

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **MID SUFFOLK COUNCIL** held in the King Edmund Chamber - Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich on Thursday, 24 October 2019

PRESENT:

Councillor:	Lavinia Hadingham (Chair)	
	Barry Humphreys MBE (Vice-Chair)	
Councillors:	Oliver Amorowson	Gerard Brewster
	David Burn	Terence Carter
	James Caston	Rachel Eburne
	Paul Ekpenyong	John Field
	Julie Flatman	Jessica Fleming
	Dr Helen Geake	Peter Gould
	Kathie Guthrie	Matthew Hicks
	Sarah Mansel	John Matthissen
	Andrew Mellen	Richard Meyer
	Suzie Morley	David Muller
	Mike Norris	Penny Otton
	Timothy Passmore	Stephen Phillips
	Dr Daniel Pratt	Harry Richardson
	Keith Scarff	Andrew Stringer
	Rowland Warboys	Keith Welham
	John Whitehead	

In attendance:

Officers:	Chief Executive (AC)
	Strategic Director (KN)
	Corporate Manager - Strategic Planning (RH)
	Corporate Manager - Democratic Services (JR)
	Corporate Manager - Internal Audit (JS)

Apologies:

Wendy Turner

61 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

61.1 There were no declarations of interests.

62 MC/19/23 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 SEPTEMBER 2019

It was **RESOLVED**: -

That subject to the following amendments, the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2019 be confirmed and signed as a true record:

Paragraph 10.2 to 10.3: To expand on the response to the question from Councillor Eburne.

NOTE: The response from the Leader to the above question was as follows: “All the resources are done through the Growth Company, if there are any more details required, I would like the officer to respond”

Paragraph 15.14: Change ‘Emergency Climate Change’ to Climate Emergency Change’

Paragraph 15.13: Amend ‘re-wilderment’ to ‘rewilding’

Paragraph 10.37: Amend the first sentence to read: “Councillor Matthissen asked why none of the information relating to the recent Cabinet report had been forwarded to Members”.

63 MC/19/24 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

63.1 The Chair referred to paper MC/19/24, which was for noting.

63.2 She invited all Members to the Civic Service at Fressingfield Church at 3:30pm on the 8 December.

63.3 Councillor Phillips informed Members that the Vice-Chair had not attended the Needham Market Civic Service as detailed in the paper.

64 MC/19/25 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

64.1 The Chair invited the Leader to present her tabled updates.

64.2 Councillor Morley referred to the Tabled Papers and updated Members on the following:

64.3 Success of recent Needham Lake drop in and launch of plans

In October, the Council shared blueprints for the Needham Lake visitor centre which was being developed to create a high quality and environmentally sustainable building including a café and new public convenience facilities. This included a drop-in event on Thursday 10 October at Needham Market Community Centre. A survey was also carried out at the event and had continued to be promoted on social media. The plans complemented the rural nature of the site and aims to boost the number of visitors to the Lake each year, supporting the local economy and encouraging more people to enjoy a range of outdoor leisure pursuits. High quality, innovative tenants were now being encouraged to bid to manage the new visitor centre and café.

64.4 **Thank you and success of National Democracy Week, including our Councillor webinar**

The Leader thanked everyone who took part in National Democracy Week. During the week, Councillors talked to groups they don't often see in the Council Chamber. The week commenced with a panel of Members from both Councils holding an hour-long live webinar with pupils at Thurston Community College. Members covered a range of topics, from planning to litter picking, responding to questions sent in live by the pupils watching. Later in the week, staff and Councillors set out to local markets to speak with people about what the Council does and how it shapes our communities, giving market-goers in Stowmarket the chance to ask questions, find out more about services and discover what local government meant for them.

64.5 Success of National Customer Services Week and the launch of our new Customer Charter

Having identified the Council's customers as one of the Council's five core values during National Customer Services Week the Customer Charter was launched, which set out the clear standards which the Council expected of staff, and what the Council's customers expected from Members. Importantly, customers were not just residents, but anyone the Councils interacted with to deliver its services. This included Councillors, colleagues, businesses, partners, local authorities, suppliers or others. The week saw staff and Councillors challenged to update their profile, add a voicemail among other tasks, with stories shared from staff based in the Council's call centres, making it clear to all employees, that customers were central to the work undertaken every day, and by making sure there were a clear set of guidelines about what the Council's customers should expect from the Council, consistency in approach, monitoring of performance, get better at listening to customer feedback and improve services.

64.6 Councillor Open Evening at the Mix in Stowmarket on 12th November

A reminder to all Councillors of the open evening held at the Mix in Stowmarket on 12th November. All Councillors were invited to attend and hear about the ways in which staff at the Mix were working to support young people.

64.7 Recycle Week & Empty Home Week Social Media Campaign

During Recycle Week, the Council ran a series of social media posts throughout the week to get residents thinking about how they could reduce waste and recycle better. The posts included daily challenges where answers could be found on the Suffolk Recycling website. Please do encourage residents to access the recycling dos, do nots and tips online via the Suffolk Recycling website. Groups, whether they were neighbours, community clubs or other could also sign up for free education sessions.

64.8 Empty Homes Week

Empty Homes Week saw the Council encouraging residents to report empty homes in the district as well as seeking out the Council's empty homes

interest free loans of up to £20,000 if they themselves owned an empty home.

Extension of Holiday Free Swims

Following successful take up this summer, the free swim programme for under 17s during this October half term and the Christmas holidays would be extended. This would help to promote healthy and active lifestyles in Mid Suffolk. Free swims were available at Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre in Stowmarket and Stradbroke Swimming Pool and Fitness Centre.

64.9 Former MSDC HQ Needham - Building Work Begins

The Planning for a total of 135 new homes were approved in February, on both the former HQ offices and former Needham Market Middle School site. Building work was due to begin later this year and should be completed by the end of 2020.

64.10 Tree for Life Promotion

A continuation to promote the Tree for Life scheme in Mid Suffolk, which saw parents and carers of all newborn or newly adopted children in 2019 able to apply for a free tree. This was ahead of this year's deadline in January. The scheme also included an option to apply for a memorial tree for parents who have sadly lost a child during the same period. We will be contacting successful applicants early next year to confirm when they can choose and collect their tree.

64.11 In response to Councillor Carter's question, the Chief Executive responded that it was possible to follow the Council's activities and Councillors on social media.

64.12 In response to Councillor Eburne's question regarding the Leader's Announcements, the Leader advised that the announcements would be delivered when they became available.

64.13 Councillor Eburne asked how many social homes and affordable homes have been built on that site (Former Needham Market HQ), to which a response would be delivered outside of the meeting.

64.14 Councillor Stringer enquired about the Government's Public Loan Board and the recent announcement of an increase in interest rates and whether this would have an impact on the Council's social housing building programme and the investment programme.

64.15 The Leader responded that the Cabinet Member for Finance and the S151 Officer were currently working through the information provided by Central Government.

65 TO RECEIVE NOTIFICATION OF PETITIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

65.1 The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised the Council that the following validated petition had been received:

87 valid signatures regarding planning application DC/19/01236 in Norton.

65.2 The petition would be dealt with through the normal planning process.

66 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

66.1 None received.

67 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

67.1 None received.

68 MC/19/26 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT

68.1 The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee referred to report MC/19/26 and invited Members to ask questions;

68.2 Councillor Otton referred to the recent review of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and congratulated on the report provided to the Committee and the scrutiny of the topic.

68.3 Councillor Otton hoped that the Scrutiny Committee would review how the Council dealt with CIL bids strategically in the new year.

69 MC/19/27 CORPORATE PLAN (2019-2027)

69.1 Councillor Morley, the Leader of the Council, introduced report MC/19/27, Corporate Plan (2019 – 2027) which had been undertaken in cooperation with Babergh District Council.

69.2 The current strategic plan was due to expire in 2020 and it was the intention that the proposed new Corporate Plan would be replacing the Joint Strategic plan. Appendix A provided a summary of the development of the revised corporate plan.

69.3 The draft Corporate Plan had been supported by the Senior Leadership Team and officers across both Councils and required the approval of both Cabinets and Councils. The new Corporate Plan provided a joint vision for the future of the District and addressed opportunities and challenges facing the Council in the foreseeable future.

- 69.4 The revised vision and new mission statement would provide more confident leadership for the area through greater place-based workings. The interconnected strategic priorities were the Environment, the Economy, Housing, Well-being, Our Customers and Communities.
- 69.5 The Corporate values were included in the plan to ensure that they were part of the objectives which benefitted communities and residents in the District.
- 69.6 Councillor Morley asked that if the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed that Corporate Plan Outputs be brought to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for discussion and debate before being presented for approval at Cabinet.
- 69.7 Councillor Morley **MOVED** recommendation 3.1, which was **SECONDED** by Councillor Caston.
- 69.8 Councillor Morley invited the Chief Executive to present the Corporate Plan to the Council.
- 69.9 After the presentation Councillor Eburne enquired how to explain this plan and its tactics to residents as the document related to Councillors and officers as the stakeholders but did not include residents. She stated that not all Councillors had been involved in the recent work undertaken to refresh the plan and that she felt that all Members should have been part of a consultation process before being presented with the Draft Corporate Plan.
- 69.10 The Chief Executive responded that this document was not primarily intended to be presented to residents but to be used by Councillors and officers as a simple plan setting out the tactical strategy to help them engage with communities. Fundamentally residents were less likely to be interested in the tactics but more likely to be interested in the outcome of the plan.
- 69.11 Councillor Eburne queried the engagement aspect of her previous question and she felt that it was all premature as there had not been an engagement or consultation for this plan, nor had the plan been to the Scrutiny Committee for scrutiny.
- 69.12 The Chief Executive responded that engagement with Communities had been undertaken in the form of the recent housing and community strategies and that Members had a daily dialogue with communities through the work they undertook in their wards. As the Corporate Plan built on the previous Joint Strategic Plan, a framework had already been constructed to begin with. It was a balance between engagement with communities of what they wanted, and the community leadership role provided by Councillors.
- 69.13 Councillor Passmore stated that this was a high-level strategy and asked how the layers underneath would be developed and what method would be used to feed into the plan.

- 69.14 The Chief Executive explained that there were two main components which were part of the delivery method of the plan; the customer components and the community components. He then explained how this work would be undertaken and how this fitted into the framework.
- 69.15 Councillor Field stated that previously Members had been involved in Member workshops and enquired why this had not happened this time.
- 69.16 The Chief Executive explained that work from the previous Corporate Plan was still part of this refreshed plan. The priority was to get solutions to undertake work which would benefit communities. This plan had many components and required officers to understand and engage with the strategic tactics. This would be achieved by conducting work with staff to engage and support the strategic plan to bring it forward.
- 69.17 Councillor Carter asked for clarification of the cross-party work conducted for the Corporate Plan.
- 69.18 The Chief Executive responded that Mid Suffolk Cabinet and Babergh Cabinet had been involved with the work on the plan, the latter consisting of Conservatives, Independents and Liberal Democrats.
- 69.19 Councillor Humphrey asked if lessons learnt from past failures were fed into a matrix to make it more efficient.
- 69.20 The Chief Executive explained that there existed a combination of measurements; proactively through the Project and Programme Management programme and reactively through the Risk Management Register which included lessons learnt from completed projects. If Members were interested to be more involved in this part of the process they could be.
- 69.21 Councillor Scarff asked for clarification of why there had not been a cross-party involvement for Mid Suffolk and the Leader responded that this was a refreshed plan and the previous plan had included cross-party engagement. This was a Cabinet administration plan and would be going to the Scrutiny which would allow Members to be involved at that stage.
- 69.22 Councillor Welham asked the following questions:
1. Would the plan be flexible enough to allow for a change in leadership;
 2. With reference to the cross-party issues, please could an explanation be provided for how the views of the majority of voters were to be represented, if the Mid Suffolk Cabinet did not involve all parties in this process. He felt it was not for the Scrutiny Committee to provide this part of the engagement;
 3. The Vision to build great communities were presented in the Corporate Plan but who's vision was being represented in this part of the plan, was it the cross-party group's or the officers' vision;
 4. If the document was available for offices, stakeholders and staff, what document would be available for service users and residents.

5. Was Community strategies part of the strategy, as it was not included in the diagram?

69.23 The Chief Executive responded to the questions as follows:

1. The Corporate Plan was flexible enough, but he expected that if there was a change in administration then the Corporate Plan would also change, as each administration would like to shape the Corporate plan to reflect their vision.
- 2/3. The vision was delivered by Babergh and Mid Suffolk Cabinets and not officers.
4. Everything the Council did was for the benefit of its residents. However, the Corporate Plan had not been produced for residents, as it had not been created as a tool for residents to use. Residents could look at the plan online if they wished or view the Power Point presentation on You Tube.
5. Each priority on 'the Wheel' was underpinned with a strategy so the Community Strategy was included in the Corporate Plan.

69.24 Councillor Mellen asked that the sentence on the 'Vision' part of the Strategy be revised as the syntax was unclear.

69.25 Members debated the issues of the Corporate Plan and Councillor Stringer began by stating he was frustrated with the document. He understood the idea of a mission statement but 50% of the Council had not been included in the vision for the Council and he found this insulting. He also had issues regarding paragraph 4.3, as he thought there had been a confident leadership since 2003. However, he felt that the document did not underpin the purpose of the work of the Council nor did he feel that the document would solve the issues of culture within the organisation. This was a missed opportunity to deliver a document to inspire the workforce and residents.

69.26 Councillor Mansel appreciated the visual representation of the Corporate Plan and explained to Members that she had been part of the previous incarnation of the plan and remembered the work undertaken then. She thought this had been a useful exercise for all Members. She therefore felt that it was wrong that there not been any involvement of 50% of Members for this refreshed Corporate Plan and who now felt that they did not have any ownership of this plan.

69.27 Councillor Eburne agreed with Councillor Mansel and was disappointed that there had been no workshops, engagement with the community, consultations or a taskforce to involve colleagues or residents. She thought that even if the plan would be reviewed it would not serve the people it involved, and she thought that the Corporate Plan should be deferred until a consultation across the District could take place.

69.28 Councillor Passmore specified that the previous work and consultation were still part of the plan documentation which he thought was good. There would be opportunities for all Members to be part of the development of Mid Suffolk

District though the various projects and working groups and he asked that Members maintained a positive attitude towards this plan.

- 69.29 Councillor Richardson stated that Members were debating the process of how the plan had been put together and not the substance or the content of the Plan. The relationship between sport and leisure and the wider health and wellbeing should not be understated. It was important that these issues be developed with the Councils' Partners in Suffolk and Northeast Essex STP, who had similar plans and priorities which tied in with Public Health. The Council could look at this as part of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and he thought Members should engage with these important issues. He thought the plan contained further aspects which were good, and he was in favour of the plan.
- 69.30 Councillor Hicks agreed with Councillor Richardson, and he was disappointed in the critical view of the opposition, whom he thought opposed the plan for the sake of it. He thought it was a good plan, which detailed the foundation on which the administration could move forward.
- 69.31 Councillor Humphreys supported the plan and he thought that the plan contained everything the Council needed to do and was not contentious.
- 69.32 Councillor Matthissen would not be supporting the plan and drew Members' attention to the use of the word 'customers' for residents in the Corporate Plan. He felt this was an unsuitable use in this context.
- 69.33 Councillor Geake referred to Councillor Humphrey's statement and agreed that the plan was not contentious because there was very little in the plan and that the recommendation did not make any sense. She felt that the Corporate Plan was not a corporate plan but a framework to develop a corporate plan around. She had researched the previous corporate plan but thought that corporate outcome, service plans, staff strategy and so on was missing. She felt that the corporate plan was a visual representation of the framework for a corporate plan but had not been presented to Members as such. She was also concerned about the issues around how to explain this Corporate plan to members of the public.
- 69.34 Councillor Mansel appreciated the visualisation of the Corporate plan, however she thought that environmental sustainability was missing, despite there being a theme of the environment, which she did not believe were the same issues. Since the Council had declared a climate emergency, she thought that environmental sustainability should be all encompassing in the plan and she would like to **MOVE** an **AMENDMENT**, which was tabled for Members:

That Council adopts a draft corporate plan (2019 – 2027) based on the visual representation shown in paragraph 4.5, but with the inclusion of an environmental sustainability theme (including, but not limited to, resource management, transport, built environment, biodiversity, etc) which underpins all activity within the Council in line with the climate emergency declared on

July 27th 2019. The final design of the corporate plan is to be agreed by the three group leaders in advance of publication.

- 69.35 Councillor Pratt **SECONDED** the proposed Amendment.
- 69.36 The Chair asked Councillor Morley whether she accepted the Amendment, which Councillor Morley did not.
- 69.37 Members then debated the Amendment and Councillor Passmore said he understood the principles of the amendment but felt that this would restrict the work too much, he questioned what happened if the three group leaders did not agree. He did not support the Amendment.
- 69.38 Councillor Stringer said that this was an attempt to work with the administration which had been mentioned previously. The Amendment was trying to make the Council truly environmentally sustainable and would prevent the Council from losing sight of the aim. He supported Amendment.
- 69.39 Councillor Fleming had sympathy with the idea of incorporating environmental issues into everything the Council did, but the Council already had the environment as one of its main visions. Environmental stewardship came through everything the Council did and would be clear when the taskforce had completed its work.
- 69.40 Councillor Eburne thought that the environment should be placed between the Local Plan and the Strategies in the visual representation as that the Amendment was vitally important. The Environment strand ran through everything the Council did for the benefit of residents including housing, community activities and development. Therefore, Environment should be included in the plan, and she supported the Amendment.
- 69.41 Councillor Richardson was sceptical about the Amendment and thought that there were two issues. Firstly, the issues around environmental sustainability and the principle of this. The environmental strategy was still emerging, and it was not for the Council to define this in advance. He thought that if the strategy in the Corporate Plan was not sustainable then the Plan would have no value, which it clearly did. He thought that better understanding of the sustainability would be apparent once understanding of the outcome of the task forces would be available.
- 69.42 The second part of the Amendment was also a concern for Councillor Richardson. He thought that the agreement of the three group leaders would limit the decision-making process of the Council due to the split of the political groups. He explained that even if there was a majority for a proposal, but the group leaders were not in agreement then the proposal would not be approved. He stated that this was an undemocratic process and he could therefore not support the Amendment.
- 69.43 Councillor Geake clarified why the environment was different to any other strategy in the Corporate Plan. The Council had acknowledged this in the

Climate Emergency which was announced on the 27 July 2019. The Climate Emergency underpinned everything the Council did, which was why it was such an important part of the Corporate Plan.

- 69.44 Councillor Humphreys understood the principle and the thought behind the amendment, but he did not agree with part of the three group leaders' approval of proposals and he could therefore not support the Amendment on the basis of a breakdown of democracy.
- 69.45 Councillor Geake asked as a point of order if the wording in the Amendment could be changed to accommodate the points made by Members.
- 69.46 The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that each Amendment had to be put to Members separately, but should this Amendment fall, another Amendment could be tabled.
- 69.47 Councillor Ekpenyong agreed that the Climate Emergency would be influencing activities that the Council undertook to take the Council forward. He thought that if the Council did not have sustainable planning and actions the work conducted by the Council would not be viable for communities, for him sustainability was embedded in all achievements of the Council and he could not support the Amendment.
- 69.48 Councillor Warboys referred to paragraph 10 in relation to the Amendment. He thought there was confusion around the issues and that the environment was not a building block, everything the Council did had carbon emissions, and this should be audited and should be the framework on which to build the work of the Council. The environment should encircle the framework in the visual representation, therefore he supported the Amendment.
- 69.49 Councillor Pratt addressed some of the issues and wondered if Members agreed that sustainability was part of everything the Council undertook then why not agree the Amendment. The Corporate Plan was a framework.
- 69.50 Councillor Field **PROPOSED** that the Council moved on to voting on the Amendment and Councillor Phillips **SECONDED** this proposal.
- 69.51 All Members agreed to vote on the Amendment.
- 69.52 The Amendment was put to Members for voting and the vote was **LOST**
- 69.53 The Substantiated **PROPOSAL** was put to Members for voting and the vote was **CARRIED**.

It was RESOLVED: -

That the Council adopts the draft corporate plan (2019 – 2027) as visually presented in paragraph 4.5 to replace the refreshed Joint Strategic Plan (2016 – 2020).

70 MC/19/28 HAUGHLEY NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- 70.1 Councillor Burn, Cabinet Member for Planning, introduced report MC/19/28 and summarised the main points of the report and the process undertaken for the referendum. He referred to paragraph 4 which detailed the referendum and said that the results would be posted on the Council's website. He offered his congratulation to all who had been involved in the work for Haughley Neighbourhood Plan and **MOVED** recommendations 3.1 and 3.2 in the report.
- 70.2 Councillor Eburne **SECONDED** the proposal and congratulated all who had been involved. The work had involved thousands of hours of work, most of which had been undertaken by volunteers. She reiterated that more resource was need for communities to undertake work such as this plan, but she congratulated the community of Haughley in its achievement. Councillor Eburne also thanked officers who had supported the work.
- 70.3 Councillor Stringer thanked all the volunteers for the work and reiterated that these neighbourhood plans would be empowering tools to allow residents to decide where sustainable housing development should be placed within their communities.
- 70.4 The **PROPOSAL** was put to Members for voting and the vote was **UNANIMOUS**.

It was **RESOLVED**: -

- 1.1 **That the Hughley Neighbourhood Plan be formally 'made' (adopted) as part of the District Council's Development Plan and be used to help determine planning applications where relevant.**
- 1.2 **That the Decision Statement (Appendix 1) be published with immediate effect.**

71 MC/19/29 THURSTON NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- 70.1 Councillor Burn, Cabinet Member for Planning, introduced report MC/19/29 and summarised the main points of the report. He referred to paragraph 4 which detailed the referendum and said that the results would be posted on the Council's website. He offered his congratulations to all who had been involved in the work for Thurston Neighbourhood Plan and **MOVED** recommendations 3.1 and 3.2 in the report.
- 71.1 Councillor Richardson **SECONDED** the proposal and he thanked all who had worked on the production of this plan in particular Thurston Parish Council. This was a thorough plan and offered benefits to the community and its residents.
- 71.2 In Councillors Turner's absence Councillor Mansel responded on her behalf and thanked all who had worked on Thurston Neighbourhood Plan.

71.3 The **PROPOSAL** was put to Members for voting and the vote was **UNANIMOUS**.

It was **RESOLVED: -**

1.1 That the **Thurston Neighbourhood Plan** be formally 'made' (adopted) as part of the **District Council's Development Plan** and be used to help determine planning applications where relevant.

1.2 That the **Decision Statement (Appendix 1)** be published with immediate effect.

72 COUNCILLOR APPOINTMENTS

72.1 Councillor Morley proposed that the following appointments be agreed for the Community Governance Review Working Group:

Councillor Suzie Morley (replacing Councillor Julie Flatman)
Councillor John Whitehead (replacing Councillor James Caston)

The **PROPOSAL** was put to Members for the vote and the vote was **UNANIMOUS**.

It was **RESOLVED: -**

That Councillor Suzie Morley and Councillor John Whitehead be appointed to the Community Governance Review Working Group.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 7.33 pm.

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Chair