

Monday, 9 January 2023



MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

DECISIONS NOTICE

**DECISIONS BY THE MID SUFFOLK CABINET
CALL IN DEADLINE 5:00PM ON 18 JANUARY 2023**

The following decisions have been taken by the Cabinet and will come into effect on 19 January 2023 unless the call-in procedure is activated. For clarity, where an item is 'to be noted', 'received' or recommended to Council for a decision, this is deemed not to be a formal Executive decision and so the call-in provisions will not apply.

MCa/22/34 COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION (WORKING AGE) SCHEME 2023/24

It was **RESOLVED**: -

That Option 3 (as set out in Appendix C of this report) be used as the basis for a revised (Working Age) Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2023/24.

REASON FOR DECISION

- 1.1 To increase the maximum reduction available to 100% and reduce the number of customers undergoing recovery processes.
- 1.2 To avoid unnecessary means testing and provide equitable access to CTR for all customers who receive welfare benefits.
- 1.3 To reduce the requirement for recalculation of awards for customers on UC with fluctuating earnings
- 1.4 To ensure that no customer is disadvantaged on the introduction of the new CTR Scheme

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

- 1.1 Option 1
Renew the existing Working Age LCTR Scheme to allow an up to 100% maximum reduction for all households.
- 1.2 Option 2

Renew the existing Working Age LCTR Scheme to allow an up to 100% maximum reduction for all legacy benefit households and introduce a simplified scheme for UC customers that will allow 'passport' claims to be automated based on the UC financial data without additional verification.

1.3 Option 4

Continue with the existing Working Age LCTR Scheme of up to 95% maximum reduction for all households.

Any Declarations of Interests Declared: None

Any Dispensation Granted: None

MCa/22/35 FEES AND CHARGES 2023/24

It was RESOLVED: -

That, the proposed Fees and Charges for 2023/24 as shown in Appendix A, be approved.

REASON FOR DECISION

To ensure that the Council achieves sufficient income and thereby reduces the subsidy on non-essential services which may compromise the Council's ability to fund statutory services.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

To make no change, leave them at the current year's level.

Any Declarations of Interests Declared: None

Any Dispensation Granted: None

MCa/22/36 TENANCY POLICY

It was RESOLVED: -

To approve the Tenancy Policy (Appendix A).

REASON FOR DECISION

1.1 The Tenancy Policy meets the requirements of the Regulator for Social Housing, providing information for tenants to understand how their occupation of Council homes will be managed.

1.2 Consistent with the current political agenda for social housing the Tenancy Policy prioritises long-term security of tenure for tenants over tenancies of a fixed length. This will allow tenants and their families to create a home in Council properties and build thriving and diverse communities in our housing estates.

1.3 In the time elapsed since their introduction, fixed term tenancies have been proven to be largely ineffective in providing their anticipated benefits of reducing housing waiting

lists. Managing and administering Flexible fixed term tenancies has proven to be costly and time consuming for landlords, and unsettling for tenants, particularly vulnerable tenants and those suffering with mental illness.

- 1.4 The Councils will create a new, separate policy which will support efficient use of the Councils' housing stock by encouraging tenants to downsize. Such policy is included in the Homes and Housing Strategy (objective 2g) and may include provide financial incentives, advice and practical support to tenants who are under-occupying their homes to assist and encourage them to free-up larger homes for families.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

- 1.1 At an 'Early Warning' Cabinet Briefing on 26th September 2022, Cabinet members considered the following fundamental decision in the Tenancy Policy.
- 1.2 Option 1: to continue the current practice of granting Secure Tenancies which provide long-term security of tenancy, or; Option 2: to grant Flexible (fixed term) Tenancies which only provide security for a short period of time (typically 5 years).
- 1.3 In light of the changes in Government agenda and the Housing Sector in recent years (please refer to explanatory note in Appendix B), and mindful of Government's intention to abolish fixed-term tenancies in private and social housing by 2030, Cabinet members voted in favour of Option 1, for Secure Tenancies to remain the primary form of tenancy for Council tenants. The Tenancy Policy has therefore been created to confirm and clarify the Councils' current practice of providing and managing tenancies.

Any Declarations of Interests Declared: None

Any Dispensation Granted: None

MCa/22/37 FREEPORT EAST BUSINESS RATES POLICIES

It was RESOLVED: -

- 1.1 **That delegated authority was given to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Director for Economic Growth & Climate Change and the Cabinet Members for Economic Growth and Finance to endorse the Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of the Council.**
- 1.2 **That Cabinet approved the Freeport East Retained Rates policy with authority being given to the Council's S151 Officer in consultation with the Operations Manager SRP and Director for Economic Growth & Climate Change to make changes to the policy, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holders, to ensure it met the criteria set by the Council and in line with updated Government guidance.**
- 1.3 **That Cabinet approved the Business Rate Relief policy, with authority being given to the Council's S151 Officer in consultation with the Operations Manager SRP and Director for Economic Growth & Climate Change to make changes to the policy, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holders, to ensure it met the criteria set by the Council and in line with updated Government guidance.**

REASON FOR DECISION

This once in a generation opportunity will leverage in substantial additional funding to support the delivery of G14 alongside providing investment in skills, infrastructure and investment projects in the wider area to support the Levelling Up agenda and provide opportunities for all and true inclusive growth for our communities.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

- 1.1 Proceed as per recommendations to endorse the MOU and approve the Business Rate Relief Policy and the Freeport East Retained Rates Policy. This is the preferred approach as it aligns to the decision process of other Freeport partners and ensures that Mid Suffolk District Council play an active role in the delivery of Freeport East.
- 1.2 The Cabinet could choose not to endorse the MOU or approve the Policies. However, as the aspirations within the Freeport East proposal are closely aligned to the Council's own strategic priorities and it is a mandatory requirement that all Billing Authorities complete this process, this would not be appropriate.
- 1.3 The Cabinet could choose to delay making a decision, however, the Government's timeline for approval of the MOU is fixed and there is a requirement to have appropriate business rate policies in place prior to first occupation of the Tax Sites. Delay could undermine Freeport East's wider negotiations with Government and potentially limit access for potential tenants at G14 to key Freeport related incentives.

Any Declarations of Interests Declared: Councillor Whitehead declared an Other Registrable Interest due to being a Director of Gateway 14 Ltd.

Councillor Richardson Declared an Other Registrable Interests due to being a Non-Executive Director of Freeport East Limited Supervisory Board.

Any Dispensation Granted: Dispensation had been granted by the Monitoring Officer.

MCa/22/38 SCRUTINY/CABINET PROTOCOL

It was **RESOLVED:** -

That Cabinet approved the Scrutiny/Cabinet protocol attached.

REASON FOR DECISION

To promote a culture of accountability, openness, and transparency within Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, recognising scrutiny as a key enabler within that culture.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

The proposal to formulate a Scrutiny/Cabinet Protocol was an action from the Corporate Peer Review and is considered best practice by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny.

Any Declarations of Interests Declared: None

Any Dispensation Granted: None

MCa/22/39 RISK MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENTS

It was RESOLVED: -

That Members of Babergh and Mid Suffolk Cabinets noted the progress so far to improve strategic risk management and agree the new draft risk management policy and strategy which aligns with the Orange Book.

REASON FOR DECISION

Babergh and Mid Suffolk Cabinets are responsible for Strategic Risk Management and approval of the joint Risk Management Policy and Strategy.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

The Councils could have maintained the existing responsibility for risk rather than integrate it with performance and improvement, but it was felt this would not drive the improvement required or maximise the opportunities to join up with a new corporate approach.

Any Declarations of Interests Declared: None

Any Dispensation Granted: None