

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **MID SUFFOLK CABINET** held in the King Edmund Chamber, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich on Monday, 7 February 2022

PRESENT:

Councillor: Suzie Morley (Chair)
Gerard Brewster (Vice-Chair)

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

In attendance:

Councillors: Rachel Eburne
Andrew Mellen
Keith Welham

Officers: Chief Executive (AC)
Strategic Director (KN)
Assistant Director – Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer (EY)
Assistant Director – Corporate Resources and Section 151 Officer (KS)
Assistant Director – Housing (GF)
Assistant Director – Commercial Partnerships and Regeneration (FD)
Assistant Director – Assets and Investments (EA)
SRP Operations Manager (AW)
Corporate Manager– Financial Operations (RH)
Governance Support Officer (CP)

Apologies:

Councillor Peter Gould

85 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

There were no declarations of interests made by Councillors.

86 MCA/21/33 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 DECEMBER 2022

It was **RESOLVED:-**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 6 December 2021 be confirmed as a true record.

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

None received.

88 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS

None received.

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

- 89.1 The Chair invited the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Welham to introduce the item.
- 89.2 Councillor Welham referred to the recommendations and Appendix A in the report and provided an overview of the concerns raised at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee included staffing and vacancies, the high level of reserves in the budget, the transfer of £3.35m into the reserves, the timings for the scrutiny process of the budget and the lack of clarity for the terms of reference for both the Overview and Scrutiny and Joint and Audit and Standards Committees, which the Monitoring Officer and the Constitution Working Group has been asked to review.
- 89.3 Councillor Welham responded to questions from other Members attending the meeting and said that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would like to review the scrutiny process for the budget to allow for an earlier input into the budget and options for involving communities in setting the budget.
- 89.4 Councillor Moley stated that Cabinet intended to consult on the budget more widely with communities next year.
- 89.5 The recommendations in the report were noted.
- 89.6 Councillor Welham then introduced the Overview and Scrutiny Committees recommendations for the HRA Budget 2022/23 and referenced Appendix A. He outlined some of the concerns raised by the Committee including the volume in planned maintenance work for housing, which were to be carried over to next year, the increase in housing rents and that the Committee had requested that information be provided to Council as detailed in the recommendations.
- 89.7 The recommendations in the report were noted.

90 FORTHCOMING DECISIONS LIST

- 90.1 The Forthcoming Decisions List was noted.

91 MCA/21/34 GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2022/23 AND FOUR-YEAR OUTLOOK

- 91.1 The Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Whitehead introduced the item

and provided an overview of the report.

- 91.2 Councillor Whitehead proposed the recommendations 3.1 and 3.2 in the report, which was seconded by Councillor Flatman.
- 91.3 The Cabinet Member for Finance responded to questions from other Members attending the meeting including the level of Government funding, increased social value measurements, the business rate income from the Bramford substation and the Growth Efficiency Fund.
- 91.4 Councillor Fleming referred to a national significant infrastructure project in Eye for a substation and solar farms and whether the Council benefitted from these financially in terms of business rates. Councillor Whitehead stated that both would bring in funding from business rates which would be shared with Suffolk County Council and Central Government.
- 91.5 The Assistant Director for Corporate Resources outlined the process for business rates and how the evaluation office determined listings of developments placing them on either a local list or a central list, which determined the proportion of the business rates kept by the Council. She added that solar farms were classed as green initiatives and that the Council was able to keep a larger proportion of the business rate for these developments.
- 91.6 Members debated the issues of the report including the lack of clarity of long-term financial planning due to the uncertainty of Central Government grant funding allocations, that the Cabinet had received a degree of assurance of the Council's medium term financial position and that residents did not make a distinction between government, county and district in term of services delivery and social values in their communities.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED:-

- 1.1 That the General Fund Budget proposals for 2022/23 and four-year outlook set out in the report be endorsed for recommendation to Council on 24 February 2022.**
- 1.2 That the General Fund Budget for 2022/23 is based on no increase to the Band D Council Tax.**

REASON FOR DECISION

To bring together all the relevant information to enable Cabinet Members to review, consider and comment upon the Councils General Fund budget for endorsement and recommendation to Council.

92 MCA/21/35 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) 2022/23 BUDGET

- 92.1 The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the item and provided an

overview of the report.

- 92.2 Councillor Whitehead proposed the recommendations 3.1 to 3.7 in the report, which was seconded by Councillor Hadingham.
- 92.3 In response to questions from other Members attending the meeting, the Assistant Director for Housing responded that there was a team of tenancy support officers, who provided a level of financial inclusion to those in most need. He detailed some of the funds available and that the Government had provided additional funding as a Household Support Fund, for which Suffolk had received £5.1m and which had been allocated to a variety of outcomes. Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils had also received funding for the Homelessness and Prevention Fund, which were on track to be spend before the end March 2022.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED:-

- 1.3 That the HRA Budget proposals for 2022/23 set out in the report be endorsed for recommendation to Council on 24 February 2022.**
- 1.4 That the CPI + 1% increase of 4.1% in Council House rents, equivalent to an average rent increase of £3.42 a week for social rents and £4.99 a week for affordable rents be implemented.**
- 1.5 That garage rents are kept at the same level as 2021/22.**
- 1.6 That Sheltered Housing service charges are kept at the same level as 2021/22.**
- 1.7 That the Sheltered Housing utility charges increase of 50p per week for heating and 25p per week for water be implemented.**
- 1.8 That the budgeted surplus of £95k be transferred to the Strategic Priorities reserve in 2022/23.**
- 1.9 That in principle, Right to Buy (RTB) receipts should be retained to enable continued development and acquisition of new council dwellings.**

REASON FOR DECISION

To bring together all the relevant information to enable Cabinet Members to review, consider and comment upon the Councils Housing Revenue Account budget for recommendations to Council.

93 MCA/21/36 BUSINESS RATES RELIEF POLICIES

- 93.1 The Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Whitehead introduced the Report. He outlined the process for the business rates relief and the Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF) scheme and introduced the Shared

Revenues Partnership Operations Manager.

- 93.2 Councillor Whitehead proposed the recommendation 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 in the report, which was seconded by Councillor Brewster.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

- 1.1 **That Cabinet give authority to the Assistant Director for Corporate Resources in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Finance and Economy to agree the COVID-19 additional relief fund policy**
- 1.2 **That Cabinet agree the retail, hospitality and leisure policy, transitional relief policy and supporting small business relief policy for 2022/23 as set out in Appendices a, b and c.**
- 1.3 **That Cabinet give authority to the Assistant Director for Corporate Resources in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance to agree any future changes to the 2022/23 retail, hospitality and leisure discount policy.**
- 1.4 **That Cabinet gives authority to the Shared Revenues Partnership Operations Manager to administer the Covid-19 additional relief fund, discretionary retail, hospitality and leisure discount, transitional relief and supporting small business relief policies**

REASON FOR DECISION

To provide discretionary reliefs to support ratepayers in Mid Suffolk.

To enable the implementation of the discretionary schemes.

94 MCA/21/37 ACCOMMODATION AND AGILE STRATEGY - ENDEAVOUR HOUSE

- 94.1 The Cabinet Member for Assets and Invests, Councillor Gould had forwarded apologies for the meeting and the Leader of the Council, Councillor Morley introduced the report.
- 94.2 Councillor Morley proposed recommendations 3.1 and 3.2 in the report which was seconded by Councillor Richardson.
- 94.3 Other Members attending the meeting raised questions including dilapidation costs, staff wellbeing with reference to mental health issues, and the environmental benefits in relation to the proposed Accommodation and Agile Strategy.
- 94.4 Members debated the issues in the report including the corporate carbon footprint, reassessment of the way the Council delivered services to residents, the support provided to staff when working remotely and that the emerging approach to collaborative working would add value and provide a

stronger workforce.

- 94.5 Members debated the issues further and that the timing, for the Accommodation and Agile Strategy in relation to the break clause in the Lease for the office space, was appropriate.
- 94.6 The Leader stated that even before the Pandemic it had become clear that the offices space was underutilised and stated that data had been collecting for the use of the office space before the pandemic and had concluded that there was a 60% occupancy rate at any time before the pandemic. It had become clear that there was a need for collaborative space and the Accommodation and Agile Strategy would contribute to this and improve the wellbeing of officers.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

- 1.1 That the Cabinet agrees to reduce and reconfigure the floorspace demised to the Councils within Endeavour House in accordance with this report.**
- 1.2 That the Cabinet delegates authority to the Assistant Director of Assets & Investments to deliver the reconfiguration of the floorspace including finalising the detailed design, the appointment of contractors and suppliers and completing negotiations with the landlords.**

REASON FOR DECISION

To create a fit for purpose workspace at Endeavour House to reinforce our organisational culture, enable collaboration, networking and learning whilst promoting well-being and supporting the delivery of effective and efficient services for residents.

To deliver financial savings over the term of the original lease period.

To enable the timely, efficient, and effective delivery of the project.

95 MCA/21/38 HAVEN GATEWAY PARTNERSHIP MEMBERSHIP

- 95.1 The Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, Councillor Brewster introduced the item and provided an overview of the reasons for the recommendations set out the report.
- 95.2 Councillor Brewster proposed recommendations 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 in the report.
- 95.3 Councillor Fleming seconded the recommendations.
- 95.4 Councillor Fleming stated that she endorsed the financial priorities behind the decision to withdraw the Council's Membership from Haven Gateway Partnership. She added that financial priorities and investments strategies

had changed since 2001 and that new alliances with other authorities and partners were being formed particularly in relation to environmental, energy and public health.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED:-

- 1.1 That the key information in this report which outlines the current economic funding and policy landscape and the range of partnerships which now exist across the East of England which support the Babergh/Mid Suffolk economy, be noted.**
- 1.2 That the withdrawal of the Council's membership of the Haven Gateway Partnership from 31 March 2022 be approved.**
- 1.3 That delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director Economic Development and Regeneration in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth to finalise any legal documents associated with a withdrawal from the Partnership.**

REASON FOR DECISION

To ensure future resources are diverted to areas and partnerships to drive greatest growth and support, especially as part of covid 19 recovery.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 11.44 am.

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Chair