

## MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **MID SUFFOLK CABINET** held in the John Peel Centre - Church Walk, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 1ET on Tuesday, 11 July 2023

### PRESENT:

Councillors: Teresa Davis Rachel Eburne  
Andrew Mellen Andrew Stringer  
Richard Winch

### In attendance:

Councillors: Lavinia Hadingham

Officers: Chief Executive (AC)  
Interim Director - Law and Governance, Interim Monitoring Officer (IA)  
Director - Corporate Resources and Section 151 Officer (ME)  
Director - Assets and Investments (EA)  
Director - Operations (ME)  
Interim Corporate Manager - Finance and C&P Corporate Resources (BP)  
Corporate Manager - Governance and Civic Office (JR)  
Corporate Manager - Housing Solutions (AAY)  
Corporate Manager – Strategic Policy (JH)  
Performance and Business Planning Lead (AL)  
Assistant Manager – Governance (HH)

### Apologies:

Councillor Tim Weller

#### 1 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

There were no declarations of interests made by Councillors.

#### 2 MCA/23/1 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 MARCH 2023

It was **RESOLVED**: -

**That the minutes of the meeting held on the 6 March 2023 be confirmed and signed as true record of the meeting.**

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

None received.

#### **4 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS**

None received.

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

There were no matters referred from the Overview and Scrutiny or the Joint Audit and Standards committees.

#### **6 FORTHCOMING DECISIONS LIST**

There were no comments made for the Forthcoming Decisions List.

#### **7 MCA/23/2 GENERAL FUND FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2022/23**

7.1 The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources to introduce the report.

7.2 Councillor Rachel Eburne provided a summary of the key points in the report and outlined that there had been an overall surplus of £5.287m for the past year, which was £629K less than expected. This was due to inflation, cost pressures in areas such as public realm, timing issues with grants and expected interest rates, which had increased significantly.

7.3 Councillor Eburne referred to the recommendations and provided additional information including: that the Growth and Efficiency Fund would be renamed to be applicable to the communities it served, that there was uncertainty of prices for Waste Service, and that the transfer to the Commercial Development and Risk Management Reserve related to interest payments for Gateway 14.

7.4 Councillor Eburne further referred to recommendation 'f' and that this related to the cost pressures from Everyone Active Leisure Centre in Stowmarket, which had seen large increases in energy prices. The Council had agreed to support the Leisure Centre with funding from the Covid Recovery Reserve. She assured Members that the Council was working with the Leisure Centre to resolve the issues going forward.

7.5 Councillor Eburne proposed the recommendations, as detailed in the report which was seconded by Councillor Teresa Davis.

By a unanimous vote.

**It was RESOLVED: -**

**1.1 That the 2022/23 General Fund financial outturn of £629k overspend compared to budget as set out in this report be noted.**

- 1.2 That the revenue carry-forward requests totalling £34k be noted.
- 1.3 That the following transfers be approved;
- a) £4.294m be transferred to the Growth and Efficiency Fund
  - b) (£500k) be transferred from the Inflationary Pressure Reserve
  - c) (£85k) to be transferred from the Business Rates & Council Tax Reserve
  - d) £138k to be transferred to the Waste Reserve
  - e) £1.233m Investment Income be transferred to the Commercial Development & Risk Management Reserve
  - f) £173k of Everyone Active utility cost pressure to be funded from the Covid Recovery Reserve
- 1.4 That the capital carry-forward requests totalling £23.062m be approved.

#### **REASON FOR DECISION**

To ensure that Members are kept informed of the outturn position for both General Fund Revenue and Capital and to approve earmarked reserve transfers.

### **8 MCA/23/3 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) DRAFT FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2022/23**

- 8.1 The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources to introduce the report.
- 8.2 Councillor Rachel Eburne provided a summary of the key points in the report and proposed the recommendations as detailed in the report.
- 8.3 Councillor Richard Winch seconded the recommendations.
- 8.4 Councillor Andrew Stringer referred to Housing Services in the report and questioned how forecasting for next year was being undertaken, when the report stated that there had been a lack of technical support this year. In addition, the cost of materials had increase for housing repairs and he was concerned whether there would be enough resource capacity to manage the service.
- 8.5 The Director for Housing advised that it continued to be challenging and that the team was working with Building Services and Finance to gain an understanding of the position for the next year, and the increase in staffing costs. An update would be brought to Cabinet in due course.

By a unanimous vote

**It was RESOLVED: -**

- 1.1 That the 2022/23 HRA financial outturn as set out in this report be noted.
- 1.2 That the transfer of £743k, being the HRA revenue deficit for the year (£838k worse than the original budget) from the Strategic Priorities Reserves be approved.
- 1.3 That the HRA capital carry-forward requests totalling £18.388m be approved.

## **REASON FOR DECISION**

To ensure that Members are kept informed of the outturn position for both Housing Revenue and Capital and to approve earmarked reserve transfers and carry forward requests.

## **9 MCA/23/4 MSDC 2022-23 Q4 PERFORMANCE REPORT**

- 9.1 The Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resilience introduced the report and provided brief summaries of each section in the report.
- 9.2 Councillor Rachel Eburne asked that the year on page 86 be corrected to 2023/24.
- 9.3 Councillor Eburne stated that social tariffs for utilities bills were available and asked that this was advertised more widely. She then referred to the National Democracy week on page 51 and asked for an update.
- 9.4 Councillor Eburne also referred to the number of households currently in temporary accommodation and asked for more recent figures.
- 9.5 The Corporate Manager for Governance and Civic Office advised Members that there was not going to be a National Democracy week this year, however the Council was planning to undertake a mini democracy week engaging with schools and hold market stalls event later in the year.
- 9.6 The Corporate Manager - Housing Solutions responded that she would provide an update containing information on what the expectation was for the Housing Service for households in temporary accommodations outside of the meeting.
- 9.7 Councillor Andrew Stringer referred to the number of waste fly tipping incidents and queried how many were prosecuted.
- 9.8 Councillor Stringer asked further for what the plans were for this year's Local Energy Showcase event.
- 9.9 Councillor Stringer then stated that the app used for the Pay and Display machines in Stowmarket was slow and required to be improved.
- 9.10 The Director for Operations responded that it was challenging to successfully prosecute waste fly tipping cases. However, consideration for setting up

CCTV in fly tipping hot spots, was ongoing with members and officers. He added that he would advise the company who operated the Pay and Display machines of Councillor Stringer's concern.

9.11 The Chief Executive advised Members that the Director for Economic Growth and Climate Change would provide information regarding any planned energy showcase events for this year.

9.12 The Quarter 4 Performance report was noted.

## **10 MCA/23/5 UPDATE ON SOCIAL HOUSING REGULATION AND THE OUTCOME OF THE REFERRAL TO THE REGULATOR OF SOCIAL HOUSING**

10.1 The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for Housing and Property to introduce the report.

10.2 Councillor Richard Winch provided a brief background to the report and summarised the progress made since the last update.

10.3 Councillor Winch asked that information for each of the legal process stages for gaining access to non-compliant properties be included in the updates going forward, including the reasons for why access to these properties could not be obtained.

10.4 Councillor Eburne concurred with the above.

10.5 The Director for Housing advised Members that she had proposed to make changes to the spreadsheet and had noted Members' comments.

10.6 Members noted the report.

### **REASON FOR DECISION**

To ensure that members and senior leaders of the councils have oversight over a journey with the regulator back to a position where we are compliant.

## **11 MCA/23/6 AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMUTED SUMS SPENDING POLICY**

11.1 The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for Housing and Property to introduce the report.

11.2 Councillor Richard Winch introduced the report by providing the reason for the proposed Affordable Housing Commuted Sums Spending Policy and a brief summary the aforementioned policy.

11.3 Councillor Winch proposed the recommendations as detailed in the report, which was seconded by Councillor Eburne.

- 11.4 Councillor Andrew Stringer stated that the policy cut across to planning decisions and, from a planning perspective, the policy was robust.
- 11.5 The Housing Enabling Officer advised Members that the number of houses being built by using commuted sums depended on what other funds would be available, and if the Council partnered up with other organisations such as the Community Land Trust.
- 11.6 Councillor Eburne queried the deadlines for spending the Section 106 funding grants, as Babergh District Council Grants had tight deadlines on their Section 106 funding grants. The Housing Enabling Officer responded that usually the Section 106 funding grants would be under tenure but that quite a few of Mid Suffolk District Council's section106 funding grants did not have any deadlines on them.

By a unanimous vote.

**It was RESOLVED: -**

- 1.1 To confirm that affordable housing Commuted Sums formed part of the operational housing budget and so delegated to the Director for Housing the authority to make the associated spending decisions, in line with adopted policy and in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing.**
- 1.2 To adopt the appended Commuted Sums Spending Policy as a means of guiding decision making on Commuted Sums spend.**
- 1.3 That the Director for Housing to be authorised to make future amendments to the Commuted Sums Spending Policy, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, for example if required to stay up to date with legislation, national or other Council policies.**

**REASON FOR DECISION**

To enable spending decisions to be made in a consistent, prompt and effective manner, in line with Council policy and objectives, and the terms of the spend set through individual Section 106 planning obligations.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 10:47am.

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Chair