

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **MSDC COUNCIL** held in the King Edmund Chamber, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich on Monday, 22 May 2023

PRESENT:

Councillor: James Caston (Chairman)

| | | |
|--------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Councillors: | David Bradbury | Terence Carter |
| | Austin Davies | Teresa Davis |
| | Rachel Eburne | Lucy Elkin |
| | Lavinia Hadingham | Nicholas Hardingham |
| | Matthew Hicks | Terry Lawrence |
| | Colin Lay | Anders Linder |
| | Sarah Mansel | Adrienne Marriott |
| | John Matthissen | Andrew Mellen |
| | Gilly Morgan | David Napier |
| | Jen Overett | James Patchett |
| | Janet Pearson | David Penny |
| | Dr Ross Piper | Dr Daniel Pratt |
| | Miles Row | Keith Scarff |
| | Andrew Stringer | Ollie Walters |
| | Rowland Warboys | Tim Weller |
| | John Whitehead | Nicky Willshire |
| | Richard Winch | |

In attendance:

Officers:

- Chief Executive (AC)
- Deputy Chief Executive (KN)
- Monitoring Officer (IA)
- Corporate Manager Governance & Civic Office (JR)
- Director Corporate Resources (ME)
- Director Customers, Digital Transformation and Improvement (SW)
- Director Operations (ME)
- Director Assets & Investments (EA)
- Director Economic Growth & Climate Change (FD)

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

- 1.1 On the proposal of Councillor Mellen and seconded by Councillor Eburne, Councillor Rowland Warboys was nominated for the position of Chairman of the Council.

By a unanimous vote.

It was RESOLVED: -

That Councillor Rowland Warboys be elected as Chair of the Council for the municipal year 2023/24.

- 1.2 Before vacating the Chair Councillor Caston thanked the previous Council for their support throughout his chairmanship, he also thanked the Corporate Manager – Governance and Civic Office and the Lead Officer – Regulatory and Civic Office for their support. Additionally Councillor Caston highlighted that he had raised £4,400 for his chosen charity Stowmarket ASD Saturday Club.
- 1.3 Councillor Warboys made his declaration of office.
- 1.4 Councillor Warboys thanked the citizens of Gislingham Ward for re-electing him to represent them on the Council and thanked his fellow Councillors for electing him as Chairman, and the outgoing Chair Councillor Caston for his fair approach and fundraising throughout his chairmanship.
- 1.5 Additionally the Chair paid tribute to the newly elected Councillors, and those who were not re-elected. He announced that his chosen charities were Street Forge Thornham Magna, and Beyond the Wall. Both of which worked with people aged 16 and over who have disabilities.

2 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

- 2.1 On the proposal of Councillor Mellen and seconded by Councillor Eburne, Councillor Daniel Pratt was nominated for the position of Vice Chairman of the Council.

By a unanimous vote.

It was RESOLVED: -

That Councillor Daniel Pratt be elected as Vice Chair of the Council for the municipal year 2023/24.

- 2.2 Councillor Pratt made his declaration of office.
- 2.3 The Vice Chair thanked the citizens of Battisford and Ringshall for re-electing him and thanked his fellow Councillors for electing him as Vice Chairman. The Vice Chair stated that he was looking forward to promoting democracy in secondary schools and sixth forms across the district.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 3.1 None received.

4 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

- 4.1 None declared.

5 MC/23/1 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 MARCH 2023

It was RESOLVED: -

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2023 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

6 MC/23/2 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

6.1 The Chairman's announcements were noted.

7 ELECTION OF LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

7.1 A nomination for Councillor Andrew Melen was proposed by Councillor Stringer and seconded by Councillor Eburne.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

That Councillor Andrew Mellen be appointed Leader of the Council for the current term of office.

8 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

8.1 The Leader made the following announcements:

"Mr Chairman, can I be the first to congratulate you on your elevation to your new position as chair of the council. Also to Councillor Pratt for your election as vice-chair. I am sure you will both do a very good job over the next year, I commend you for your choice of charities to fundraise for, and I am also very grateful that you have both agreed to be champions of the democracy project, as we seek to promote better engagement by our citizens, particularly young people, in the democratic process.

With 20 new members on the council, you have a job of work to do in learning the new names and new faces, but I am sure you will soon know your Councillor Marriott from your Councillor Morgan, your Davis from your Davies, and your Hadingham from your Hardingham.

I would like to start by welcoming all members to this new council term, whether newly elected, or returning for another four years. Each of you have put yourself forward, you have made it through the campaign and have been elected to represent your community - and every one of you has a significant contribution to make to the work of this authority.

I am sure we all will want to thank our hard-working officers for the smooth operation of the election count at Wherstead park. I know that this required a big team effort, not just from the elections team but with many other staff members in support, and with the significant media interest it was a long and busy day. So thank you to Arthur and all the other staff involved for a job well done.

I would also like to pay tribute to members from the previous term who are no longer councillors. Several long-serving members stood down at this election and we will miss their wisdom and experience. I am sure that all members will join me in wishing them long and happy retirements.

I also want to thank the three Councillors who served in the last term who the electorate chose not to return here - due to this sometimes brutal business that we call democracy: Councillor Tim Passmore, a councillor for 20 years, a former leader who still has a big job as our police and crime commissioner; Councillor Harry Richardson whose talent I feel sure will carry him back onto the political stage at some point, and I must also pay tribute to the council's leader for the last four years, Councillor Suzie Morley, who, on a hung council, pulled off the remarkable achievement of leading a stable administration for four years. I wish her well for the future and I am sure she will be back.

Having looked back, I now want to look forward and briefly set out our administration's priorities and programme for the next four years. We have an emphatic mandate from the electorate to deliver the sensible Green agenda that we set out during the campaign. Mid Suffolk's residents are rightly concerned about a variety of issues: the cost of living perhaps the most pressing concern over the past year. For many it is finding an affordable place to live. Others spoke to us about the provision of local services, or public transport, or the decline of town centres. And above all these concerns is the looming threat from climate change, which we can no longer speak of as something that will trouble us in the future – it's here and now. Last week The World Meteorological Organisation warned that we are about to cross that threshold of 1.5 degrees warming, and we only need to think back to last summer when we saw record temperatures and a prolonged period of drought here, in East Anglia - a taste of things to come. Alongside the climate crisis but often with a lower profile is a biodiversity crisis, with huge declines in the populations of insects, pollinators, birds and other wildlife.

Now clearly a district council such as ours cannot solve all of these problems. But we can make a start, and we can work with others, we can take a lead, and I believe we can make a difference. So today we formally press the re-set button on the council's priorities, and in the days, weeks and months ahead we will re-focus the work of the council in a greener and more sustainable direction.

We must continue to deliver the council's services to the highest possible standard, whether that is emptying the recycling bins, licencing a taxi, deciding a planning application, or the thousand and one other things that this organisation does so well.

We have an excellent team of over 500 staff, shared with Babergh, and we want them to continue to take pride in the work they do and the services that they deliver. But concern for this beautiful world, for the climate and for nature must be at the heart of all that we do. It must be the prism through which we view every future decision, it must run through this organisation like letters through a stick of rock. This council declared a climate emergency back in July 2019, here in this chamber, and declared a biodiversity emergency a few months later. If we are to take those declarations seriously, we must take environmental concerns into account in every decision that we make: how we work; what we invest in; the kind of houses we build, the locations we allow to develop, the type of businesses that we support and encourage, and all the services we provide.

Alongside this re-set of our priorities, there are three words that I want to mention that I think help to sum up the first Green administration's approach. Firstly, we must do all we can to improve the liveability of our communities. This might be a new word for some people so what do I mean by this? You may have heard about the concept of the 15 minute neighbourhood in cities – where all essential services can be found within a short walk or cycle ride of where you live. We can't hope to achieve this in rural areas but we can look to promote the liveability of our villages and towns, supporting the provision of key facilities which help to make places easier to live in, what some have described as the foundation economy. This might be the local pub which also hosts the village post office or the food bank, 2 examples that are already happening. It could be redundant farm buildings re-purposed as a micro-brewery or a professional services centre, or the village hall which acts as a hub for community life. These kind of small businesses and community connections are often what make neighbourhoods work and on which people depend, and we want to build these up and support them.

The second word is resilience. Resilience is what someone has described as “bounce-back-ability” – the ability to take a punch and recover and survive and keep going. We have seen a number of shocks over the past year – financial, economic, the cost of living etc. and our resilience is being tested. Our households and communities will need to be even more resilient in the years ahead – there will be troubles, some of which like climate change we can anticipate, others which we won't be able to foresee, but if we can build up the resilience of the district we will be in a much better state to withstand them.

The third word came into my mind just a little too late – I was asked by a journalist last week what will a Green-led district look like after four years, and I produced an answer of sorts – but later I realised I could have summed it up in one word, and that word is thriving. We want to see Mid Suffolk thriving. Not just economically – though that's important, but also culturally, socially, environmentally, sustainably thriving. With our focus on sustainability and community we want this district to be a great place to live (which it already is) – a great place to work, a great place to do business and a great place to visit. If we can achieve that, as councillors, as officers, and working with all the other organisations involved, that will be something to be proud of.

To put these priorities into action, I would now like to introduce the members of the cabinet. Serving as deputy leader of the council, and portfolio holder for Finance and Resources will be Councillor Rachel Eburne. Cabinet member for Heritage, Planning and Infrastructure is Councillor Andrew Stringer. Cabinet member for Housing and Property is Councillor Richard Winch. Cabinet member for Thriving Towns and Rural Communities is Councillor Teresa Davis. Cabinet member for Environment, Culture and Wellbeing is Councillor Tim Weller. As leader, I will look after the portfolio for Performance and Resilience.

Whilst the cabinet will lead and guide our initiatives, as I said earlier I believe that all elected members have a significant part to play in the council's work, and there are many ways in which this will be done: Sitting on one of the committees: planning, licencing or scrutiny; participating in a working group or a task and finish group; representing the council on one of the many outside bodies; taking part in debate in this chamber, or simply representing your residents in a myriad of ways. Whilst we may not always agree politically, it is a good and healthy thing to have different views and perspectives, and I look forward to the contribution each one of you will make.

In that spirit, we have decided not to nominate Green councillors for all of the committee chair and vice-chair positions, leaving some for non-administration members to fill and this information has been shared with the opposition group leaders.

Lastly, the last four years showed us that the leader and cabinet model, whilst having certain benefits, is not a particularly democratic system, where half the council can be denied a stake in the administration. So, despite the fact that we have a clear majority, I can announce today that we will seek, within this council term, to review the council's governance structure, with the intention of bringing in a more democratic configuration.

So Mr Chairman, in conclusion I want to harness the enthusiasm and commitment of this new administration, and set ourselves the challenge of being a fairer, more open, more sustainable council, leading to a thriving and resilient district."

- 8.2 Councillor Whitehead congratulated Councillor Mellen as the new Leader of the Council. He commented that although Opposition will be a new learning experience for himself and the Conservative councillors, Opposition plays an important role in the democratic system and they would approach it with humility but with a clear desire to hold the new controllers of the council to account.

Councillor Whitehead went on to say that the Greens had inherited a golden legacy from the Conservatives, including a council that could freeze its council tax precept for two years, the budget and four-year outlook, Gateway 14 and CIFCO investments. He commented that the Greens now take on stewardship of that golden legacy and the Opposition will closely scrutinise how they perform that stewardship.

9 DESIGNATION OF COMMITTEES AND JOINT COMMITTEES

9.1 On the proposal of Councillor Mellen and seconded by Councillor Whitehead

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOVLED: -

That the following Committees and Joint Committees be appointed:

- **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
- **Planning Committee**
- **Licensing and Regulatory Committee**
- **Joint Audit and Standards Committee**
- **Joint Appointments Committee**

10 MC/23/3 POLITICAL BALANCE AND COMPOSITION OF COMMITTEES

10.1 The Monitoring Officer introduced the report.

10.2 On the proposal of Councillor Mellen and seconded by Councillor Scarff

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

- 1.1 That the Committees' size and numerical allocation of seats be approved as detailed in Appendix A to this report.**
- 1.2 That Committee members and named substitutes be appointed as set out in Appendix B to this report.**
- 1.3 That the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make consequential changes to the Constitution following any changes made to the appointments and political composition of committees.**

11 ELECTION OF CHAIRS AND VICE-CHAIRS OF COMMITTEES

11.1 On the proposal of Councillor Whitehead and seconded by Councillor Mansel

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

That Councillor James Caston be elected as Chair of the Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2023/24.

11.2 On the proposal of Councillor Marriott and seconded by Councillor Caston

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

That Councillor Keith Scarf be elected as Vice Chair of the Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2023/24

11.3 On the proposal of Councillor Mellen and seconded by Councillor Stringer

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

That Councillor Sarah Mansel be elected Chair of the Planning Committee for the municipal year 2023/24.

11.4 On the proposal of Councillor Whitehead and seconded by Councillor Caston

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

That Councillor Lavinia Hadingham be elected Vice Chair of the Planning Committee for the municipal year 2023/24.

11.5 On the proposal of Councillor Mellen and seconded by Councillor Mansel

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

That Councillor Oliver Walters be elected Chair of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee for the municipal year 2023/24.

11.6 On the proposal of Councillor Scarff and seconded by Councillor Marriott

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

That Councillor Nicky Willshire be elected Vice Chair of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee for the municipal year 2023/24.

11.7 On the proposal of Councillor Mellen and seconded by Councillor Walters

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

That Councillor Matthissen be elected Co-Chair of the Joint Audit and Standards Committee for the municipal year 2023/24.

11.8 On the proposal of Councillor Mansel and seconded by Councillor Carter

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

That Councillor Mellen be elected Co-Chair of the Joint Appointments Committee for the municipal year 2023/24.

12 MC/23/4 APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES FOR 2023/24

12.1 Councillor Mellen introduced the report and **MOVED** the recommendations in the report.

12.2 Councillor Mellen informed the Council that there was the additional recommendation of the appointment of Councillor Terence Carter to the West Suffolk Community Safety Partnership.

12.3 Councillor Caston seconded the motion.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillors be appointed to the Outside Bodies as detailed below:

| NAME OF BODY / PANEL | NUMBER OF REPRESENTATIVE TO BE APPOINTED | NAME OF MEMBER(S) NOMINATED |
|---|---|------------------------------------|
| Armed Forces Covenant | 1 | James Patchett |
| Association for Suffolk Museums | 1 | Ollie Walters |
| East of England Assembly of Leaders | 1 (Leader) | Andrew Mellen |
| East of England Local Government Association | 1 (Leader) | Andrew Mellen |
| East Suffolk Water Management Board | 3 | TBC |
| East West Main Line Partnership | 1 | David Bradbury |

| | | |
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| Families Together Suffolk | 1 | Lavinia Hadingham |
| Ipswich Strategic Planning Area Board | 1 (+1 substitute) | Andrew Stringer (Sub: TBC) |
| Local Government Association - SPARSE | 1 | Andrew Mellen (Obs: John Whitehead) |
| Local Government Association Assembly | 1 (Leader) | Andrew Mellen |
| Suffolk Flood Risk Management Scrutiny Sub-Committee | 1 (+1 substitute) | James Patchett (Sub: TBC) |
| Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board | 1 (+1 substitute) | Tim Weller (Sub: Teresa Davis) |
| Suffolk Health Scrutiny Committee | 1 (+1 substitute) | Terence Carter (Sub: Miles Row) |
| Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Policy Panel | 1 | James Patchett |
| Suffolk Police and Crime Panel | 1 (+1 substitute) | Sarah Mansel (Sub: TBC) |
| Suffolk Violence and Abuse Partnership | 1 | Jen Overett |
| Suffolk Waste Partnership | 1 | Teresa Davis |
| Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership | 1 (+1 substitute) | Terence Carter (Sub: TBC) |

13 MC/23/5 APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTORS TO THE BOARD OF MSDC (SUFFOLK HOLDINGS) LTD

13.1 On the proposal of Councillor Mellen and seconded by Councillor Eburne

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

That the Council approve the appointment of Councillor Austin Davies, Councillor John Matthissen, Councillor Colin Lay, and Councillor Richard Winch as Directors of MSDC (Suffolk Holdings) Ltd.

14 APPOINTMENT OF COUNCILLORS TO THE SHARED REVENUES PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE

14.1 On the proposal of Councillor Mellen and seconded by Councillor Stringer

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

That Councillors Rachel Eburne and Richard Winch be appointed as members of the Shared Revenues Partnership Joint Committee and that Councillors Teresa Davis and Tim Weller be appointed as substitute members for the municipal year 2023/24.

15 APPOINTMENTS TO THE SUFFOLK JOINT STANDARDS BOARD

15.1 On the proposal of Councillor Mellen and seconded by Councillor Pratt

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

That Councillor Lucy Elkin be appointed as a member of the Suffolk Joint Standards Board for the municipal year 2023/24.

16 APPOINTMENTS TO THE JOINT GYPSY AND TRAVELLER STEERING GROUP

16.1 On the proposal of Councillor Mellen and seconded by Councillor Lay

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

That Councillors David Penny and Miles Row be appointed to the Joint Gypsy and Traveller Steering Group for the municipal year 2023/24.

17 APPOINTMENTS TO COUNCIL WORKING GROUPS

17.1 On the proposal of Councillor Mellen and seconded by Councillor Scarff

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED:

1.1 That Councillors Janet Pearson, Rowland Warboys, Anders Linder, and Adrienne Marriott be appointed to the Community Governance Review Working Group.

1.2 That Councillors Rachel Eburne, John Matthissen, John Whitehead, and Keith Scarff be appointed to the Constitution Working Group.

- 1.3 That Councillors Janet Pearson, Ross Piper, Gilly Morgan, and Nicky Willshire be appointed to the Member Learning and Development Working Group.**
- 1.4 That Councillors Sarah Mansel, Andrew Stringer, James Caston and Terry Lawrence be appointed to the Local Plan Working Group.**

The business of the meeting was concluded at 18:19pm.

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Chair