

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **MID SUFFOLK CABINET** held in the Frink Room (Elisabeth)
- Endeavour House on Monday, 6 December 2021

PRESENT:

Councillor: Suzie Morley (Chair)

Councillors: David Burn
Jessica Fleming
Lavinia Hadingham
John Whitehead
Julie Flatman
Peter Gould
Harry Richardson

In attendance:

Councillor(s): Rachel Eburne
John Field
Kathie Guthrie
Andrew Mellen
Keith Welham

Officers: Chief Executive (AC)
Assistant Director – Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer (KN)
Assistant Director – Corporate Resources and Section 151 Officer (KS)
Assistant Director – Customers, Digital Transformation and Improvement (SW)
Assistant Director – Environment and Commercial Regeneration (CC)
Assistant Director – Housing (GF)
Corporate Manager – Financial Operations (RH)
Licensing Officer (KS)
Licensing Officer (KG)
Senior Governance Officer (HH)

Apologies:

Gerard Brewster (Vice-Chair)

66 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

There were no declaration of interests declared by Councillors.

67 MCA/21/28 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1 NOVEMBER 2021

It was **RESOLVED:-**

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 1 November 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

68 TO RECEIVE NOTIFICATION OF PETITIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE

COUNCIL'S PETITION SCHEME

None received.

69 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS

Councillor Eburne read out Councillor Matthissen's question for Item 10 to the Cabinet Member for Customers, Digital Transformation and Improvement.

Why do almost all the Performance Indicators lack any objective measurement and target to enable the Cabinet and members to judge if the priority is being delivered? A list of things done below a high-level objective is interesting but is simply an assertion that the objective is being delivered. The performance on mails and phone calls is the exception.

Response

The current quarterly performance presentation has been evolving over the last couple of years and its current format was designed to provide high level assurance of delivery against strategic priorities, whilst providing content that was engaging for a variety of audiences and included cases studies that highlighted and bought to life the impacts for our residents. As you have stated some targets and quantitative measurements are already included, such as percentage of fly tips cleared, average telephony wait time, and average number of days taken to relet a Void property to pick out a few.

We have recognised that our Performance framework needs to continue to evolve which is why we are already working on a new framework which will bring a greater focus to the delivery of our strategic priorities. This framework is focused on the outcomes that we wish to achieve, and future reporting of progress against these will include a range of different types of measures and targets to identify progress or areas where improvement is required. We will be including regional and national benchmarks where appropriate and setting measures of success for short-term outcomes covering the next two years.

Further information on this new approach is being shared in December with all Councillors, with a report before Cabinet in January.

70 MATTERS REFERRED BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY OR JOINT AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEES

There were no matters referred.

71 FORTHCOMING DECISIONS LIST

The Forthcoming Decision List was noted.

72 MCA/21/29 GENERAL FUND FINANCIAL MONITORING 2021/22 - QUARTER 2

72.1 The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Whitehead to introduce the report.

- 72.2 Councillor Whitehead provided a summary of the papers and proposed recommendations 3.1 and 3.2 in the report.
- 72.3 Councillor Gould seconded the proposal.
- 72.4 Councillor Gould referred to the staffing position and the cost of the level of staff vacancies detailed in the report, in terms of covering essential work with temporary or interim posts in relation to paragraph 6.7 of the report.
- 72.5 The Chief Executive responded that the use of interim staff was monitored on a monthly basis, and that there had not been a significant increase in the use of interim staff. There was not a significant cost uplift in the level of natural leavers positions being filled nor in the new posts created. Further information would be provided outside the meeting.
- 72.6 The Cabinet Member for Finance and officers responded to questions from other Members attending the meeting on issues including: loss of income from carparking and the cost for Public Realm Transition to combined in-house delivery as detailed in appendix C, the reduction in car parking places in Stowmarket and the effect this would have on income, and whether the salaries for the Council's employees were similar to neighbouring authorities.
- 72.7 The Assistant Director for Corporate Resources would provide a response outside the meeting for the cost of Public Realm Transition.
- 72.8 In response to several questions from other Members attending the meeting the Chief Executive stated that the authority was an attractive place to work and had a healthy package and support for employees. Pay concerns across the authority would be addressed in a pay review paper coming forward in due course and an all-member briefing would be provided in the New Year.
- 72.9 Members debated the issues including that the Communities' team had undergone a restructure and was expanding and that vacancies had been anticipated and would be filled when appropriate.

It was RESOLVED: -

- 1.1 That, subject to any further budget variations that arise during the rest of the financial year, the surplus position of £398k, referred to in section 6.6 and Appendix A of the report, be noted;**
- 1.2 The revised 2021/22 Capital Programme referred to in Appendix E and section 6.16 of the report be noted.**

REASON FOR DECISION

To ensure that Members are kept informed of the current budgetary position for both General Fund Revenue and Capital.

2021/22 - QUARTER 2

- 73.1 The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Whitehead to introduce the report.
- 73.2 Councillor Whitehead provided a summary and proposed recommendations 3.1 and 3.2 in the report.
- 73.3 This was seconded by Councillor Hadingham.
- 73.4 In response to questions from other Members attending the meeting, the Cabinet Member for Finance stated that there was a difference between the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account, and that the Finance team were reviewing the funding provided by the Government for the Covid -19 Pandemic.
- 73.5 The Assistant Director for Housing responded to additional questions from other Members attending the meeting and stated that building material shortages and increases in costs had been a challenge of the whole building industry. During the Covid-19 lock downs only urgent repairs had been allowed to be undertaken and tenants staying at home had resulted in an increase of the number of repairs reported to the Councils' building service. Recently the Building Service team had reduced the number of outstanding repair jobs.

It was RESOLVED: -

- 1.1 That, subject to any further budget variations that arise during the rest of the financial year, the adverse variance of £747k, referred to in section 6.5 of the report, be noted;**
- 1.2 The 2021/22 revised Capital Programme referred to in Appendix A and section 6.13 be noted.**

REASON FOR DECISION

To ensure that Members are kept informed of the current budgetary position for both the HRA Revenue and Capital Budgets.

74 MCA/21/31 QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE

- 74.1 The Chair and Cabinet Member for Customers, Digital Transformation and Improvement, Councillor Morley introduced the item and provided a summary of the main points in the Quarter 2 Performance paper.
- 74.2 The Chair invited questions from other Members attending the meeting.
- 74.3 Questions included the increased rate of abandoned telephone calls and wait times for Customer Services, and the increase in Stage One complaints and whether there was a particular sector which had received more complaints in

the last quarter.

- 74.4 The Cabinet Member for Customers, Digital Transformation and Improvement responded that the figures had remained high, but that figures for October were lower, that the abandoned call rate was down to 13% and the average wait time was 1 minute and 57 seconds. The increase in Stage One complaints had mainly related to Council house complaints and waste collections.
- 74.5 In response to further questions from other Members attending the meeting in relation to Stage One complaints for Council Housing, the Assistant Director for Housing explained that they mainly related to waiting times. There had been a decrease in these complaints in the past month and the response rate had also improved. He then detailed the measures taken by the Housing team to continue to improve the service to tenants.
- 74.6 The Cabinet Member for Customers, Digital Transformation and Improvement continued to respond to questions on issues including that the delivery plans were on Connect and the outcomes framework format would be changing over the next few months.
- 74.7 The Quarter 2 Performance was noted.

75 MCA/21/32 NEW HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE LICENSING POLICY

Note: The meeting was adjourned before this item between 11:30 am and 11:39 am.

- 75.1 The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor Fleming to introduce the report.
- 75.2 Councillor Fleming proposed recommendations 3.1 and 3.2 in the report and introduced the Chair of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee, Councillor Guthrie, who was present to assist with responding to member's questions.
- 75.3 Councillor Guthrie stated that the report was substantial and thanked those who had responded to the consultation and officers for the report.
- 75.4 Councillor Flatman seconded the recommendations.
- 75.5 The Cabinet Member for Environment responded to questions from other Members attending the meeting on issues including whether any consideration had been made in relation to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Policy for when electric vehicles became mandatory.
- 75.6 To ensure a continuous taxi service in the District, the Council was not in position to mandate a time period for a change over to electric vehicle for the taxi service at this point, however the transition to electric vehicles would come in time.
- 75.7 The Assistant Director for Environment and Commercial Partnerships added

that improvements to infrastructure, and the taxi trades appetite to change to electric vehicles were kept under continuous review and if any changes were required sooner, talks would be undertaken with the community to find the right time for these.

75.8 The Chair of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee advised Members that there was one electrical taxi in the District. She added that the instillation of electrical charging points in the District was a planning matter.

75.9 In response to comments made by other Members attending the meeting, the Cabinet Member for Environment pointed out that the taxi trade in some urban areas would find it easier to transfer to electric vehicles than in a rural area such as Mid Suffolk District and that the cost in investing in an electric vehicle was high for taxi drivers.

75.10 In response to a question for the time frame of the research and development of an incentive scheme for greener vehicles for the taxi trade, the Licensing Officer stated that this had not been determined but that the policy was reviewed every three years.

75.11 A response to the question regarding the number of hybrid taxi vehicles in the District, would be provided to outside the meeting.

75.12 Members debated the issues and thanked the Chair of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee and the officers for the thorough work on the policy, and the trade for responding to the consultation to support the policy.

It was RESOLVED: -

That Cabinet, following consideration of Licensing and Regulatory Committee's recommendation, adopted the post consultation draft Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing Policy, attached as Appendix A.

REASON FOR DECISION

Following the publication of the new Statutory Standards for Taxi's and Private Hire Vehicles, Councils are required to review the recommendations from the Department for Transport (DFT) and consult on any changes to their current policies.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 11:50am

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Chair