

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, 27 February 2020

PRESENT:

Councillor: Lavinia Hadingham (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
	Barry Humphreys MBE	Sarah Mansel
	John Matthissen	Andrew Mellen
	Richard Meyer	Suzie Morley
	David Muller	Mike Norris
	Penny Otton	Timothy Passmore
	Dr Daniel Pratt	Harry Richardson
	Keith Scarff	Andrew Stringer
	Wendy Turner	Rowland Warboys
	Keith Welham	John Whitehead

In attendance:

Guest(s): Sir Christopher Haworth – Chair of CIFCO CAPITAL LTD.
Henry Cooke - Director of CIFCO CAPITAL LTD.

Officers:

- Chief Executive (AC)
- Strategic Director (KN)
- Assistant Director - Assets and Investments (EA)
- Assistant Director - Economic Development & Regeneration (FD)
- Assistant Director - Housing (GF)
- Assistant Director – Corporate Resources and Section 151 Officer (KS)
- Assistant Director - Customer Services (SW)
- Assistant Director - Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer (EY)
- Chief Planning Officer - Sustainable Communities (PI)
- Corporate Manager - Financial and Commissioning and Procurement (ME)
- Corporate Manager - Democratic Services (JR)
- Senior Governance Support Officer (HH)

Apologies:

Stephen Phillips

- 84.1 The Chair advised Members that, in accordance with delegated authority, the Monitoring Officer had granted dispensation to all Members in respect of the 20/21 Budget papers.
- 84.2 Councillor Brewster declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 14 as Chair of MSDC (Suffolk Holdings) Ltd.
- 84.3 Councillor Whitehead declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 14 as Director of Gateway 14.

85 MC/19/35 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 JANUARY 2020

It was RESOLVED:-

That subject to the following amendments, the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2020 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

Page 17, paragraph 80.17 - amend number to proportions.

Page 15 at the top – amended Councillor Flatman to Councillor Fleming.

86 MC/19/36 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 86.1 Councillor Hadingham, Chair of the Council, referred to Paper MC/19/36, which was for noting.
- 86.2 Councillor Eburne thanked Councillor Matthissen for organising the Z-pod meeting held on the 17 February 2020 for sustainable housing.

87 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 87.1 The Chair invited Councillor Morley, Leader of the Council, to present her update.
- 87.2 Councillor Morley provided the following update:

Equality and Diversity – the Leader asked that the nine Members, who had failed to attend this mandatory training rectified this now.

Needham Market Station - Applications for the Needham Access Project had been successful and had been awarded £380k from the Department of Transport. However, further feasibility work and continuation of the CIL funding process had to be undertaken before the project could move forward. This demonstrated the strong pathways with Greater Analia was working.

UNISON Against Violence at Work Charter – It was confirmed that the Council had met the 10 criteria for the charter and could now become signatories to the charter. Achieving this charter was evidence of the commitment the Council had to

its staff and the effort made to ensure that staff was protected from violence and aggression whilst at work. She thanked the team that had undertaken this work.

Public Sector Leaders Meeting (tomorrow)- the Leader raised three issues which she would present at the meeting tomorrow.

- The Leader anticipated that funding would be approved for £50k to address needs for young people, who were not in education, employment or training. Support for this was delivered through the Mix in Stowmarket.
- Gateway 14 – a proposal was put forward to spend £250k to develop an innovation cluster at Gateway 14 in Stowmarket.
- A new two-year proposal to create a Suffolk Housing Coordinator post would be put forward at the meeting. This officer would be employed by Mid Suffolk and Babergh on behalf of the wider Suffolk system. The Leader would be happy to share the presentation and papers with Members if the proposal was approved tomorrow.

Planning Officer for Babergh and Mid Suffolk – the Planning team was in the running for a national award for technological advance as part of 21st planning. Both Councils were shortlisted for the *Best use of Digital and Technology* category at the annual IEasy Public Sector Transformation Awards 2020. The award acknowledged the use of technology improving services to residents. The team had streamlined the processing of planning applications, delivering timely applications and becoming one of the top authorities in the County for this service. The team had also introduced an electronic case management system and a mobile App and was working on implementing the use of drones and augmented reality as part of the 21st century Planning process.

87.3 Councillor Carter asked the Leader to ensure that there was no last-minute change to any meetings or agendas as last-minute changes made it difficult for him to adjust.

87.4 Councillor Mellen referred to a deep clean of a GP Surgery due to the Corona Virus pandemic and if the Council could assure that a plan was in place to provide a service to the public during a pandemic.

Councillor Morley responded that if Members were concerned, she would arrange another briefing for the matter.

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

None received.

89 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

89.1 None received.

90 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

90.1 The Chair referred to the tabled papers and asked Councillor Eburne to ask the first question.

Question 1

Councillor Eburne to Councillor Morley, Leader of the Council

“The cost of Member allowances and expenses has increased from £269,393.13 in 2017/18 to £442,563.39, a difference of £173,170.26.

Please can you provide the explanation for this increase.”

Response

There was a one-off increase in the member allowances in 18/19 due to the back payment of the basic allowance and special responsibility allowances that was made following a review of the Members Remuneration Scheme, carried out by the Independent Remuneration Panel. The Panel was tasked with looking at members’ allowances and to take into account the changes to members’ roles following the creation of the Leader /Cabinet model which was constituted in May 2017. The new scheme was adopted by full Council in June 2018.

The figures forecast for 19/20 show a projected decrease in the amount of members’ allowances which will be a more accurate reflection of the cost following a reduction in the number of members since the elections in May 2019.

Supplementary question:

Councillor Eburne said that the difference for the back-payment did not make up the £173,170.26, and she asked that the exact figures for the difference were provided to her.

Response

Councillor Morley asked the Assistant Director for Corporate Resources to provide a response outside the meeting.

Question 2

Councillor Geake to Councillor Brewster, Cabinet Member for Economic Growth

“We recently heard from the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, that part of our ongoing work on project delivery, for Regeneration and Capital projects, will take account of climate change. As stronger economic growth tends to be closely linked to a higher carbon footprint, and as we are now in a climate crisis, could we be told which parts of the Council’s work on regeneration and capital projects will *not* take account of climate change?”

Response

As part of the refreshed project management framework across both councils, all

project initiation documents have a section on the environment. Project managers, when commencing a project and throughout the life of that project, are required to complete an environmental impact assessment which consider positive and negative environmental impacts of each scheme. As new projects come to the various Programme Boards, environmental impact is considered as part of the overall deliverability. This means every regeneration and capital project will take account of climate change and will ensure any impacts are assessed and properly mitigated.

Supplementary question:

Councillor Geake asked that the Cabinet Member looked at the work of other Councils, with a view to future proofing every single aspect of the Council's work and she provided two examples; Oxford City Council had provided a climate emergency budget of £18m for capital investments and £1m for its operational budget to ensure delivery and Warwick District Council had announced they would hold a referendum to increase council tax to provide the necessary funds.

Response

Councillor Brewster responded that the Council's economy budget was the smallest budget in the Council, and he was sure the Assistant Director was aware of this, but he would raise this with the Assistant Director for Corporate Resources.

Question 3

Councillor Welham to Councillor Flatman, Cabinet Member for Communities

"The Council is making a grant to Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice of £86,700 per annum for each of the next three years. Could we please be assured that there are no specific conditions attached to the making of the grant?"

Response

A grant of this nature will clearly have reasonable conditions attached – that the applicant uses the money for the purposes set out in their application, for example, and that they deliver the proposed outputs. I can reassure you that these conditions will be agreed with Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice prior to issuing the offer letter, rather than simply being imposed upon them without dialogue.

Supplementary question:

Councillor Welham asked if he could assume that the conditions would be the normal Mid Suffolk Grant Conditions and that no other conditions be imposed on Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice, nor would the Council seek to reorganise or close branches of the Citizens Advice.

Response

Councillor Flatman responded that at this moment in time there were no plans to make such changes.

Question 4

Councillor Welham to the Leader of the Council

“The Corporate Outputs document was discussed at a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 8 January 2020. A number of the outputs are stated as giving support to various initiatives. Could we have clarity around the type of support to be given, particularly whether it is financial support or support by Officers and/or Members of the two Councils, and what outcomes are expected in respect of each of these initiatives?”

Response

As was explained during the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting, there are approximately 9 Mid Suffolk references to ‘providing support’ in the Corporate Outputs. These reflect the fact that the Council has an impact not just in terms of what it directly delivers but also by working in partnership with others where the partner is the lead. The reference to support therefore relates to political and officer support but does not exclude financial support. Where any proposal for direct financial support is made however, this will come forward through Cabinet for decisions. I think the intended outcomes for each of these is obvious from the document, for example for the Museum of East Anglian Life to become the National Museum for Food, for businesses to access our local shop front and accessibility funding etc but I am happy to provide further details outside of the meeting for anywhere Councillor Welham has additional queries.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Welham was unclear about the reason for supporting the A14 expressway, as this would increase the amount of traffic and he was equally unclear, how this fitted in with the Council’s declaration of Climate Emergency.

Response

Councillor Morley responded she would provide an answer outside the meeting, but it was imperative that the infrastructure could deliver the Council’s needs.

Question 5

Councillor Welham to Councillor Morley, Leader of the Council

“At a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 8 January, the Leader of our Council stated that various Task Groups would be providing the timescales for achieving the outcomes to be achieved in 2020/21 and beyond. Are Task Groups actively working towards providing agreed programme dates to be included in the document before the start of Municipal Year 2020/21?”

Response

I believe that the Chief Executive addressed a similar question to this at the Cabinet Meeting that adopted these Corporate Outputs. As he explained, this is intended to be the first and last time that the Corporate Outputs are presented to Councillors in this way. This is a reflection of the fact that the outputs were developed in parallel with the Corporate Plan. Now that the Corporate Plan and these Outputs have been adopted, they are being incorporated into action plans for each of our 6 Strategic Priorities. These actions plans are a combination of work that is already underway and new actions. Performance will then be measured from Quarter 1 of 2020/21

against these action plans. With this in mind officers are, at my request, conducting a review of our performance framework.

Supplementary question

Councillor Welham asked if action plans with dates against them would be available for Members, before the start of the municipal year, so it would be possible to measure performance against those dates.

Response

Councillor Morley responded that not all the action plans would have dates against them as they had not been finalised yet, such as the Climate Change Taskforce.

Question 6

Councillor Mansel to Councillor Burn, Cabinet Member for Planning

“Two of our adopted Neighbourhood Plans have recently been put to the test at Planning Referrals Committee. Recommendations from development control officers were to go against Neighbourhood Plan policies, because they felt that they were lacking in housing allocations and/or policy wording. Given that MSDC is obliged to support communities making Neighbourhood Plans, how are we ensuring that they are getting the best impartial advice?”

Response

Thank you Councillor Mansel for your question. This matter is clearly topical and has been subject of much discussion at not just Planning Referrals but also at the recent training exercise for Councillors. The officer recommendations contained significantly more nuance than you have suggested within your question and I think it's important that we continue to talk about weight to be applied rather than your more adversarial language of 'going against'. That aside, I recognise the sentiment. Our officers are serious in their intent to support communities to develop neighbourhood plans though. They provide technical advice on the processes involved and signpost to 'impartial' sources such as Locality to ensure communities enter the process with their eyes open and optimise the support available to them. Officers also advise on funding sources available and help groups to engage their own professional advice as well as providing both informal feedback as plans progress and formal feedback during the relevant consultation stage. There is a wealth of information available on our website which further explains the support available.

Because of the importance of this subject I have provided a more detailed and substantive response in writing but do not intend to read that to you during this meeting. I am of course happy to discuss this matter further with you and officers outside the meeting if that would assist.

Written Answer (Tabled Papers)

Neighbourhood Planning (NP) provides local communities with the opportunity to have their say in where they would like to see new housing come forward but, with that, comes a certain degree of responsibility that those same groups will need to

identify and allocate a sufficient supply of sites to meet not just locally identified need but also to enable the District Council to meet its wider housing delivery objectives. In reality, what we have seen over the last few years is a number of communities bringing forward Neighbourhood Plans in advance of our new planning framework being in place and, in effect, only going as far as allocating what already has permission.

To be successful at examination, one of the 'basic conditions' against which such plans are tested is their general conformity with district level planning policy. This is something that has also been touched upon in a number of recent Neighbourhood Plan Examination Reports published on this Council's website and should also act as a signal to all other prospective Neighbourhood Plan Groups. In summary, that advice is:

- *There is no legal requirement to examine a Neighbourhood Plan against emerging policy. **However, Planning Practice Guidance on Neighbourhood Planning [PPG para 009 ref id 41-009-20160211] advises that **the reasoning and evidence informing the Local Plan process may be relevant to the consideration of the basic conditions against which the Plan is tested.*****

And, that where a Neighbourhood Plan is produced in parallel to the emerging Local Plan

- ***Conformity with emerging plans can extend the life of Neighbourhood Plans, providing this does not result in conflict with adopted policies.** However, the Joint Local Plan (JLP) Draft could change significantly and so this should be carefully considered. It is also important to be mindful of the fact it has been demonstrated for a number of years now that housing needs and provisions are unlikely to decrease significantly, and that land supply has to be maintained through delivery.*

Where Neighbourhood Plans are being produced, the Council is proactive in engaging with a community from the outset. However, it is the responsibility of the community to develop their Neighbourhood Plan and, in many circumstances, they are directly appointing independent planning consultants to assist them. In addition, where plans do seek to allocate sites, there are support packages available through the Government's neighbourhood planning body, Locality.

Prior to Neighbourhood Plan Groups consulting us at the Regulation 14 Pre-submission stage, we encourage them to share their draft plan with us for informal feedback. The purpose of this exercise is also to identify likely significant issues in advance of any formal consultation in public. Before publication in July 2019 of the Preferred Options Joint Local Plan, and where appropriate, we have consistently advised Neighbourhood Plan Groups that a housing number higher than that currently being promoted through their Neighbourhood Plan could not be ruled out. Since July 2019, Neighbourhood Plan Groups have had an indicative (minimum) housing number that they should be planning for. It would be reasonable to expect that those Groups who had prepared a plan prior to publication of the draft Joint Local Plan in July 2019, but who had yet to formally submit their Plans to the District Council, to be mindful of our advice and, if necessary, consider whether they should

modify their plan accordingly and re-run the Regulation 14 process. That does not appear to have happened in the case of Woolpit. In essence, groups need to be aware of changing national and local planning policy to ensure their plans are both compliant with the National Planning Policy Framework and emerging Development Plan policy.

It is also important to highlight that communities with adopted Neighbourhood Plans must keep them under review because of the progression of the emerging Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan and the evidence that underpins it on many aspects in relation to the social, economic and environmental factors. Neighbourhood Planning guidance informs that planning applications are decided in accordance with the development plan, unless material consideration indicates otherwise. It is for the decision maker in each case to determine what is a material consideration and what weight to give to it. In some cases, this may mean an adopted Neighbourhood Plan does not hold as much weight as some other material consideration.

Supplementary question:

Councillor Mansel questioned that as Joint Neighbourhood Plans (JNP) progressed to examination and adoption, would it be necessary to appoint more staff to provide support to communities, who would need to review their Neighbourhood plans, as the JNP was implemented. Also, there might be more communities who would produce neighbourhood plans.

Response

Councillor Burn responded that the requirements for further resources would be taken into consideration when the time came.

91 MC/19/37 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT

91.1 The Chair advised Members that the report would be in two parts and that any information regarding Gateway 14 would be presented under Part Two on the Agenda, she then invited Councillor Welham to present the Overview and Scrutiny Report.

91.2 Councillor Welham, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the report and added that Councillor Mansel was the Council's representative on the Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership (WSCSP) and would be able to provide more information about the work of the WSCSP.

92 MC/19/38 GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2020/21 AND FOUR YEAR OUTLOOK

92.1 The Chair of the Council referred Members to the revised Appendix C in the tabled papers and invited Councillor Whitehead to introduce report MC/19/38.

92.2 Councillor Whitehead, Cabinet Member for Finance, informed Members that the budget was a result of a period of strong financial discipline and strict prudence implemented by the administration and the significant contribution of the management team, whom had consistently delivered positive financial outturns against the budget.

- 92.3 He continued that the General Fund Budget report had been presented to Cabinet on the 13th January 2020 and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 17th January 2020. Several Member briefings have also taken place in January for the Budget.
- 92.4 He directed Members' attention to the fact that the Council had minimised the use of the new Homes Bonus and had not used any New Homes Bonus for the Council's normal running costs.
- 92.5 He referred to paragraph 8.10, table 5, which illustrated that the New Homes Bonus would end in 2023/24 and currently it was uncertain what and how much would be replacing it.
- 92.6 The Central Government's revenue support grant had fallen away in recent years and it was therefore important that the Council generated its own income. This was achieved by the following four income streams:
- Income received from various pool investments, all of which produce income streams
 - The building up of CIFCO to £50m by investing in secure real estate assets, which generated a significant income stream
 - Growing of the council tax base by building new housing and bringing empty properties back in to use, which provided a 1%+ tax increase each year.
 - An increase in council tax of 1.66%, which equated to a £2.26 increase per year for a Band D home.
- 92.7 Councillor Whitehead continued that the budget was healthy and included £1m for the development of a Commercial Risk Management Reserve for the Councils' development sites and £0.5m for Climate Change initiatives for 2020/21. Despite these investments the reserves would still be above £10m for 2020/21, as illustrated in paragraph 7.6.
- 92.8 He then detailed the revised Appendix B, which included information regarding investments into CIFCO, the development of the Needham Market Lake Visitor Centre, development of the Leisure Centre, a proposed change to reduce the 25% council tax discount from three months down to 28 days for Empty and unfurnished properties in section 11. He also referred to the Pay Policy in section 12.
- 92.9 He thanked the Finance Team for the work undertaken.
- 92.10 Councillor Whitehead **MOVED** recommendations 3.1 to 3.5 in the report, which was **SCEONDED** by Councillor Morley.
- 92.11 Councillor Eburne advised Members that the Green Party and Liberal

Democrat Groups of Councillors coordinated to produce a series of budget proposals in November 2019, and having had discussions with the Finance Team, then presented 10 key proposals to the ruling Administration for the next financial year. They were pleased that the Administration had progressed some of these proposals including:

- Promoting sustainable new homes through the provision of technical and planning advice
- Improving tree cover across the District
- Providing greater access for all to the Council
- Improving democratic relationships with residents especially young people
- Improving residents and businesses confidence in and experience of planning

She felt, however, that it was important that further proposals were taken forward in order to respond to the Climate Emergency and future-proof Mid Suffolk District to fulfil residents' and businesses' sustainable potential. The proposals had been sense checked by the Finance Team and Legal Team and had been part of the discussion with the Chief Executive, Members and Officers and she was pleased that there had been so much attention for these proposals.

92.12 She **PROPOSED** the following amendments to the draft budget 2020/21 and that the majority was funded through the "Growth and Efficiency Fund", which stood at £9.235 million as at 31 March 2020:

This Council agrees that:

- i) All new housing, where possible within commercial constraints, should be zero carbon and the Council should do everything within the Council's powers to promote this especially with its own building programme; indicative cost £70,000 additional officer time to support all new housing developments and £1 million upfront capital funding to borrow against for own house-building programme plus approximately £40,000 in interest.*
- ii) A "competition" is run to produce plans for a series of sustainable Suffolk house designs - that can then be provided to local builders and developers for free; indicative cost £5,000 for officer time to set up and £20,000 fund for the "winner"*
- iii) Electric vehicle (EV) use is promoted through installing EV points in all public car-parks in Stowmarket, Needham Market and Council premises; as well as providing funding support and advice for businesses to install EV points in towns and surrounding villages; indicative cost £15,000 officer time for set-up, £40,000 capital cost for installation of up to 20 points, £5,000 ongoing annual maintenance*
- iv) Visitors are encouraged to extend their stay in Stowmarket with the introduction of free parking after 3pm one day per week and through providing*

vouchers for interconnecting community buses; indicative cost £15,000 for voucher trial per year over two years with the loss of income from parking of approximately £30,000 expected to be covered by increase in spend in the local economy.

- v) *Confidence in planning is restored through providing additional highways consultation expertise; indicative cost £60,000 in year one for consultancy services.*

92.13 Councillor Field **SECONDED** the proposed amendment and said he recognised that there had been an adjustment to the budget including the £500k for delivering Climate Change.

92.14 He thought that the proposed amendment was much wider than just the environment. The proposal included an action to build houses as close to zero carbon as possible, and that an increase of the building of houses at a cost of realistic borrowing. Over the next 30 years the Council should replace the housing stock through the Right to Buy scheme and ensure that modern standardised houses were available to local tenants at a reasonable rent. This included ensuring that local builders could provide modern designs without high individual start up expenditure.

92.15 He continued that to progress with electric vehicles, the Council should allow taxi vehicles to switch to a hybrid plug-in version.

92.16 Better Highways planning was necessary and that current highway solutions for new developments were not sustainable and he asked that Members supported this amendment.

92.17 The Chair asked the Proposer, Councillor Whitehead if he accepted the proposed amendment.

92.18 Councillor Whitehead responded that he did not accept the amendment.

92.19 He felt that during the work already undertaken to incorporate some of the key projects into the Corporate Outputs, it had become clear to him that the five proposed projects in the amendment already existed in similar format in the Corporate Outputs. However, he recognised that further work was needed to ensure that the proposals were deliverable.

92.20 Councillor Eburne raised a point of order, when Councillor Otton was denied asking Councillor Whitehead a question, on account that Councillor Whitehead had provided a substantial response for rejecting the amendment.

92.21 Councillor Otton asked why Councillor Whitehead could not support Item 5 of the amendment, as she believed there was support amongst members of the public that when the Council was dealing with major planning applications, more serious consideration should be given to highways expertise.

92.22 Councillor Whitehead responded that Suffolk County Highways advised on all

planning applications and attended planning committees as the Highway Authority. He felt that providing the Councils' own highways expertise was not what the Council was trying to achieve.

- 92.23 Councillor Passmore enquired if some of these projects could be included in the corporate plans without the allocation of resources, even if they required more precise definition.
- 92.24 Councillor Whitehead agreed.
- 92.25 Councillor Eburne expressed her concern regarding implementation of electrical vehicle charging points, which were not being installed in the District, even though other authorities were progressing with this. She informed Members that there was a local company, which could install these for the Council and that it was a simple action to do to help climate change.
- 92.26 In response to Councillor Matthiessen's question regarding expertise consultation for highways, the Chief Planning Officer replied that he was not aware of the immediate figures for work with SCC, but that he thought the work was effective and coordinated.
- 92.27 Councillor Carter considered the alignment between the parties referred to earlier and where was the action evidencing this alignment, especially with regards to the environment.
- 92.28 Councillor Fleming felt it was disingenuous to suggest that nothing had been done, and that the anticipated work of the Climate Change Taskforce would be presented to Cabinet in April. She thought that there was no point in progressing before consideration of which action would be the most effective with regards to the carbon reduction in the long-term.
- 92.29 Councillor Carter reiterated his point that action was needed now, and that carbon reduction had to be achieved not to prevent irreversible damage.
- 92.30 Members continued to discuss the cost and the options for building zero carbon housing in the District, and whether zero carbon housing would be affordable on a large scale. Some Members thought that this was possible based on the cost of building a zero carbon house in comparison to the current building cost per square metre, other Members referred to the recent presentation on building zero carbon housing and the cost implied there.
- 92.31 Members progressed into debate and Councillor Eburne explained that other authorities were building carbon zero housing and that this should be a criterion for all new build. She stated that all the amendments had been undertaken by other authorities.
- 92.32 Councillor Meyer reminded Members that the Council had voted for Climate Change and referred to the work of the Climate Change Taskforce. He felt

that the first three amendments undermined the work of the task force.

- 92.33 Members continued the debate in relation to electrical vehicle charging points, zero carbon housing, reduction of heating bills and the wider benefits to the community.
- 92.34 Councillor Eburne thought that the work of the Climate Change Taskforce was important, but that it was unfair to pin everything to the Taskforce, especially when action could be taken now and agreed by Members today.
- 92.35 Councillor Mellen, who was a member of the Climate Change Taskforce, thought that the recommendations from the Taskforce were not yet ready to be presented to the Cabinet. He referred to the Terms of Reference, which referred to the urgency of the work to be done. However, the timeline set for the work of the Taskforce did not reflect the urgency and was slow in reaction to the Climate Emergency, he therefore commended the amendment.
- 92.36 Councillor Stringer referred to amendment two in relation to the zero-carbon housing, and that there were issues within the planning process. The housing design was standard and was not environmentally sustainable. He wanted to support the building industry and to get Suffolk Preservation Society involved with specific 'Suffolk' design for future housing to fulfil future demands for environmental sustainability and he asked that Members at least supported amendment two.
- 92.37 Councillor Caston said that the Climate Change Taskforce needed time to develop a suitable action plan to ensure its effectiveness and best value for money for reduction in carbon and to develop the best eco systems for the District.
- 92.38 Members continued the debate including the development of infrastructure in relation to SCC Highways, the details of the amendment in relation to funding, the intellectual properties of any winning design from a design competition for housing and how this would work in practice, the appropriate allocation of resources in the budget and the robustness of the amendment.
- 92.39 Councillor Geake was concerned that the lack of understanding of the urgency of climate change influenced the decision for how to implement infrastructure in the District. A budget setting meeting should act if the crisis was real and that the amendment was an essential minimum start. She recommended the use of the expertise available amongst officers and Members and asked that lack of understanding did not defeat the purpose for change.
- 92.40 Members debated further the development of electrical charging points and Councillor Welham explained the importance of getting more residents to use electrical vehicles and the wider implementation on the community, the reduction of public transport and services to rural areas to allow residents to

access local shopping, town centres and leisure facilities, free car parking and cycling paths.

- 92.41 Councillor Scarff detailed the cost of free parking in relation to the revenue income from car parking charges. He suggested free car parking one afternoon a week.
- 92.42 Councillor Pratt supported the amendment and thought that the funding provided for climate change was small compared to the funding invested into the Council's investment company.
- 92.43 Councillor Morley advised Members that the proposed £1m capital funding to borrow against for the Council's housing scheme required further investigation, as the General Fund could not contribute to the HRA stock in this way. She reminded Members that carbon zero housing was not required of the Councils Planning Charter and could therefore not be part of the requirements for housing developments. She clarified that the local taxis did not currently have any electrical vehicles and that it was therefore not good use of taxpayers' money to install electrical charging points for taxis. She stated that the Council was working on implementing some of the proposed elements of the amendment and she was distressed if all the good work undertaken during the past month would be undermined by the disagreement of the amendments.
- 92.44 Councillor Mansel informed Members that zero-carbon housing should be for all housing and not just the Council's own developments and therefore the General Fund Budget could be used for this purpose. If the General Fund budget could not provide the funding, then the £9.2m in the Reserves could provide it.
- 92.45 Councillor Eburne clarified that the taxi licensing was part of a previous version of the amendment and that the charging points within the Outputs referred to policy and actual action points. Contact had been made with architects to discuss the proposal to provide a design competition and they had been delighted by the idea. She thought the discussion had been fantastic and that the debate and ideas put forward had been good. Some of the previous proposals had been included in the budget and she thought that the proposed amendment should be included too, as Members and officers had conducted useful discussions to produce these achievable proposals. She reiterated the fantastic suggestions and debate that had taken place across the floor in the Chamber this evening.
- 92.46 The amendment was put to Members for voting and the vote was **LOST**.
- 92.47 In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 19.3, the vote was recorded as follows:

FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
Oliver Amorowson		
	Gerard Brewster	
	David Burn	
Terence Carter		
	James Caston	
Rachel Eburne		
	Paul Ekpenyong	
John Field		
	Julie Flatman	
	Jessica Fleming	
Helen Geake		
	Peter Gould	
	Kathie Guthrie	
	Lavinia Hadingham	
	Matthew Hicks	
	Barry Humphreys MBE	
Sarah Mansel		
John Matthissen		
Andy Mellen		
	Richard Meyer	
	Suzie Morley	
	Dave Muller	
Mike Norris		
Penny Otton		
	Timothy Passmore	
Daniel Pratt		
	Harry Richardson	
Keith Scarff		
Andrew Stringer		
Wendy Turner		
Rowland Warboys		
Keith Welham		
	John Whitehead	
Total	16	Total 17

92.48 Members then returned to the original Motion for questions and debate.

92.49 Councillor Eburne referred to paragraph 7.6 in the report and asked for confirmation if the £500k for Climate Change had to be spent in 2020/21 and why there were no increases in the forecast for the Business Rates in paragraph 8.14.

92.50 Councillor Whitehead clarified that the £500k had been allocated to the 2020/21 budget, however, he thought that the funds would be carried over to the following financial year, if the funds had not been spent.

92.51 In a response to Councillor Welham's question regarding the New Homes Bonus, Councillor Whitehead clarified how the Council spent the New Homes Bonus and that some had been included in the Growth and Efficiency Fund and related projects. He believed that the Government had decided to remove the New Homes Bonus, as many authorities no longer used this funding for the daily running of the Council.

- 92.52 Councillor Otton referred to paragraph 7.7 and asked for assurance that there was enough funding for the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and that there should be some indication of the amount for the CIL funding. She also enquired about the Section 106 CIL exemptions that the Council had provided. She asked for reassurance that the Council was fulfilling the legal requirements for CIL provisions. She also asked for reassurance that the provision for Disabled Facilities Grants would be improved and managed better in the future.
- 92.53 Councillor Whitehead responded that Table 7, indicated the CIL figure separately, as there was a specific use for CIL funding. CIL funding would be spent, as the CIL bids came forward. He thought that CIL funding should be a separate budget, as the spending of this funding was very specific. The spending on CIL was available on the Website.
- 92.54 Councillor Flatman updated Members on the Disabled Facilities Grants and the new arrangements recently agreed.
- 92.55 In response to Councillor Carter's question regarding the Disabled Facilities Grants, Councillor Flatman offered to speak with him after the meeting.
- 92.56 Councillor Hicks thought that the budget papers were clear, and he referred to the principles of the budget located on page 43 of the papers. He appreciated the funding set aside for the Climate Change emergency. He thought the budget was well considered, sustainable and focussed on the needs of the Council's residents.
- 92.57 Councillor Fleming supported the budget as it was principled and a prudent use of Mid Suffolk's public money. It provided good service to customers, and social and environmental values were included in everything the Council did. Investment targeted for climate change and biodiversity had been included for the first time and the Climate Change Task Force would provide important direction in April for how to best proceed with projects to support the work for Climate Change.
- 92.58 Councillor Eburne would like to deliver a forward-looking budget and she felt that the budget was not supporting the wishes of many of the residents in the District. The reserves of £9.23m should be utilised to support businesses and residents in the community and she felt that the budget was not going far enough, and she could not support the budget.
- 92.59 Councillor Field appreciated the cross-party work and the cross-party discussion that had taken place. However, there were still issues which he did not agree with, such as the £50m invested in high street properties and business premises. Although these investments were currently yielding a good return, he thought the risk was too high. He also questioned if enough was done to address the Climate Emergency declaration and for the leisure centres in the District. He could not support the proposed budget
- 92.60 Councillor Geake challenged the economic strategy of the administration and the decision to keep funding in reserve for 'a rainy day', actions which she

thought was ideologically driven. She described the housing surplus in relation to the housing crisis in the country and how this could be resolved by bringing more housing forward for social renting as a temporary measure on the way to owner-occupation.

- 92.61 Councillor Richardson detailed the low rise in Council Tax compared with the growth in average earnings and inflation. He thought that the budget would continue to deliver a high-quality public service and ensured investing in the future, especially as local governments' finances were challenged. This budget recognised that the New Homes Bonus would be coming to an end and overall, the budget represented responsible management of the Council's finances, and he supported the budget.
- 92.62 Councillor Carter did not support the budget, as he did not feel that climate change had been supported enough in the budget.
- 92.63 Councillor Whitehead thought that the budget reflected the changing times and he hoped Members would support it.
- 92.64 The recommendations were put to Members for voting and the vote was **CARRIED**.
- 92.65 In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 19.3, the vote was recorded as follows:

FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
	Oliver Amorowson	
Gerard Brewster		
David Burn		
	Terence Carter	
James Caston		
	Rachel Eburne	
Paul Ekpenyong		
	John Field	
Julie Flatman		
Jessica Fleming		
	Helen Geake	
Peter Gould		
Kathie Guthrie		
Lavinia Hadingham		
Matthew Hicks		
Barry Humphreys MBE		
	Sarah Mansel	
	John Matthissen	
	Andy Mellen	
Richard Meyer		
Suzie Morley		
Dave Muller		
	Mike Norris	
	Penny Otton	
Timothy Passmore		
	Daniel Pratt	
Harry Richardson		
	Keith Scarff	
	Andrew Stringer	
	Wendy Turner	

		Rowland Warboys	
		Keith Welham	
John Whitehead			
Total	17	Total	16

It was **RESOLVED**: -

- 1.1 That the General Fund revenue budget proposals for 2020/21 and four-year outlook set out in the report be approved.
- 1.2 That the General Fund capital budget proposals for 2020/21 set out in Appendix B in the report be approved.
- 1.3 That the General Fund Budget for 2020/21 is based on an increase to Council Tax of 1.66%, which equates to £2.76 per annum (5p per week) for a Band D property, to support the Council's overall financial position.
- 1.4 That from the 1st April 2020 properties that are unoccupied and unfurnished (Class C discount) receive a 25% reduction for the first 28 days as set out in section 11.
- 1.5 That the proposed Pay Policy Statement for 2020/21 as set out in section 12 be approved.

93 MC/19/39 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUDGET 2020/21 AND LONGER-TERM OUTLOOK

- 93.1 The Chair invited Councillor Whitehead to introduce the report and to move the recommendations.
- 93.2 Councillor Whitehead, the Cabinet Member for Finance, began by informing Council that the HRA had been through a challenging time and had a budgeted deficit of £564k, which was funded by the Reserves. A review of Housing Services had been undertaken in 2019/20 and had identified savings efficiencies and income-generating opportunities.
- 93.3 Councillor Whitehead then summarised the main details in the report and advised Members that some of the key points were also included in the recommendations.
- 93.4 Councillor Whitehead **MOVED** recommendations 3.1 to 3.9 in the report, which was **SECONDED** by Councillor Flatman.
- 93.5 Councillor Mansel queried the Sheltered Housing service charges increase and asked for clarification of what that service provided.
- 93.6 The Assistant Director for Housing responded that it was a culmination of several utility charges for the sheltered housing service, such as the Scheme Manager and grounds maintenance. It was the intention to conduct a review of the service charges this year.

- 93.7 Councillor Eburne referred to the previous question and asked what measures the Council was taking to keep utility bills low for sheltered housing services.
- 93.8 She continued regarding investment in the Council's social housing paragraph 6.4 and said that since the debt cap for housing had been removed, the Council was now allowed to borrow more money, but had no plans to do so. She would like to know if there were any long-term plans for borrowing to increase the Council's social housing.
- 93.9 In response, Councillor Whitehead explained that the HRA Business Plan would be brought back to Council again next year and he was confident that further housing development would be included in future 30-year HRA business plans.
- 93.10 The Assistant Director for Housing explained, how the total utility cost was managed by Vertas and was based on actual bills received and then the cost was apportioned across the District to achieve the charges. However, PV heating panels and installation of ground source heat pumps were part of the schemes to reduce the overall costs and improve the life of residents.
- 93.11 In response to Councillor Carter's question regarding mobility scooters, the Assistant Director clarified that investment was being put into storage facilities where suitable for mobility scooters, to reduce the fire risk associated with mobility scooters being stored inside flats and sheds.
- 93.12 Councillor Field referred to the last time the Council put up rents by CPI+1% and had been reassured by Government that clients would receive the increase from Housing Benefits and then asked Council to reduce rent for four years. He wondered if this was likely to happen again. Councillor Whitehead responded that tenants were paying less rent now, than four years ago.
- 93.13 Councillor Welham asked if the Council was paying more for service charges for Sheltered Housing, as more of these became de-sheltered and fewer sheltered houses were available.
- 93.14 Councillor Flatman responded that in some areas, Sheltered Housing units were not being occupied by those requiring sheltered accommodation, therefore these unoccupied units were rented out to other tenants, who paid a higher rent.
- 93.15 Councillor Welham asked for clarification of the higher rent, and the Assistant Director detailed the re-designation of sheltered units across Babergh and Mid Suffolk District and that that not all tenants required the services of the sheltered housing officer and would not pay for that service. However, as the demand for this service fell so did the cost and the service charges were proportional. He then listed the services included in the charge.

- 93.16 Members then moved to debate and Councillor Otton was concerned about the de-sheltering and the service charges. Some tenants had to buy or join a private alarm system at their own expense. Often these people were receiving housing benefits and thus it was paid for by public money. She could not support this.
- 93.17 Councillor Eburne similarly had issues with sheltered housing services and that this charge should be reduced by spreading the cost over a longer period. She was also concerned for the Right to Buy Scheme, though she was pleased that the figures for this scheme were lower than projected. She thought social housing should remain social housing in perpetuity. She also wanted to see a longer programme for building the Council's own housing stock and felt that the Capital Programme did not go far enough.
- 93.18 Councillor Mansel shared Councillor Eburne's concerns.
- 93.19 Councillor Scarff detailed the unintended consequence of removing decorating vouchers, which had a real cost for the most vulnerable people in the community, whom could not afford such costs.
- 93.20 Councillor Matthissen requested that recommendations 3.5 and 3.6 were voted for separately.
- 93.21 The Chair advised Members that the recommendations 3.5 and 3.6 would be voted for first and put the recommendations to Members for voting and the vote was **CARRIED**.
- 93.22 In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 19.3, the vote was recorded as follows:

FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
	Oliver Amorowson	
Gerard Brewster		
David Burn		
	Terence Carter	
James Caston		
	Rachel Eburne	
	Paul Ekpenyong	
	John Field	
Julie Flatman		
Jessica Fleming		
	Helen Geake	
Peter Gould		
Kathie Guthrie		
Lavinia Hadingham		
Matthew Hicks		
Barry Humphreys MBE		
	Sarah Mansel	
	John Matthissen	
	Andy Mellen	
Richard Meyer		
Suzie Morley		
Dave Muller		

		Mike Norris	
		Penny Otton	
Timothy Passmore			
		Daniel Pratt	
Harry Richardson			
		Keith Scarff	
		Andrew Stringer	
		Wendy Turner	
		Rowland Warboys	
		Keith Welham	
John Whitehead			
Total	16	Total	17

93.23 The Chair used The Chair's casting vote.

It was RESOLVED: -

- 1.1 That Sheltered Housing Service charges be increased by £2 per week to reduce the subsidy by £30k.**
- 1.2 That Sheltered Housing utility charges be increased by 5% (average £0.62 increase per week).**

N.B Subsequently, it was brought to the attention of the Monitoring Officer and the Corporate Manager for Democratic Services, that the announcement that the vote was carried had been incorrect. After seeking legal advice on the matter, it was advised that the vote would still stand

93.24 Recommendations 3.1 to 3.4 and 3.7 to 3.9 were put to Members for voting and the vote was **CARRIED**.

93.25 In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 19.3, the vote was recorded as follows:

FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
	Oliver Amorowson	
Gerard Brewster		
David Burn		
	Terence Carter	
James Caston		
Rachel Eburne		
Paul Ekpenyong		
John Field		
Julie Flatman		
Jessica Fleming		
	Helen Geake	
Peter Gould		
Kathie Guthrie		
Lavinia Hadingham		
Matthew Hicks		
Barry Humphreys MBE		
	Sarah Mansel	
John Matthissen		
		Andy Mellen

Richard Meyer		
Suzie Morley		
Dave Muller		
	Mike Norris	
	Penny Otton	
Timothy Passmore		
	Daniel Pratt	
Harry Richardson		
Keith Scarff		
Andrew Stringer		
	Wendy Turner	
Rowland Warboys		
	Keith Welham	
John Whitehead		
Total	23	Total 9
		Total 1

It was **RESOLVED**: -

- 1.1 That the HRA revenue budget proposals for 2020/21 and the longer-term outlook set out in the report be approved.
- 1.2 That the HRA capital budget proposals for 2020/21 set out in Appendix A in the report be approved.
- 1.3 That the CPI + 1% increase of 2.7% in Council House rents, equivalent to an average rent increase of £2.19 a week be implemented.
- 1.4 That garage rents are kept at the same level as 2019/20.
- 1.5 That the budgeted deficit of £564k be transferred from the HRA Reserves in 2020/21.
- 1.6 That in principle, Right to Buy (RTB) receipts should be retained to enable continued development and acquisition of new council dwellings
- 1.7 That the revised 30-year HRA Business Plan in Appendix B be noted.

93.26 The Monitoring Officer advised Members that the Council's Procedural Rule 9, the Guillotine Rule, would be activated at 8:30pm and business would have to be concluded at that time unless a vote was taken to extend the meeting further.

93.27 Councillor Hicks **PROPOSED** to extend the meeting beyond 8:30pm for as long as necessary which was **SECONDED** by Councillor Caston. The Motion was put to Members for voting and the vote was **CARRIED**.

It was **RESOLVED**: -

That the meeting be extended as long as necessary to complete the business on the Agenda.

By a unanimous vote.

It was RESOLVED :-

That pursuant to Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the business specified below on the grounds that if the public were present during discussion of this item, it is likely that there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as indicated in the report.

95 RECOMMENDATIONS AND REPORTS FROM CABINET/COMMITTEES

96 MC/19/42 RECOMMENDATION FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

97 MC/19/43 GATEWAY 14 DELIVERY MODEL & PARTNER

On completion of the closed session for Item MC/19/43 the meeting returned to Public session.

98 MC/19/40 JOINT CAPITAL, INVESTMENT AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES (2020/21)

97.1 The Chair invited Councillor Whitehead to introduce the report and to move the recommendations.

97.2 Councillor Whitehead, Cabinet Member for Finance, introduced the report and informed Members that the report had been scrutinised by the Joint Audit and Standards Committee before being presented to Cabinet.

97.3 Councillor Whitehead **MOVED** the recommendations in the Report, which was **SECONDED** by Councillor Caston.

97.4 There were no questions on the report.

97.5 During the debate, Councillor Eburne referred to Appendix B and informed Members that she was supporting Gateway 14, as it was a local investment project and within the District. However, she was against CIFCO and disagreed with investing outside the District and could not support this investment strategy.

97.6 Councillor Stringer was concerned about the risk involved with the investments in CIFCO and for this reason he could not support the paper.

97.7 Recommendations 3.1 to 3.8 were put to Members for voting and the vote was **CARRIED**.

It was RESOLVED: -

- 1.1 That the Joint Capital Strategy for 2020/21, including the Prudential Indicators, as set out in Appendix A and the updates tabled at the meeting, be approved.
- 1.2 That the Joint Investment Strategy for 2020/21, as set out in Appendix B, be approved.1.2
- 1.3 That the Joint Treasury Management Strategy for 2020/21, including the Joint Annual Investment Strategy as set out in Appendix C, be approved.
- 1.4 That the Joint Treasury Management Indicators as set out in Appendix D, be approved.
- 1.5 That the Joint Treasury Management Policy Statement as set out in Appendix G, be approved.
- 1.6 That the Joint Minimum Revenue Provision Statement as set out in Appendix H, be approved.
- 1.7 That the key factors and information relating to and affecting treasury management activities set out in Appendices E, F, and I be noted.

That Officers and Members, Working Parties and whatever mechanisms have been set up commence exploring alternative investment strategies that take greater account of the Councils' own declaration of a climate change emergency.

99 RECOMMENDATIONS AND REPORTS FROM CABINET / COMMITTEES

99a JAC/19/10 HALF YEAR REPORT ON TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2019/20

- 98a.1 The Chair invited Councillor Muller to introduce the report and to move the recommendations.
- 98a.2 Councillor Muller, Chair of the Joint Audit and Standards Committee, informed Members that the Committee had agreed with the recommendations in the report.
- 98a.3 Councillor Muller **MOVED** recommendations 3.1 and 3.2 in the report, which was **SECONDED** by Councillor Caston.
- 98a.4 The recommendations were put to Members for voting and the vote was **CARRIED**.

It was **RESOLVED**:-

- 1.1 That the Treasury Management activity for the first six months of 2019/20 as set out in the report and Appendices, be noted.

That it be noted that both Councils' Treasury Management activity for the first

six months of 2019/20 was in accordance with the approved Treasury Management Strategy, and that the Council has complied with all the Treasury Management Indicators for this period.

100 MC/19/41 PROPOSED CHANGES TO COUNCIL MEETING DATES 2020-21

100.1 The Chair invited the Leader to introduce the report and to move the recommendations.

100.2 Councillor Morley, Leader of the Council, explained that two dates had been removed from the meeting calendar, as all Council business could be achieved within the remaining meetings.

100.3 Councillor Morley **MOVED** recommendation 2.1 in the report, which was **SECONDED** by Councillor Richardson.

100.4 Councillor Eburne was concerned by the reduction in the number of meetings and that there would be more of a democratic deficit in the District. She also asked why more meetings were not conducted in the community to enable residents to attend.

100.5 Councillor Morley responded that it was her personal opinion that the democratic requirements were best served by having the meetings in the Council Chamber, which allowed for live streaming and could be viewed on YouTube by residents.

100.6 Councillor Stringer was concerned that less Council meetings reduced the opportunity for Members to hold the administration to account.

100.7 Councillor Mansel could not support the paper as no reason was provided for the removal of meetings.

100.8 The recommendation was put to Members for voting and the vote was **CARRIED**.

It was RESOLVED: -

That the changes to Council meetings detailed in paragraph 3.1 of the report be approved.

101 COUNCILLOR APPOINTMENTS

100.1 Councillor Hadingham **MOVED** the proposed changes to Councillor Appointments as detailed in the Tabled Papers, which was **SECONDED** by Councillor Eburne.

100.2 The proposals were put to Members for voting and the vote was **CARRIED**.

It was Resolved:-

- 1.1 That Councillor Matthissen be appointed to Development Control Committee A (to replace Councillor Turner).**
- 1.2 That Councillor Stringer be appointed to Development Control Committee B (to replace Councillor Matthissen).**
- 1.3 That Councillor Mellen be appointed to Development Control Committee B (To replace Councillor Terence Carter)**
- 1.4 That Councillor Carter be appointed to Overview & Scrutiny (Joint and Mid Suffolk) (To replace Councillor Mellen)**

The business of the meeting was concluded at 8.42 pm.

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Chair