of Freeport status to Gateway 14, clearly stating it will be a net carbon free development, can the portfolio holder confirm what will make Gateway 14 a carbon free development?

Councillor Brewster, Cabinet Member for Economic Growth

71.6 We are applauding the fact that the Freeport will be on Gateway 14 as well. The aspirations for the Freeport East bid are to create a green energy hub that will help deliver net-zero transport systems and complement sustainable developments across the Freeport East area. These aspirations align from our desire for Gateway 14 to deliver a high quality, viable and sustainable development, with low carbon impact. This ambition has been informed through our work with the Greater South East Energy Hub and BEIS on a zero carbon feasibility study for Gateway 14. We are now reviewing the options proposed in this report and possible funding routes in order to deliver on this aspiration.

Supplementary question from Councillor Stringer to Councillor Brewster

71.7 I do have to say there is a slight difference in language between stating something will be net carbon free, and that we aspire to doing it. If we are going to make this a carbon free development, why did we not seek to put this site forward as a site for a grid serve filling station when we had the opportunity 6 months ago?

Councillor Brewster, Cabinet Member for Economic Growth

71.8 I don't know why we didn't put it forward for the grid, I wasn't actually aware of that. Yes, there is a difference between aspiration and actual. I believe we are in the early days of doing this, obviously there is a planning application which I dare say you have looked at. It's a pre-app energy consultation but it deals with the sustainability statement. That has already started and that is part of the planning application. But we still need to ensure that, looking at the reports we've got, the best way to do it and there are some recommendations within those. So, we have got time at this moment and we wish to make it as zero carbon as we can and I think we will get that result.

Councillor Otton to Councillor Flatman, Cabinet Member for Communities

71.9 The impact of the pandemic on families, in particular on women, has been drastic. The rise in domestic violence has risen to a level never seen before. The issues of childcare and support were ignored by the Chancellor's budget. What has the Council done over the past year to help women and parents with young children?

Councillor Flatman, Cabinet Member for Communities

71.10 I share your concerns about the impact the pandemic has had on women and also more broadly parents with young children. As I have said before I am immensely proud of the support that our Council has provided to our communities over the last year and thank you for the opportunity to describe some of that support, specifically in relation to women and parents.

Just over a year ago a multi-agency steering group, led by Suffolk County Council, was created to address violence against women, and girls, and men, and boys. This steering group has developed a strategy and action plan to address domestic abuse, sexual violence and sexual exploitation. As well as this strategy our communications teams have helped promote Sexual Abuse and Violence Awareness Week through our social media.

71.11 We have provided satellite accommodation for victims of domestic abuse and promoted both the Domestic Abuse Hotline and Domestic Abuse Outreach Service.

71.12 Our housing team prioritise those fleeing domestic abuse and work across agencies to support those that we house.

71.13 In a broader sense we have also helped address holiday hunger through work in partnership with Abbeycroft Leisure and projects delivered in Stowmarket and Eye.

71.14 Chill, Chat and Play is still being delivered in Stowmarket by Home Start (Mid and West Suffolk) and supports families experiencing a range of moderate and complex mental health needs. This will soon also be expanded to provision in Needham Market.

71.15 And in terms of wider financial support, we provide £3000 to Lighthouse Women's Aid each year in Revenue Grant funding and we also gave them a Capital Grant of a further £3000 last year.

71.16 Home Start in Suffolk receive a revenue grant of £9000 and Home Start (Mid and West Suffolk) also receive £4000. And of course, you will be aware that we do also provide Citizens Advice with Revenue Grant Funding.

71.17 Because there has been so much going on I have only briefly touched upon the activity we have either delivered directly or influenced but will also send a briefing note to all Councillors after this meeting so that you can see more of the details behind some of the things I have mentioned.

Supplementary question from Councillor Otton

71.18 Just to say I am really pleased to hear the amount of work that has been going on and certainly from my point of view and I know the rest of the Council, we certainly thank all of them who have been doing that work. However, my question is of course that work cannot stop as there will be many staff and residents facing real problems in the coming months so what actions are in place to help women and parents to continue with a successful life and career?

Councillor Flatman, Cabinet Member for Communities

71.19 As we talked about at last Council a month ago, our plans are to rejuvenate the whole district and I'm sure that once I send you round this briefing note on everything that's been going on you will be very pleased.

Councillor Mellen to Councillor Fleming, Cabinet Member for Environment

71.20 In the Council's Carbon Reduction Management Plan, we say that:

Housing: We will review policy and regulation for energy conservation reduction and efficiency to understand how this can be standardised for the Councils' new builds and retrofits by quarter 3, 2020/21.

And

Proposed Housing Strategy revised action: Prepare a broad specification for new build Council stock, to include consideration of passive technologies and measures to increase accessibility, by quarter 2 of 2020/21.

71.21 Have these targets been met? If not, when will they be?

Councillor Fleming, Cabinet Member for Environment

71.22 We are reviewing policy and regulation for energy conservation reduction and efficiency to understand how this can be standardised for the new builds and retrofits. Our surveyors have attended and completed a Level 5 Diploma in Retrofit Coordination and Risk Management delivered by the Retrofit Academy and domestic Retrofit by the BRE. These courses enable the evaluation of properties within our stock that are suitable for retrofit to be identified and planned by Officers as opposed to outsourcing and will reduce the time and delay along with saving on consultant's costs.

71.23 In addition to the retrofit training we have:

- Embarked on a programme to collect up to date energy performance data for every home in our stock.
- We are working with the Energy Saving Trust to deliver a programme of 'Measures' (Works) that are tailored to every Babergh and Mid Suffolk owned home across the districts.
- The draft 'Design Guide' for new homes contains a section on Retrofit and we will be continually looking to review and change this document as the industry moves towards net zero carbon homes following PAS 2035 which is the retrofit standard.

- Our programme of fitting energy efficient heating continues and consistently evolves as technology improves.
- We have allocated a budget to energy measures for our homes targeting properties through the 'Fabric First' approach recommended by PAS 2035 with £1,000,000 set aside for insulating solid wall properties.
- We are continually assessing the best approach to delivering these measures working with the Energy Saving Trust and we will be able to target homes and funding into the future. This is a new development that will become standard procedure in the coming years.

71.24 I will now move on to answering the second part of your question. Due to the impact of Covid this new specification piece of work was placed on hold as Officers were redeployed to other areas deemed higher priority. We will be taking up this work again as we emerge from the stricter lock down restrictions and return to some form of business as usual. A new target for this to be completed will be later in 2021-2022.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Mellen

71.25 Does Councillor Fleming agree that the progress generally on the carbon reduction management plan has been slow and can she also tell me when the next audit of the Council's CO2 emissions will take place?

Councillor Fleming, Cabinet Member for Environment

71.26 I have to disagree that progress has been slow. I think that we have been progressing very quickly and I think that the steps we are taking are serious ones, they involve public money and I am amazed at how fast we are moving.

Assistant Director - Environment and Commercial Partnerships

71.27 The base line reviews are done on an annual basis and are normally undertaken around May each year so we will be moving onto that process shortly. As soon as possible, we will be publishing the findings from that review so everyone will be able to see the transfer from our emissions from 20/21 and our emissions from 19/20 previously.

72 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

72.1 None received.

73 MC/20/28 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT

73.1 Councillor Welham introduced the report and informed Council that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered the following reports:-

Meeting 14th January 2021

- Mid Suffolk District Council draft General Fund Budget 2021/22 and Four-Year Outlook.

- Mid Suffolk District Council Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget 2021/22 and Four-Year Outlook
- Review of Representation of Outside Bodies Additional Recommendations

Meeting 15th February 2021

- Review of local Citizens Advice Service

73.2 The outcomes from these meetings are detailed in the Council report.

73.3 Councillor Mansel queried the timeliness of the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee?

73.4 In response Councillor Welham stated that the draft Minutes from January had been available for Cabinet to consider at their meeting, but the full version had not been available until later. Councillor Welham asked the Chief Executive if he was aware of any issues with the production of Minutes.

73.5 In response the Chief Executive stated that he was not aware of any delay in the production of Minutes. Minutes were normally produced in time to be approved at the next meeting. All meetings are recorded and online and cover the entirety of the meeting for reference.

73.6 Council noted the report.

74 MC/20/29 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) - CIL EXPENDITURE FRAMEWORK THIRD REVIEW - MARCH 2021

74.1 Councillor Burn introduced the report and informed Council that this was the third review of CIL carried out by the Joint Member Panel.

74.2 The main changes being recommended to the process was the introduction of new additional criteria for dealing with cross county bids which were listed fully in paragraph 4.5 of the report.

74.3 All such CIL expenditure that fall beyond each district's administrative / geographical areas shall be Cabinet decisions.

74.4 Councillor Burn also highlighted the key recommended changes to the Communication Strategy that were detailed in Appendix B of the report.

74.5 Councillor Burn then paid tribute to the hard work and dedication of the CIL Team before **MOVING** the recommendations in the report which Councillor Brewster **SECONDED**.

74.6 Councillor Pratt queried whether any considerations had been given to include funding for sustainable travel infrastructure as there did not appear to be any obvious reference to this in the report.

74.7 In response, the Assistant Director - Planning for Growth informed Councillor Pratt that he would respond to him in the next couple of days to have a detailed discussion on the CIL framework and the role sustainable travel had within it.

74.8 Councillor Otton made reference to page 167 of the report relating to the Thurston Railway Crossing and asked what influence the Council had over organisations such as Network Rail where they had been offered £100k of funding and had failed to come up with the project?

74.9 In response, the Assistant Director - Planning for Growth informed Councillor Otton that the Council could influence but could not control. He would ascertain whether the feasibility study had been commenced and report back to her.

74.10 Councillor Otton also asked why public art had been excluded from CIL bids.

74.11 In response, Councillor Burn stated that he would ensure that the subject be included for discussion at the next review.

74.12 Councillor Passmore queried whether the provision of mental health facilities on a Suffolk wide basis would be classed as infrastructure?

74.13 In response, the Assistant Director - Planning and Growth confirmed that health facilities were an inherent part of the CIL infrastructure and could contribute on a proportionate basis to a county wide provision.

74.14 Councillor Field raised concerns that the audience for the document could find it too complicated and asked that the complexity of the document was examined at the next review.

74.15 In response, the Assistant Director - Planning for Growth said that he felt that it was really important to maintain the detail of the framework but agreed that some sort of executive summary could be explored alongside maintaining the detail of the framework.

74.16 Councillor Eburne commented that there was an awful lot of coordinated work from the parishes and groups to submit a bid and wanted to be sure the funding was getting out to the communities and that the government was not going to change the rules.

74.17 Councillor Mansel stated that it was extremely pleasing that there was flexibility within the scheme for community projects to get the funding they need.

74.18 Councillor Matthissen felt that a simplified approach for parishes and smaller groups should be investigated.

74.19 Councillor Burn thanked everyone for their comments and informed Council that these comments would be taken forward to the next review.

It was RESOLVED:-

1.1 That the amendments to the CIL Expenditure Framework – March 2021 (arising from the third review) - (Appendix A) and the CIL Expenditure Framework Communications Strategy – March 2021(Appendix B) be approved.

1.2 That the CIL Expenditure Framework and the CIL Expenditure Framework Communications Strategy be reviewed again whilst Bid round 8 is being considered (October 2021) so that any amended scheme can be in place before Bid round 9 occurs (May 2022).

1.3 That the Joint Member Panel be retained to inform this (fourth) review.

75 MC/20/30 RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE OF NEW HOMES BONUS

75.1 Councillor Whitehead introduced the report and informed Council that this was a long - awaited consultation on the future of New Homes Bonus.

75.2 The Council's Constitution delegates responsibility for responding to consultations to the relevant Assistant Director but in this case the Monitoring Officer had concluded that the consultation was of significant importance so should be referred to Full Council for a response.

75.3 Due to the timescales of the response and the number of questions to be considered, there was insufficient time to fully debate this at Council. It was therefore proposed that a cross party working group be established to agree a response in conjunction with the Assistant Director for Resources.

75.4 Councillor Whitehead also drew attention to the amended membership of the Babergh Working Group following their Babergh Council meeting.

75.6 Councillor Whitehead then **MOVED** the recommendations in the report which Councillor Haddingham **SECONDED**.

75.7 Councillor Field raised concerns that Councillors who were not involved in the Working Group would not get to see the responses.

75.8 The Assistant Director - Corporate Resources informed Councillor Field that two meetings would be held to discuss the responses and Councillors who were part of the Working Group would be encouraged to keep the other members of their Group informed of the progress.

75.9 The full submission would be circulated to Members for information once completed.

75.10 Councillor Matthissen felt that the Council had experienced difficulties when completing these types of consultation and requested that the Monitoring Officer circulated some general advice on the submission of responses to consultations to Councillors and officers.

It was RESOLVED:-

1.1 That a joint cross-party working group be appointed to formulate the Councils' response to the Future of the New Homes Bonus Consultation and that the membership of the working group be agreed as detailed in paragraph 4.6 of the report.

1.2 That delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director for Corporate Resources to formally submit the consultation response agreed by the working group on the Council's behalf.

76 MC/20/31 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2021/22 AND GENDER PAY GAP

76.1 Councillor Whitehead introduced the report and informed Council that the Council was required to produce a Pay Policy Statement for each financial year under Section 38 (1) of the Localism Act 2011. As Mid Suffolk and Babergh have a single organisational structure with harmonised pay, grades and terms and conditions of service, a single pay policy covered both Councils.

76.2 Councillor Whitehead added that the Council was also required to report on its gender pay gap. The date of the reporting had been extended from 31st March 2021 to 31st October to take into account the impact of Covid. Although a report must be published for each Council, the combined data was more relevant due to the workforce being fully integrated. The report does not need the approval of full Council and will be published on the website when available.

76.3 Councillor Whitehead then **MOVED** the recommendations in the report which Councillor Ekpenyong **SECONDED**.

76.4 Councillor Mansel queried the links to the report as they appeared to be linked to the Babergh report.

76.5 In response, Councillor Whitehead informed Councillor Mansel that his understanding was that the report had yet to be published and would be published later in the year to meet the report deadline.

76.6 The Chief Executive added that the Council was obliged to publish the report for each organisation, there would also be a joint report because of the fully integrated workforce which would be more meaningful. This information would be contained within the same documents when published and linked to each Council on the website.

76.7 Councillor Geake queried why the report wasn't published if the data was available?

76.8 In response, Councillor Whitehead informed Council that although the data was available, the data needed to be consolidated, narrative and explanation added for SLT to analyse it.

76.9 Councillor Eburne raised concerns that the Transparency part of the website for Mid Suffolk contained no documents under the pay gap and requested that when the report was finalised that it was circulated to all Councillors

76.10 The Chief Executive confirmed that the report would be circulated to all Councillors and that the link on the Mid Suffolk website would be fixed.

76.11 Councillor Otton queried how it was possible to know that an equality impact assessment was not required when the report had not been published yet?

76.12 The Chief Executive explained that the wording in the report referred to the Pay Policy Statement and not Gender Pay Gap report. A full equality impact assessment would be undertaken when the Gender Pay Gap report was produced and would be available for scrutiny.

76.13 Councillors raised concern about the wording of the recommendations.

76.14 The Monitoring Officer recommended that additional wording be added to recommendation 2.2 “that the delay to the publication” to clarify the recommendation.

76.15 The Chair **PUT** this proposal to the Proposer and the Seconder and it was accepted.

It was RESOLVED:-

- 1. That the proposed pay policy statement for 2021/22 as set out in section 4 be approved.**
- 2. That the delay to the publication of the Council’s gender pay gap, as of 31st March 2020, be noted.**

77 MC/20/32 APPOINTMENT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

77.1 The Corporate Manager - Governance and Civic Office introduced the report and informed Council that the current panel that was appointed in 2016 had now reached the end of their term. Under the Local Authorities (Members Allowances England) regulations 2003, the Council is required to establish and maintain a Panel known as the Independent Remuneration Panel to make recommendations and amendments of the Members Allowance Scheme.

77.2 A recruitment exercise had been undertaken, candidates were selected from applicants who had made a formal application and underwent a competitive interview.

77.3 Council was being asked to approve the formal appointment of the recommended panel of members for four years with an option to extend this for another 4 years and to confirm the fee payable for each review and the payment of reasonable expenses.

77.4 Councillor Morley **MOVED** the recommendations in the report which Councillor Brewster **SECONDED**.

77.5 Councillor Eburne queried when the review was likely to take place.

77.6 In response, the Corporate Manager informed Council that the review would be commenced almost immediately with recommendations being brought to Council by the end of the year.

77.7 Councillor Stringer felt strongly that voting on your own allowance was very damaging and asked if the timing of the review could be changed so that the recommendations would go to the Council meeting before the district elections.

77.8 Councillor Geake supported his views and felt that this should be the last action of this Council.

It was RESOLVED:-

1.1 That the following persons be appointed to the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel:

- Amanda Orchard
- Sarah Way
- Monica Calbio
- John Clough
- Sue Putters

1.2 That the IRP members each be paid £500 for each review carried out and be reimbursed any expenses reasonably incurred in the performance of their duties.

1.3 That the IRP be appointed for a period of 4 years with the option to extend this for another period of 4 years if required.

78 COUNCILLOR APPOINTMENTS

78.1 Councillor Morley informed Council that Councillor Paul Ekpenyong had been appointed to the Board of Gateway 14 and Councillor Harry Richardson had been appointed as Cabinet Member for Health and Well Being.

78.2 Council noted the appointments.

79 MOTIONS ON NOTICE

80 TO CONSIDER THE MOTION ON NOTICE RECEIVED FROM COUNCILLOR EBURNE

80.1 Councillor Eburne introduced the Motion and informed Council that the Motion called for Council to carry out a review of green space to ensure that it was optimising the biodiversity and wellbeing aspects of natural and amenity green space in Mid Suffolk.

80.2 Councillor Eburne went on to say that during the last year, the importance of green space to our communities had been highlighted more than ever with people taking advantage of local outdoor space. Green space was important for many reasons. For both physical and mental health, we know that social prescribing works, that people who can access green space have healthier lives, exercise is beneficial, and time spent outdoors improves our mental health. As green lungs in our town centres where homes have very little gardens or none at all, it provides areas for dog walkers, access to nature and areas to combat pollution. Green space is important for our children, so that they can run free and avoid all of their time

looking at screens, an area where they can play, an outlet for their energy and areas where they can be just children.

80.3 Our green spaces also attract visitors in our villages. Green centre spaces full of wild flowers that inspire visitors to stay a while and makes residents proud.

80.4 Green spaces are also areas for wildlife and wild flowers, for greater biodiversity in responding to the climate emergency. We should be prioritising our areas of biodiversity ensuring our ponds, trees, hedges and areas of rough ground are creating the right habitats for creatures and wildlife.

80.5 Pieces of land that are of significant historical importance that are found on tired old maps and in local history.

80.6 Or green space known simply for its beauty. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, this could be a rough scabby piece of land, can mean as much as a wild flower meadow or a copse of trees.

80.7 We should be creating new opportunities for green space, positively looking for new areas and where there are gaps, it is not just about green spaces per se, it is about their availability and access to them. In our rural district people often have to travel more to get to a green space. Natural England have proposed a standard for green space provision no more than 300m or five minutes walk from home. This does not refer to privately owned farmland or footpaths but publicly available and accessible areas They need to be accessible with the ability of a parent to walk with their toddler for someone to be able to cycle to and for a wheelchair user to be able to access. Where we have green spaces we should be looking to enhance them and improve biodiversity.

80.8 These spaces should be publicly owned by the community by local councils even by the district council and covenanted so that no development can ever take place on them.

80.9 Finally, we need to protect the spaces we do have to ensure that our green spaces are designated as local green spaces as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework. We should also set up a directory of green spaces and add to it each year. The Council has already agreed to draw up a supplementary planning document for green space in new development, but this Motion is about our existing green spaces, enhancing and protecting them and finding new spaces within our towns and villages. Ultimately, we need to value our green spaces more. Our communities have shown that they both need and value them.

80.10 Green spaces are incredibly important for health both mental and physical as green lungs in our urban towns, as places for children to run free, as spaces for wildlife and biodiversity, spaces of historical interest and places simply of beauty.

80.11 As Councillors we need to ensure that our green spaces work for our communities and access to them is part of this.

80.12 Councillor Eburne then **MOVED** the Motion which Councillor Fleming **SECONDED**.

80.13 In her speech, Councillor Fleming thanked Councillor Eburne for bringing the Motion to Council and said that they clearly agreed that accessible natural green space was important to our communities for all of the reasons that Councillor Eburne had mentioned. Open space conveyed a sense of wellbeing and permanency which was very reassuring in a world that was becoming increasingly stressful and hurried.

80.14 Mid Suffolk and Babergh's open space study which was prepared in 2019 supported the Joint Local Plan. This refers to a largely aspirational standard for accessible open space of various kinds. The standards for open space have been evolving since 2003. The implications of putting these standards into practice were complex and should not be overly rigid. We already have this as a starting point, but this should be taken further.

80.15 Councillor Fleming went on to say that plans needed to be put into place to optimise and use the green spaces that we already had as well as identifying any gaps that we have. Growth pressures need to be taken into account as well as the new planning context and pressures from biodiversity loss it then needed to be linked in with the emerging health and wellbeing strategy.

80.16 The open space study suggested some strategic options, existing provision to be protected and enhanced and opportunities for relocation and re-designation etc. it was also about how the Council defined open space itself. The definition from Natural England was very rigid and had some problems with practical application particularly in areas of Mid Suffolk which were rural and actively farmed.

80.17 Councillor Fleming felt that the Motion gave the impetus needed to take action on the objectives in the existing open space strategy and the emerging Joint Local Plan. It was acknowledged that a supplementary planning document was the best way to detail how the standards should be set out and applied.

80.18 Councillor Fleming added that she would like to see joint arrangements in place so that the health and wellbeing aspects of open space were fully considered as well and she was confident that this would be the case.

80.19 Councillor Morley commented about the benefits that green space had on mental health and stated that by increasing access to green space it would contribute overall to the health and well-being of residents.

80.20 Councillor Passmore welcomed the approach being taken and supported the Motion.

80.21 Councillor Richardson emphasised the benefits of access to green spaces improving the health and well-being of residents

80.22 Councillor Matthissen requested that Councillor Burn undertake to review the designation of visually important open spaces in the emerging Joint Local Plan.

80.23 Councillor Scarff welcomed the Motion and requested that the Public Realm team be heavily involved in the review.

80.24 Councillor Warboys spoke in support of the Motion and made reference to the Dasgupta review and the natural capital approach.

80.25 Councillor Geake made a plea for green space to be truly communal.

80.26 Councillor Burn in response to Councillor Matthissen's request, informed Council that the time had already passed for the designation of visual open space to be included in the Joint Local Plan. However, the Plan would be reviewed almost immediately after it was adopted.

80.27 Councillor Welham raised concerns about open spaces on new developments and requested that green spaces with poor access were looked at to see how they could be improved.

80.28 Councillor Mellon commented that whilst it was important to have green spaces in our towns, it was also important to have useable green space in the countryside.

80.29 Councillor Flatman felt that Mid Suffolk was very lucky to have access to an abundant number of footpaths and bridleways and stressed that it was really important that these areas were kept and maintained for the next generation.

80.30 Councillor Carter stated that it was important that green space was accessible to everyone.

80.31 Councillor Eburne thanked Councillors for their comments and outlined the seven reasons why open space was so important. She also highlighted the importance of listening to our communities.

80.32 The Motion was **PUT** to Council and **CARRIED** unanimously.

It was RESOLVED:-

That the Council carries out a review of green space to ensure that it is optimising the biodiversity and wellbeing aspects of natural and amenity green space in Mid Suffolk.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 7:55pm

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Chair