

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, 9 January 2023

PRESENT:

Councillor: Suzie Morley (Chair)
Harry Richardson (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Julie Flatman
Lavinia Hadingham

Jessica Fleming
John Whitehead

In attendance:

Councillors: John Field
Keith Welham – Chair of Overview and Scrutiny

Officers: Chief Executive (AC)
Deputy Chief Executive (KN)
Interim Director - Law and Governance, Interim Monitoring Officer (IA)
Director - Corporate Resources and Section 151 Officer (ME)
Director - Housing (DF)
Corporate Manager - Governance & Civic Office (JR)
Corporate Manager - Economy & Business (MG)
Corporate Manager – Finance, Commissioning & Procurement (RH)
Corporate Manager Policy, Performance, Insight, Risk and Improvement (JK)
Tenancy Services Corporate Manager (RL)
Risk Management Lead (TF)
SRP Operations Officer (AM)
Assistant Manager – Governance (HH)

Apologies:

Councillors: Gerard Brewster
David Burn
Peter Gould

68 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

Councillor Whitehead declared an Other Registrable Interest in item 11 due to being a Director of Gateway 14 Ltd.

Councillor Richardson declared an Other Registrable Interest in item 11 due to being a Non-Executive Director of Freeport East Limited Supervisory Board.

However, the item under discussion did not directly relate to the finances or wellbeing of that interest nor affect the finances or wellbeing of that interest to a greater extent than the majority of inhabitants. Therefore, Councillors Whitehead and

Richardson were not prevented from participating in the debate and vote in respect of this item 11

69 MCA/22/33 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5 DECEMBER 2022

It was RESOLVED: -

That minutes of the meeting held on the 5 December 2022 be confirmed and signed as a correct record of the meeting.

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

None received.

71 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS

None received.

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

No matters were referred.

73 FORTHCOMING DECISIONS LIST

The Forthcoming Decisions List was noted.

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

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

Councillor Whitehead provided a summary of the report and moved the recommendations as detailed in the report.

Councillor Flatman seconded the recommendations.

The Cabinet Member for Finance responded to questions from other Members attending the meeting including Parish Council preceptors in table 3 and that the duration of the scheme was one year, after which the Council would have to go out to consultation again.

Councillor Whitehead stated that the savings in the report were based on forecasts.

The Shared Revenues Partnerships Operations Officer detailed how the forecasted savings were based on disestablished posts and a reduction in administrations costs.

During the debate Councillor Morley stated that the scheme would reduce the strain on residents for those who could not afford to pay the Council Tax.

By a unanimous vote

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

75 MCA/22/35 FEES AND CHARGES 2023/24

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

Councillor Whitehead provided an introduction and moved the recommendations in the report, which was seconded by Councillor Fleming.

In response to questions from other Members attending the meeting, the Cabinet Member for Finance stated that the collection for charges for bulk items reflected the cost of collection, and that with regards to inflation, it was a balancing act between covering costs and charges to ensure full recovery of costs to the Council. A response to clarify the charges for hedge trimming would be provided outside of the meeting.

Councillor Whitehead referred to paragraph 5.8 and advised that 'discretionary charges' was the correct term for this paragraph. He referred to the increase in charges and stated that previously the Council had not recovered enough to cover the cost of the services.

By a unanimous vote.

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.

76 MCA/22/36 TENANCY POLICY

The Chair, Councillor Morley invited the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Hadingham to introduce the report.

Councillor Hadingham provided an introduction to the report and moved the recommendation as detailed in the report.

Councillor Flatman seconded the recommendation.

The Tenant Services Corporate Manager responded to questions from other Members attending the meeting including that succession was considered on a case-by-case basis and was detailed under section 11 in the Policy.

In response to further questions from other Members attending the meeting, the Cabinet Member for Housing confirmed that guidance about ending a tenancy, aimed at relatives, would be published on the Council's website.

During the debate Councillor Morley expressed her support for the Tenancy Policy.

By a unanimous vote.

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 a 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.

77 MCA/22/37 FREEPORT EAST BUSINESS RATES POLICIES

The Chair, Councillor Morley invited the Cabinet Member for Economic Councillor Richardson to introduce the report.

Councillor Richardson introduced the report and proposed an amendment to the recommendations 3.1 as follows:

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.

Councillor Whitehead seconded the recommendations, as proposed by Councillor Richardson.

In response to questions from other Members attending the meeting the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth stated that Gateway 14 was a designated tax site and that business had to comply to set of criteria to be accepted for the site. So far there had not been any businesses in Stowmarket applying for relocation to the Gateway 14 site.

The Corporate Manager for Economic and Business detailed the early financial modelling for the Gateway 14 project in relations to retained business rates, however with a caveat that there was some uncertainty in the figures as they were based on projections. Work was also being undertaken with Freeport East in relation to the site. She advised Members that there was a difference between a tax site and a customs site.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

- 1.1 That delegated authority was given to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Director for Economic Growth & Climate Change 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.

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.

78 MCA/22/38 SCRUTINY/CABINET PROTOCOL

The Chair Councillor Morley invited the Corporate Manager for Governance and Civic Office to introduce the report.

The Corporate Manager for Governance and Civic Offices detailed the reasons and that work undertaken to produce the Protocol.

Councillor Morley proposed the recommendation as detailed in the report, which was seconded by Councillor Fleming.

Members were advised that the Scrutiny/Cabinet Protocol would be reviewed on a 6 months' basis.

By a unanimous vote

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.

79 MCA/22/39 RISK MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENTS

The Chair Councillor Morley, the Cabinet Member for Customers, Digital Transformation and Improvements provided an introduction to the report.

Councillor Morley proposed the recommendation, as detailed in the report, which was seconded by Councillor Richardson.

During the debate Councillor Richardson stated that he supported the Risk Management Register as the Council was undertaking large projects such as Gateway 14 and the Stowmarket Health, Education and Leisure Facilities scheme. These projects involved an inherent level of risk financially, legally and reputationally. However, it was the cycle of continuous improvements which Councillor Richardson appreciated and despite the identification, monitoring and mitigating levels of risk, this did not prevent the Council from improving performance

and move forward.

Councillor Fleming suggested that as there were some big programmes undertaken by the Council, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could focus on the overview and the strategic plan going forward.

By a unanimous vote.

It was RESOLVED: -

That Members of Babergh and Mid Suffolk Cabinets noted the progress so far to improve strategic risk management and agreed 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.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 11.43 am.

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Chair