

## 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, 6 February 2023

### **PRESENT:**

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

Councillors: David Burn  
Lavinia Hadingham

Jessica Fleming  
John Whitehead

### **Ward Member(s):**

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

**In attendance:** Nathan Swift - Saunders Boston Architects,  
Guest(s): Alan Hepburn and Stephen Brown from REAL Consulting

Officers:

- Chief Executive (AC)
- Deputy Chief Executive (KN)
- Director - Corporate Resources and Section 151 Officer (ME)
- Director - Economic Growth and Climate Change (FD)
- Director - Operations (ME)
- Corporate Manager - The Councils' Companies (HB)
- Corporate Manager – Finance, Commissioning & Procurement (RH)
- Shared Revenue Partnership Operations Manager (AW)
- Project and Research Officer (KN)
- Licensing Officer (KP)
- Assistant Manager – Governance (HH)

### **Apologies:**

Gerard Brewster  
Julie Flatman  
Peter Gould

### **80 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS**

There were no declarations of interests made by Councillors.

### **81 MCA/22/40 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9 JANUARY 2023**

**It was resolved:**

**That the minutes of the meeting held on the 9 January 2023 be confirmed and signed as a correct record of the meeting.**

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

None received.

**83 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS**

None received.

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

84.1 The Chair, Councillor Morley invited the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Welham to present matters.

84.2 Councillor Welham referred to the recommendation made at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 23 January 2023, asking Cabinet to consider an increase in the Locality Award allocation for each Member.

84.3 Councillor Welham questioned whether this would be included in the budget papers for Council.

84.4 The Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Whitehead responded that new emerging community grants projects were coming through all the time and that the Locality Grant funding would be included clearly in the budget papers for Council in March.

Due to technical issues a short break was taken between 10:41 am and 10:50 am.

**85 FORTHCOMING DECISIONS LIST**

There were no comments made for the Forthcoming Decisions List.

**86 MCA/22/41 GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2023/24 AND FOUR-YEAR OUTLOOK**

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

86.2 Councillor Whitehead introduced the report and moved the recommendations 3.1 and 3.2 in the report.

86.3 Councillor Richardson seconded the recommendations and stated that this was a healthy budget for another year, which allowed the Council to invest in Communities and the District as a whole and reflected a strong financial position for the Council.

86.4 In response to questions from other Members attending the meeting the Director for Corporate Resources clarified the loan arrangements for CIFCO

and the Capital borrowing programme.

- 86.5 The Cabinet Member for Finance responded to questions from other Members attending the meeting regarding the allocation of the Locality Funding and the risk management table in the report and further that the medium-term prediction was cumulative over the next four years. However, growth in business rates, fees and charges were likely to increase during this period to mitigate the funding gap.
- 86.6 In response to questions from other members attending the meeting, the Director for Housing advised Members that the Council was seeking legal advice on transfer between the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account to explore if changes could be made, but that this would not be completed before the budgets were presented to Council in March.
- 86.7 In responses to further questions from other Members attending the meeting the Cabinet Member for Finance stated that the Council continuously strived to make efficiency savings to maintain and improve services to residents. However, the reserves were for projects, which would improve residents' lives. There had been challenges on the Council's day to day budget, such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis. However, projects funded by the reserves, such as Gateway 14 and the Stowmarket Health, Education and Leisure Facilities scheme (SHELF) and the Electric Vehicle Charging Point project were also part of the Council's work.
- 86.8 Councillor Morley stated that there were better, faster ways to save money for the Council such as going paperless and self-services for residents, which would free-up officers' time to undertake more detailed work for residents.
- 86.9 Councillor Richardson queried table 1 for Risk Management and the Director for Corporate resources advised that it was prudent to leave the risk level as it was.
- 86.10 Members debated the issues including that efficiencies were key enablers for projects to improve the lives of residents and that the current funding for these projects would be carried forward to next year's budget.

By a unanimous vote

**It was RESOLVED: -**

- 1.1 That the General Fund Budget proposals for 2023/24 and four-year outlook set out in the report be endorsed for recommendation to Council on 23 February 2023.**
- 1.2 That the General Fund Budget for 2023/24 is based on no increase to the Band D Council Tax, be endorsed for recommendation to Council on 23 February 2023.**

**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.

## **87 MCA/22/42 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) 2023/24 BUDGET**

- 87.1 The Chair Councillor Morley invited the Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Whitehead to introduce the report.
- 87.2 Councillor Whitehead introduced the report and moved the recommendations in the report.
- 87.3 Councillor Hadingham seconded the recommendations.
- 87.4 The Director for Housing responded to question from other Members attending the meeting on issues including that the increase to tenancy rents had been restricted to 7% and that there were significant challenges to the HRA budget going forward, to keep properties up to standard as safe, warm and dry homes. Rents had to be increased to make sure there was enough capital to invest for the future for Council properties.
- 87.5 The Director for Housing clarified that HRA land was the Council's responsibility, and when this land was sold the Council had to ensure that the land was kept in good order. It was possible to transfer land to parish councils, however, this was not easy as there was cost involved for this process.

By a unanimous vote

**It was RESOLVED: -**

- 1.1 That the HRA Budget proposals for 2023/24 set out in the report be endorsed for recommendation to Council on 23 February 2023.**
- 1.2 That an increase of 7% for council house rents, equivalent to an average rent increase of £6.16 for social rent and £9.03 for affordable rent, a week be implemented.**
- 1.3 That the CPI increase of 10.1% in garage rents, equivalent to an average rent increase of £4.86 or £4.91 (private rental), a month be implemented.**
- 1.4 That an increase of 7% for sheltered housing service charges, equivalent to £10.83 a month, be implemented.**
- 1.5 That an increase for sheltered housing utility charges, equivalent to £27.93 a month (30% for heating and 62% for water), be implemented.**
- 1.6 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.

### **88 MCA/22/43 BUSINESS RATES RELIEF POLICIES**

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

88.2 Councillor Whitehead introduced the report and moved recommendations 3.1 and 3.2 as detailed in the report.

88.3 Councillor Richardson seconded the recommendations.

By a unanimous vote.

**It was RESOLVED: -**

**1.1 That Cabinet approved the introduction of the discretionary Retail, Hospitality and Leisure and Supporting Small Business rate relief policies as set out in appendix 1 & 2 for the 2023/24 financial year.**

**1.2 That Cabinet gave authority to the Director for Corporate Resources in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance to agree future changes to the discretionary Retail, Hospitality and Leisure and Supporting Small Business rate relief policies for the life of the 2023 rating list.**

## **REASON FOR DECISION**

To provide discretionary reliefs to support Business ratepayers in Mid Suffolk.

To enable the implementation of the discretionary schemes.

### **89 MCA/22/44 MSDC: RINGFENCED FUNDING FOR ELECTRIC BUS RURAL TRANSPORT**

89.1 The Chair, Councillor Morley invited Councillor Richardson to introduce the report, as the Cabinet Member for Communities and Wellbeing, Councillor Flatman had forwarded apologies for this meeting.

89.2 Councillor Richardson introduced the report and proposed that recommendations 3.3 be removed and that recommendation 3.2 be amended to:

*To approve the officer recommendation to pause the delivery of this project in order to allow more time to collate evidence to support the viability of a pilot scheme as limited evidence of successful schemes has been available to date across the local area and across the UK, accepting that further agreement with Gateway 14 Board may be required if the final scheme is linked to G14 delivery.*

- 89.3 Councillor Richardson then moved recommendation 3.1 and 3.2 as proposed, which was seconded by Councillor Whitehead.
- 89.4 In response to questions from other Members attending the meeting regarding the Gateway 14 Travel Plan Councillor Richardson responded that the travel plan was a condition of the Planning application. The Sustainable Travel Officer confirmed that travel plan was based on the occupation of The Range, which was due to be in the Summer 2024.
- 89.5 In response to further questions from other Members attending the meeting Councillor Richardson responded that the lead time for purchasing EV buses would be variable depending on the model chosen. That the Working Group had recommended that the EV Bus Scheme was pause until further evidence was available from other similar schemes nationally, as there was not enough evidence to work with for this kind of scheme. With regards to the funding of the scheme Transport of London were not currently funding the scheme, so the cost would be carried by the Council. There would be some Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) available in connection with the planning application for The Range.
- 89.6 During the debate Councillor Fleming thanked Officers for the extensive work undertaken for the project and that the Council was not ready to commit funding to this type of service yet. However, as this area developed in relation to vehicles, greener fuel options and technology, the Council would be considering options for improving transport to rural areas.

By a unanimous vote

**It was RESOLVED: -**

- 1.1 That Cabinet noted the extensive work undertaken by officers to date to consider the viability of an electric bus rural transport scheme across the District.**
- 1.2 To approve the officer recommendation to pause the delivery of this project in order to allow more time to collate evidence to support the viability of a pilot scheme as limited evidence of successful schemes has been available to date across the local area and across the UK, accepting that further agreement with Gateway 14 Board may be required if the final scheme is linked to G14 delivery.**

## **REASON FOR DECISION**

To meet the obligations set out in the funding agreement between the Homes and Communities Agency (now Homes England) and Mid Suffolk District Council in relation to

the Shared Ownership Affordable Homes Programme 2016-2021

**90 MCA/22/45 HOMES ENGLAND COMPLIANCE AUDIT - NEEDHAM MARKET MIDDLE SCHOOL SITE**

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

90.2 Councillor Hadingham introduced and moved the recommendation 3.1 as detailed in the report, which was seconded by Councillor Morley.

By a unanimous vote.

**It was RESOLVED: -**

**That Mid Suffolk District Cabinet formally acknowledged the compliance audit received from Homes England in relation to the affordable housing development at Needham Market Middle School.**

**REASON FOR DECISION**

To meet the obligations set out in the funding agreement between the Homes and Communities Agency (now Homes England) and Mid Suffolk District Council in relation to the Shared Ownership Affordable Homes Programme 2016-2021

**91 MCA/22/46 STOWMARKET HEALTH, EDUCATION AND LEISURE FACILITIES (SHELF) SCHEME**

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

91.2 Councillor Richardson introduced the report and moved the recommendations, as detailed in the report.

91.3 Councillor Whitehead seconded the recommendations and stated that whilst it was an ambitious and expensive project, it would bring high quality sports facilities to the area.

91.4 In response to questions from other Members attending the meeting, Councillor Richardson advised that sustainable transport options would be explored.

91.5 The Director for Economic Growth and Climate Change responded to questions from other Members attending the meeting and advised that all the pitches referred to in paragraph 4.5 were outdoor, all-weather pitches.

By a unanimous vote

**It was RESOLVED: -**

- 1.3 That Cabinet noted the work and progress made on the scheme to date, including extensive public engagement, design and cost planning and scheme viability.
- 1.2 To also note the future gateways for decision making for the scheme including bringing the full business case, funding strategy and optimal operating model to Cabinet and Council later this year for a formal decision.
- 1.3 To approve the recommendation to submit a full planning application and develop detailed designs for the scheme.
- 1.4 To recommend to Council further spend of £250,000 from the Growth and Efficiency fund to enable the works outlined in 3.3 to progress.

**REASON FOR DECISION**

Further work is now required to identify and secure occupiers and end users for the scheme, particularly the Wellbeing hub, to enable completion of the full business case. In addition, several external funding streams can only be submitted once a planning permission has been secured.

Therefore, it is recommended that work continues on the scheme to enable the next set of milestones to be met, at which point the full business case detailing final draft cost plan, levels of income and expenditure for the whole site, a proposed management model and a detailed funding strategy, will be brought back for formal decision. The full business case may outline options for the phased delivery of the site.

**92 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC (WHICH TERM INCLUDES THE PRESS)**

This was not required for the consideration of the above item.

**93 MCA/22/46 APPENDIX B - COST PLAN AND FUNDING SUMMARY**

The business of the meeting was concluded at 12:16 pm.

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Chair