

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **MID SUFFOLK CABINET** held as a Virtual Meeting on Monday, 4 May 2020 at 14:30pm.

PRESENT:

Councillor: Suzie Morley (Chair)
Gerard Brewster (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: David Burn
Jessica Fleming
Harry Richardson
Julie Flatman
Peter Gould
John Whitehead

In attendance:

Councillor(s): Rachel Eburne
John Field
Lavinia Hadingham
Keith Welham

Officers: Chief Executive (AC)
Strategic Director (KN)
Monitoring Officer (EY)
Assistant Director – Sustainable Communities (TB)
Assistant Director – Economic Development and Regeneration (FD)
Governance Officer (CP)

117 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

118 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

There were no declarations of interest.

119 MCA/19/57 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 09 MARCH 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 09 March 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

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

None received.

121 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS

Councillor Eburne asked Councillor Morley, Leader of the Council

I note that there is no planned full Council meeting until 23rd July. Given that the last full Council meeting was 27th February, this will have been a five month gap which is not good democratic practice noting that the Council has only had the power to hold virtual or remote meetings since 4th April. In the interests of openness and transparency to the public, please can you consider holding a meeting before July? If I may add due to the six month rule you may find that some Councillors are at risk of falling foul of that rule if they cant make the July Council meeting and have not been to another Council meeting in the mean-time.

Councillor Morley responded

Yes we are of course happy to consider an earlier meeting.

Councillor Eburne asked Councillor Burn, Cabinet Member for Planning

I note that the Forthcoming Decisions List does not include an item for the next stage of the Joint Local Plan. According to the current Local Development Scheme, the Joint Local Plan should have been adopted in February 2020. When will a revised Local Development Scheme be published giving the public and developers a more realistic schedule for the remaining stages?

Councillor Burn responded

The intention was to review the timetable following completion of the analysis of the consultation responses to the 2019 Regulation 18 Preferred Options Joint Local Plan. Member engagement on this remains ongoing as a number of you will be aware and we are having to adapt our working practices as a result of our current remote working arrangements. Progress is being made on the JLP, with collective input from the JLP Member Working Group. There is current uncertainty on the timescales and the impacts of Covid 19, however we will aim to bring a new Local Development Scheme to the Council meeting in July 2020. Given the response to the previous question it may or may not be possible to bring the revised scheme to the Council meeting if its held before July.

Councillor Eburne asked Councillor Burn, Cabinet Member for Planning

With regards to the Report from the Environmental and Climate Change Task Force, due at Cabinet on 6th July, please advise how the declarations of Climate and Biodiversity Emergencies and the work from this Task Force will be reflected in the next stage of the Joint Local Plan given there is no current timetable for this work noted on the Forthcoming Decision List and the original timetable has long since passed.

Councillor Burn responded

The draft Joint Local Plan (JLP) sets out planning policies on climate change and environmental enhancement, protection and management in line with both national policy and local circumstances. In drafting the policies, we have also sought guidance on good working practice through the Planning Advisory Service. Should specific planning policy outcomes emerge from the Task Force which differ from this advice it will be considered and discussed through the JLP Member Working Group.

Councillor Eburne then asked a supplementary question

Will there be sufficient time, if there were some planning policy outcomes from the work of the climate change taskforce, to incorporate these into the Joint Local Plan?

The Assistant Director for Sustainable Communities responded

It would largely depend on what the suggestions coming from the task force are, how fundamental they would be to the strategic policies drafted within the Joint Local Plan, what impacts any suggestions would have on key planks of the plan and whether those would require further research or consultancy studies.

The Leader of the Council then asked the Monitoring Officer to comment on the six month rule. The Monitoring Officer advised Members that the regulations confirm that virtual meetings were included in this rule, and that the ability for the Council to grant dispensation for specific reasons remains in place.

Councillor Eburne asked Councillor Brewster, Cabinet Member for Economy

Please can you advise how this Programme will support Essential Skills in our District, where those skills have been shown to be much in need during the current crisis?

Councillor Brewster responded

As part of the Emerging Economic Strategy we were already looking at how skills delivery could be expanded within the districts and were working with Suffolk County council and local colleges and University to formulate better and closer joint working. Covid 19 has accelerated this work as it is likely any future recession might result in higher levels of unemployment and we want to support people out of work to access programmes to grow transferable skills, resulting in better future employability.

We are also keen to develop programmes for new entrepreneurs and to support those people who wish to start up their own business. Organisations such as Innovation Labs, who offer affordable hot desk space and virtual membership, alongside programmes of business support are likely to prove vital in supporting such start ups and skills/knowledge required by entrepreneurs. Specific grants within the new programme can be accessed by a range of business start ups or SMEs if they satisfy the criteria to enable them to grow or develop new innovation or products. These grants in some cases can be used for training and skills development of staff.

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

There were no matters referred.

123 FORTHCOMING DECISIONS LIST

The Forthcoming Decision List was noted.

124 MCA/19/58 MID SUFFOLK BUSINESS GRANT PROGRAMME

The Cabinet Member for Economy introduced the report which outlined the proposed grant programme for small and medium sized businesses.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Brewster and seconded by Councillor Richardson.

In response to a query from Councillor Flatman it was confirmed that the grants would be available to businesses who have already received a shop front grant.

Following a query from Councillor Gould, Councillor Brewster advised there would be a launch to publicise the grant scheme to businesses.

Councillor Field commented that the grants were relatively small and asked if there was any evidence that grants of this size are required by businesses. The Assistant Director for Economic Development and Regeneration advised that consultation had taken place with partners and banks who have identified that small business grants are key to small businesses.

Councillor Richardson expressed his support for the scheme, in particular the environmental sustainability aspect of the project.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED:-

- 1.1 That the assessment of the current MSDC grant offer (Appendix 1 of the report) be noted.**
- 1.2 That £157,500 of the balance remaining in the current Mid Suffolk Shop Front grant scheme at the end of the 2019/20 financial year be commuted to support the revised programme from the financial year commencing April 2020.**
- 1.3 That £150,000 of this commuted sum be allocated over a three year period to provide flexible capital funding to businesses. This would be utilised by them to deliver improvements and change that enable the following outcomes:**

- **Create and sustain jobs;**
- **Enable the growth of innovation in local businesses;**
- **Create and retain commercial floor space;**
- **Access professional advice and training;**
- **Access additional funding (both grants and loans);**
- **Improve business frontage and town centre streetscapes (impacting on footfall and visitor satisfaction);**
- **Encourage the development of technology-based business solutions;**
- **Improve environmental outcomes and carbon efficiencies;**
- **Improve disabled access; and**
- **React and be resilient to changing business landscapes.**

1.4 That Cabinet noted that the sum above of £157,500 included a 5% sum to be allocated to provide administrative support for the management of the programme.

1.5 That the Assistant Director for Economic Development and Regeneration, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economy be granted delegated authority to agree details of the grant scheme and approval process.

Reason for Decision: To provide a comprehensive business support grant programme that will enable sustainable and sustained innovation and economic growth consistent across both Mid Suffolk and Babergh Councils.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 15:31pm.

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Chair (and date)