

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **MID SUFFOLK COUNCIL** held as a Virtual Meeting on Thursday, 18 February 2021 at 5:30pm

PRESENT:

Councillor: Barry Humphreys MBE (Chairman)
Paul Ekpenyong (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:	Oliver Amorowson	Gerard Brewster
	David Burn	Terence Carter
	James Caston	Rachel Eburne
	John Field	Julie Flatman
	Jessica Fleming	Dr Helen Geake
	Peter Gould	Kathie Guthrie
	Lavinia Hadingham	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
	Wendy Turner	Rowland Warboys
	Keith Welham	John Whitehead

In attendance:

Officers: Chief Executive (AC)
Strategic Director (KN)
Assistant Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer (EY)
Assistant Director – Corporate Resources and Section 151 Officer (KS)
Assistant Director - Assets and Investments (EA)
Assistant Director - Environment and Commercial Partnerships (CC)
Assistant Director - Economic Development & Regeneration (FD)
Assistant Director - Housing (GF)
Assistant Director - Customer, Digital Transformation and Improvement (SW)
Corporate Manager - Housing Solutions (HT)
Corporate Manager - Governance and Civic Office (JR)
Member Support Officer - Democratic Services (MS)
Senior Governance Officer (HH)

Apologies:

None.

55 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

55.1 In accordance with the delegated authority the Monitoring Officer had granted dispensation to all Members in respect of the 2021/22 Budget papers.

There were no other declarations made by Members.

56 MC/20/23 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 JANUARY 2021

It was RESOLVED:-

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2021 be confirmed and signed as a true record at the next practicable opportunity.

57 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

57.1 The Chairman invited the Leader of the Council to make her announcements.

57.2 Councillor Morley announced the following:

Covid-19

The progress that had been made in recent weeks with regard to the delivery of the vaccine had been amazing. Despite the snow, this progress had catapulted Suffolk up the league tables in terms of delivery of the first doses to the first 4 cohorts.

The Leader had met with Ed Garrett from CCGs to ensure that the Council was working as closely as possible with the NHS to support the delivery of the vaccine. Together they would be targeting the Council's resources in getting to the minority that qualify but have not yet received their jab.

It was also fantastic to see the new asymptomatic testing site being rolled out in Stowmarket, which will shortly be followed by even more local sites too.

The Leader was also proud that the Council have been able to extend the Council tax hardship scheme to further help the most vulnerable in the district who have been most impacted by Covid.

In terms of Covid, she was sure the Council would all be glued to the TV on Monday to hear the PM outline the Government's plans for leading us out of this lockdown. There were lots of reasons to be hopeful but in the meantime, she would like to reiterate the Suffolk wider messages that **Suffolk Needs You...** to follow the guidance: hands, face, space; to get tested regularly if you are unable to work from home; and to get your Covid jab when it's your turn. In return **Suffolk Supports You...** through Home But Not Alone and our community involvement, the distribution of business grants, self-isolation payments and practical support for those most in need.

She wanted to pay tribute to our bin crews who were back out within 48 hours including working on Saturday, making collections and clearing the backlog as best they could despite the weather. They were currently 2 to 3 days behind and so unfortunately the delays would run into early next week even with working on Saturday again. This was particularly difficult since the Council had Covid related staff absences within the team which had caused the garden waste service to be suspended for now.

As it was half term, she also wanted to highlight the fantastic initiative in place, building on what had been done during the winter half term, to tackle **holiday hunger**.

This scheme involved food parcels containing ingredients for five meals for a family of four distributed to families during half term. The initiative, delivered on behalf of the Council by Abbeycroft Leisure's Explore Outdoor team, ensured no child went hungry when free school meals were paused during the school holidays. Families in need were identified by local schools and the food parcels also included ideas on how to make food stretch further in future – making a real difference to the lives of low-income families in our district.

Gateway 14.

She was really pleased to see that the planning application had been submitted. she wanted to make all Councillors aware that officers, together with the Council's development partner Jaynic, were meeting on a 4-weekly basis with the newly formed residents' group. Finally, she was of course really pleased to be able to lend the Council's support to Gateway 14 being part of the wider Freeport East bid to Government; alongside colleague Councils, businesses and our MPs in Suffolk and Essex. Members would all be continuing to lobby Government and keeping fingers crossed that the Council would be one of the 10 freeports that will be announced.

- 57.3 Councillor Passmore asked if the Leader of the Council and the Chairman would like to join him in expressing thanks and admiration to all involved in the roll out of the vaccination programme, including officers from the Council.
- 57.4 Councillor Morley agreed with Councillor Passmore and reported that in her meeting with the CCG she was informed that despite the snow, 57,000 people were vaccinated across Suffolk in one week. Councillor Morley also stated that she was enormously grateful for all the work that the NHS and CCG's were doing and was happy to support them in any way that the Council could.
- 57.5 Councillor Mansel enquired if there was any information available on the Covid-19 vaccination transport programme, which she had supported with monies from her locality budget.
- 57.6 Councillor Morley reported that over 150 community organisations had been contacted to assess the requirements and needs for the vaccination transport programme. However, only 2 had given information, the Council was working with these organisations and would continue to work with any other groups, who had an identified need.
- 57.7 Councillor Geake enquired how many families were in need of the half term food parcels across the district.
- 57.8 Councillor Morley informed Councillor Geake that she would provide that information after the meeting.
- 57.9 Councillor Eburne enquired what the Council was doing to help reach the minorities that were difficult to reach with regard to vaccinations. Also, with regards to the suspension of brown bin collections, would residents be getting further reductions to the cost of their brown bin subscription if there were any further suspensions.

57.10 Councillor Morley replied that the same process would be in place to make sure that no-one was paying for a service that they were not receiving. In response to Councillor Eburne's first question the Council was working closely with the CCG to resolve any issues to reach minorities.

57.11 Councillor Welham enquired what the makeup of the Gateway 14 Residents Group was and how Members would be informed of relevant discussions and agreements.

57.12 Councillor Morley informed Councillor Welham that she would clarify this information after the meeting.

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

58.1 None received.

59 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

59.1 None received.

60 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

Councillor Andrew Stringer to Councillor Fleming, Cabinet Member for the Environment

Given the justified public outcry of this Council cutting down three of the walnut trees planted by my former Head Teacher Mike Arbon in Walnut Tree Walk in Stowmarket, and the Council subsequently stating, incorrectly, that this was because Suffolk County Council Highways demanded their removal within 21 days. when will the Council offer an apology and admit it was wrong?

Councillor Fleming – Cabinet Member for the Environment

The District Council already have made a public statement in the EADT which makes it clear that the Council regrets the loss of the trees. I too personally regret the loss of 3 walnut trees which were cut down on Walnut Tree Walk following miscommunications and what appears to have been errors of judgement on site, the details of which have been publicly reported. Mistakes happen, as all of us know and this was one of them. Important lessons have been learned and measures are being put in place to avoid any similar error. As Cabinet Member for Environment including public realm, I am sorry that this happened and realise that the trees were planted by a former headmaster of the middle school, the Council intends to make amends by ensuring that healthy and well-located replacement trees are planted as soon feasible as part of the agreed planning conditions.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Stringer to Councillor Fleming:

Can I thank Councillor Fleming for saying the word sorry in that speech publicly. That helps me certainly to draw a line and move on, which I really hope to do. Would Councillor Fleming agree whether it would be a good idea to rethink our proposals on the site we own in Walnut Tree Walk to make sure we are bringing back better than we are taking away and communicate that to the wider area, so we avoid these mistakes in the future.

Councillor Fleming – Cabinet Member for the Environment

I am not sure anything that I can say about this particular site will help avoid anything in the future, I think the new procedures will. However, this particular site is scheduled for redevelopment for housing and the road along the close where the trees were cut is unfortunately going to be widened. The trees that were cut down, would have had to have been cut down anyway and the planning application which was determined earlier last year passed muster with about four or five objections. The plans have already been approved as far as I understand. I don't think there is anything I or anyone else can do to revisit planning conditions that have already been through the planning process.

Councillor Sarah Mansel to Councillor David Burn, Cabinet Member for Planning

The Healthy Homes Act calls for a set of Healthy Homes Principles to be made law and as such part of national planning policy. Since advising officers of this initiative in January we have not heard anything more. Will this Council support the Healthy Homes Act?

Councillor Burn – Cabinet Member for Planning

The homes we live in have a major impact on our health and wellbeing, and this Council is committed to delivering healthy new homes through our emerging Joint Local Plan.

The Town and County Planning Association's important campaign, to introduce new legislation in the form of a Healthy Homes Act, includes laudable aims and objectives which we are already seeking to implement, insofar as is possible under current national policy.

It is not yet certain how the Government may seek to implement and standardise the principles proposed by the Town and County Planning Association, so we do not know what the design and cost impacts would be on development in our area. But I welcome the Town and County Planning Association's efforts and this Council will continue to push for healthy new homes.

I will ask officers to monitor the progress of this campaign, and any subsequent Bill through parliament, in order that we can respond to changes at the national level and identify best practice for implementing the Joint Local Plan.

Supplementary question from Councillor Mansel to Councillor Burn:

I think it is very pleasing to hear from Councillor Burn that we are incorporating many features within the Joint Local Plan to make sure that the homes that are built in this district are as healthy as possible, but would it be possible for this Council to incorporate some of the exemplary features to ensure that healthy homes in some of our own developments in advance of it becoming adopted as law.

Councillor Burn – Cabinet Member for Planning

I think we presently do look to see how we can extend our implementation of these particular standards and we do try to optimise as much as possible. I think this will be, as design becomes more and more up to the forefront of planning which it is certainly going to do. I think I can reassure you that the likelihood is that the standards that we will be able to achieve in the future will be higher but certainly it is a laudable aim and I share your hope for it.

Councillor Penny Otton to Councillor Suzie Morley, Leader of the Council

This council agreed to establish a youth council as part of the Green Liberal Democrats amendment in 2020.

This current year, as a result of the pandemic, has been extremely difficult for young people, physically and mentally. This youth council could help to establish just what the most important issues are for them and start to put in place some of those issues identified.

What has the council done to implement this commitment?

Councillor Morley – Leader of the Council

As part of the 2020/21 budget setting, the Green and Liberal Democratic Group presented 10 key proposals to the Administration. It was agreed that some of these proposals would be progressed when the Council approved the budget. The Administration places a great deal of importance in engaging all citizens in democracy, including young people, however it was felt that a youth council wasn't the only option to achieve this. Therefore, officers have been working on research and a scoping document for a wider project on democratic engagement. This work has been delayed during the covid-19 pandemic as staff have been redeployed to priority response tasks but will recommence in May 2021.

I can assure you that I personally, and this administration, place the utmost importance on the wellbeing of all our citizens – you can see this from our vision and strategic priorities. We know from national statistics that this pandemic has had a particular effect on the mental health and wellbeing of younger people, and we continue to work with our partners across the system to provide support for them.

Supplementary question from Councillor Otton to Councillor Morley:

I am disappointed to hear Councillor Morley's response to this, I think it is very disappointing that we have had no indication of exactly what work has been done and I would hope that what she is saying is, that the proposal to implement a youth council has now been put on hold. I believe that we need to hear from her exactly what is being planned and to have details of any time scale of works that are planned to happen.

Councillor Morley – Leader of the Council

I have just said that it will recommence in May 2021 and I can't say any more than that at the moment.

Councillor John Matthissen to Councillor David Burn, Cabinet Member for Planning

What information do you have to give confidence that our housing delivery and build pipeline will continue to justify a 5- year housing land supply?

Councillor Burn – Cabinet Member for Planning

Mid Suffolk District Council currently has a housing land supply of 7.67 years as shown in the Housing Land Supply Position Statement (October 2020). The Council also passed the Government's annual Housing Delivery Test with a result of 103% for the 2020 Test, published in January 2021. We also maintain an up-to-date Housing Delivery Test Action Plan, which has been through Overview and Scrutiny.

The Joint Local Plan identifies a supply of development from April 2018 up to March 2037 and minimum housing requirement figures for those areas producing a Neighbourhood Plan. In order to maintain a consistent and favourable supply and delivery of development throughout the Plan period, the policies aim to identify and create flexibility for sufficient housing development, and a buffer of approximately 20% in the supply of new land has been identified.

I do carry concern around our land supply though and it is important that the Council continues to grant planning permissions that enable us to maintain and 'top up' supply.

Supplementary question from Councillor Matthissen to Councillor Burn:

I can't see that we should continue to grant planning permissions when I think we have something like 7000 that we have already approved. It is encouraging that the delivery test was most recently ok, but we still need to know frequently how that is going, October is now four months away. Do we know that we are still at seven years three months when there has been a lot of stops and starts in the building industry?

Councillor Burn – Cabinet Member for Planning

We have no indication that the healthy 7.67 years have slipped significantly over the past 3 months and when we fix the five-year land supply figure we will not be recalculating it every month just to make sure we are still managing to stay on the right side of five years. I think we can be fairly confident that we are still well within that figure and regarding granting permissions, whilst we have a certain level of control over the development delivery of housing the greater part of that is held by the developers. So, we are entirely in their hands as to whether it is delivered by them, which is why it is important that we maintain a supply of permissions so that if any do drop off the end because they are not delivered in time and their permissions lapse, we maintain our numbers.

Councillor Daniel Pratt to Councillor Jessica Fleming, Cabinet Member for the Environment

How are other local authorities separating Tetrapak from other recycle and why are we not doing the same at the MRF?

Councillor Fleming – Cabinet Member for the Environment

We stopped taking cartons/tetrapaks when the current Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) contract began in May 2019. This contract does not include managing cartons/tetrapaks.

Some other local authorities are still accepting 'cartons/tetrapaks' through a mix of kerbside collections, HWRC's and bring sites, however kerbside collections are being widely phased out.

If you go on the Tetra Pak UK company web page and ask where to recycle their product, you will be directed to a site in your area – in our case this is Stowmarket. You are not directed to your recycling bin! According to best information most local authorities in England are taking this approach and not collecting at kerbside. Essex still accepts cartons/tetrapaks but this is a function of its waste contract obligations and infrastructure age, the cartons are considered to be 'contaminants'. Most new waste recycling contracts exclude cartons/tetrapaks, and it is now illegal to include carton residues in recycled paper/ card for export.

Although Suffolk's LAs collect them, it is not cost effective and Suffolk Councils pay to have them removed and shipped by ACE UK (a related organisation to Tetra Pak UK) to Warrington. There they are broken down and separated into fibre which can be incorporated into paper products and a plastic/ aluminium mix which is more problematic in terms of its reuse.

This is in contrast to other recyclable materials for which there is a positive market value and an income stream back to the Council.

In addition to cartons/tetrapaks, coffee pods pose a similar dilemma as they too are a composite material and although technically 'recyclable', are in effect a contaminant and are best disposed in the black bin or taken to a HWRC where there are special containers.

Councillor Daniel Pratt to Councillor Jessica Fleming, Cabinet Member for the Environment

Will you raise this issue with the Suffolk Waste Partnership and jointly investigate how other local authorities (and waste partnerships) are sorting Tetrapak material from other recycle?

Councillor Fleming – Cabinet Member for the Environment

Yes, I am in discussion with the SWP about this problem. As I have said, cartons/tetrapaks are not welcome in any recyclable materials stream as they need special treatment. Other local authorities are seeking to avoid mixing them.

Overall, the Suffolk Waste Partnership and other local authority bodies nationally have raised the problem posed by composite materials such as this to Central Government which is in turn in discussion with the packaging container industry to seek ways to improve the capacity to recycle their products while retaining their usefulness.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Daniel Pratt to Councillor Jessica Fleming, Cabinet Member for the Environment

During the interim could MSDC provide more bring-bank locations to enable our residents to recycle Tetrapak in their own locality.

Councillor Fleming – Cabinet Member for the Environment

The Suffolk Waste Partnership did investigate whether it would be possible to introduce carton banks at other public locations (such as alongside bottle banks at Supermarkets and Village Halls).

There is currently only one provider of these banks in the UK (to the best of our knowledge) and unfortunately this option proved to be prohibitively expensive as a standalone service where the quantities being collected (in individual banks) are likely to be relatively small. It already is an added cost to transport the current quantity of tetrapaks from HWRCs to the single UK recycling facility.

We therefore concluded that this approach would not have provided value for money for Suffolk taxpayers.

61 MC/20/24 GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2021/22 AND FOUR-YEAR OUTLOOK

61.1 The Chairman invited the Cabinet Member for Finance to introduce Paper MC/20/24 and to move the Recommendations within the report.

- 61.2 Before introducing the paper Councillor Whitehead expressed his sincere thanks to the Finance team.
- 61.3 Councillor Whitehead introduced the report and highlighted that the focus from Central Government had focused its attention on fighting Covid-9 and generous government assistance had meant that reserves did not have to be used to the extent that was originally anticipated. However, several finance reviews had been delayed making the future beyond March 2022 uncertain.
- 62.4 Councillor Whitehead **PROPOSED** Recommendations 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 in the report.
- 62.5 Councillor Morley **SECONDED** the proposal and stated that due to the careful management of the financial position in recent years under the stewardship of Councillor Whitehead, Mid Suffolk District Council was now seeing the benefits by avoiding many of the financial challenges being faced by other local authorities and that now was the time to use the Councils' financially strong position to invest back into communities to both stimulate and support swift recovery.
- 62.6 Councillor Field **PROPOSED** the Amendments which were detailed in the agenda reports pack.
- 62.7 Councillor Warboys **SECONDED** the Amendments and said that the Amendments supported the Mid Suffolk District Council's six strategic priorities and would help enable the Council to achieve its goal of being carbon neutral by 2030. They had also been scrutinised by the Section 151 Officer and were achievable without compromising the budget or increasing council tax or rents.
- 62.8 The Chairman asked Councillor Whitehead if he accepted the Amendments or any elements of the Amendments.
- 62.9 Councillor Whitehead stated that it was clear that the opposition had spent time and diligence in putting the Amendments together. However, at the last Cabinet meeting it had been announced that there were four pots of £1 million to be allocated for economy, housing, communities and wellbeing and it was intended for cross party discussions to decide how this money should be allocated. Councillor Whitehead asked if Councillor Field and the Opposition would be willing to withdraw the Amendments and take part in cross party workshops to work together to allocate the significant sums of money to the benefit of the Council's residents and communities.
- 62.10 To provide confidence to the Opposition around the cross party working, Councillor Whitehead suggested adding additional wording to Recommendation 3.1 so that it would now read *'That the General Fund Budget proposals for 2021/22 and four-year outlook set out in the report be approved, and that recommendations to Cabinet be prepared, using a balanced, cross-party approach, for the allocation of the additional £4m of funding for investment in our local economy, housing, the wellbeing of our*

residents and in our communities. This cross-party approach would also give consideration to the budget amendments proposed in 2020/21 and 2021/22.'

- 62.11 Councillor Field stated that there was a broad area of agreement between both halves of the Council and that a genuine offer to indulge in cross party working was always welcome. Therefore, he would be prepared to withdraw the Amendments.
- 62.12 Councillor Warboys welcomed the offer of genuine cross party working to deliver on strategic priorities and also agreed to withdraw the Amendments.
- 62.13 The Chairman asked Councillor Morley as seconder if she agreed to the additional wording to Recommendation 3.1 suggested by Councillor Whitehead.
- 62.14 Councillor Morley stated that she approved the proposed additional wording to Recommendation 3.1.
- 62.15 As there were no objections voiced by Members to the proposed amendment the Chairman took this as the meetings consensus and opened up questions on the amended substantive motion.
- 62.16 Councillor Eburne asked why the report had revealed an increase to the service charge for Endeavour House as staff had not been using the facilities due to the Pandemic. Secondly where in the budget did it show the plans for spending the £18 million currently shown in reserves.
- 62.17 Councillor Whitehead replied that the increase to the service charge for Endeavour House was a budgeted figure based on agreements made when the Councils first moved to the building. However, it was hoped that negotiations would take place with Suffolk County Council to bring the figure down to reflect the actual usage.
- 62.18 In reply to Councillor Eburne's second question, page 16 in Appendix D illustrated an extensive table of reserves earmarked for specific projects.
- 63.19 The Chief Executive commented that negotiations were taking place to bring down the service charge costs and explained that the reason that the service charge was budgeted to rise was a result of a discount which had been negotiated at the start of the rental agreement but was now due to expire. Also, a reduction in the Councils' current space in Endeavour House was being explored in terms of relinquishing the Members area and possibly compressing the Councils' footprint within the building onto one floor plate instead of the current two.
- 63.20 Councillor Eburne thanked the Chief Executive and Councillor Whitehead for their explanations and asked if all Members could be given an update regarding any reductions in the service charge or space in Endeavour House.

- 63.21 Councillor Mansel welcomed the £0.5 Million earmarked for the climate change and biodiversity reserve as detailed in Appendix D, page 16, and asked which of the projects were incorporated into the Carbon Reduction Management Plan following recommendations from the Climate Change Task Force.
- 63.22 Councillor Whitehead stated that he did not have that information and would get more detail outside of the meeting.
- 63.23 Councillor Mansel also enquired what future projects were being planned to make sure all the money was being spent.
- 63.24 Councillor Fleming assured Councillor Mansel that the monies available would be put to excellent use and there was a very ambitious programme of Climate Change and Biodiversity works set out in the action plan.
- 63.25 Councillor Passmore commented that he would be interested to hear how the workstreams for the additional monies would be implemented and any timescales for implementation.
- 63.26 The Chief Executive replied that it was early days, but his initial thoughts involved all Councillors, and that all issues should be dealt with holistically. It required to be driven by evidence and in light of the forthcoming elections, it was anticipated that work would start in earnest in early May for a June or July completion.
- 63.27 Councillor Matthissen enquired if there were any plans to recruit staff to manage the projects generated.
- 63.28 Councillor Whitehead agreed that the Assistant Directors had been stretched however, the current administration had no plans to recruit.
- 63.29 The Chief Executive thanked Councillor Whitehead for his comments and extended the comment regarding Assistant Directors being stretched to all Officers. Whilst he would not refuse the offer of more Officers it was vital to have the right resources at the right times to deploy in the right way.
- 63.30 Councillor Otton enquired about several issues including CIL Expenditure, Disability Grants, funding in the budget to provide safe elections and provisions being made for people unable to pay their council tax.
- 63.31 Councillor Whitehead invited the Assistant Director – Corporate Resources to respond to the query regarding CIL Expenditure.
- 63.31 The Assistant Director - Corporate Resources explained that it was difficult to predict what CIL money was available, but that the figures had been included in the budget for completeness.
- 63.33 The Chair invited the Chief Executive to answer the query regarding elections.

- 63.33 The Chief Executive replied that monies were available from the Government to support elections and as the District Council was running the elections for the County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner, the majority of the costs would be their responsibility.
- 63.34 Councillor Whitehead invited the Assistant Director - Housing to provide an answer for the query regarding Disability Grants.
- 63.35 The Assistant Director - Housing gave a broad summary of the history of Disability Grants and announced that the current budget monitoring projections were showing that the budget was due to be overspent by £22,000 and the additional expenditure would be made from reserves.
- 63.36 Councillor Whitehead addressed the question regarding people who were unable to pay their council tax by stating that the Council had a generous scheme to assist the most vulnerable residents, which would result in them paying no more than 5% of their council tax and that a compassionate approach had been adopted for collection of council tax.
- 63.37 Councillor Field enquired what the rationale was for increasing council tax.
- 63.38 Councillor Whitehead responded that there was a lot of uncertainty going forward and the increases were small, but they would generate £104,000, which was being ringfenced to assist with business Covid-19 recovery.
- 63.39 Councillor Welham asked what allocation had been made in the budget for the provision of community benefit on Gateway 14.
- 63.40 Councillor Whitehead responded that he would provide a detailed answer outside of the meeting.
- 63.41 Councillor Welham enquired if the Council would work with Jaynic to investigate ways of providing community benefits on the development.
- 63.42 Councillor Whitehead responded that they would.
- 63.43 The Chair thanked the Officers and Councillors involved in providing comprehensive answers to the questions asked and moved into debate.
- 63.44 Members debated various issues including that:
- Working together to allocate the additional £4 Million in the budget was welcomed.
 - Despite a difficult year the budget was in a positive position.
 - Investments were also made into Cabinet portfolios.
 - Working with the opposition was a bit late in the day.
 - The Budget surplus were year on year increases.
 - The budget reserves should be used to support residents.
 - Technology was important as the District needed innovation to help support

recovery from Covid-19.

- The virtual high street programme was successful where it had been rolled out.
- The Council's funds could be used to support more environmental projects.
- The budget reserves allowed the Council to deal with unexpected events.
- The decision to increase council tax was not taken lightly.
- The Council had a responsibility to look after its residents.
- The budget was consistent, and a prudent approach had been taken for the coming year.

63.45 The meeting had reached the guillotine deadline and Members agreed to continue by consensus and none spoke against the proposal.

It was RESOLVED:-

That the meeting continue beyond the guillotine deadline until all the business of the meeting was concluded.

63.46 Members continued to debate the issues including that since the Council did not have a need for additional funding as there was a surplus in the budget, some Members therefore opposed the increase in Council Tax.

63.47 Councillor Whitehead summed up the points made by Members, which he had taken a note off and said that he believed that Council Tax increases should be kept to a minimum.

63.48 The Chair advised Members that they would be voting collectively on the substantive Recommendations 3.1 and 3.2, and put these to Members for voting.

By 17 votes for and 16 votes against, 1 abstention.

It was RESOLVED:-

1.1 That the General Fund Budget proposals for 2021/22 and four-year outlook set out in the report be approved, and that recommendations to Cabinet be prepared, using a balanced, cross-party approach, for the allocation of the additional £4m of funding for investment in our local economy, housing, the wellbeing of our residents and in our communities. This cross-party approach would also give consideration to the budget amendments proposed in 2020/21 and 2021/22.

1.2 That the General Fund Budget for 2021/22 is based on an increase to Council Tax of 1.66% which equates to £2.80 per annum (23p per month) for a Band D property.

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		
	Sarah Mansel	
	John Matthissen	
Andrew Mellen		
Richard Meyer		
Suzie Morley		
David Muller		
	Mike Norris	
	Penny Otton	
Timothy Passmore		
	Stephen Phillips	
	Daniel Pratt	
Harry Richardson		
	Keith Scarff	
	Andrew Stringer	
	Wendy Turner	
	Rowland Warboys	
	Keith Welham	
John Whitehead		
TOTAL 17	TOTAL 16	TOTAL 1

63.45 Recommendations 3.3 and 3.4 as detailed in the report were put to Members for voting.

By 31 votes for and 2 votes against, 1 abstention

It was RESOLVED:-

- 1.1 That the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy at Appendix E be approved.
- 1.2 That the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

(MHCLG) be notified of the adoption of the Strategy.

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		
Sarah Mansel		
John Matthissen		
Andrew Mellen		
Richard Meyer		
Suzie Morley		
David Muller		
Mike Norris		
Penny Otton		
Timothy Passmore		
	Stephen Phillips	
	Daniel Pratt	
Harry Richardson		
Keith Scarff		
Andrew Stringer		
Wendy Turner		
Rowland Warboys		
Keith Welham		
John Whitehead		
TOTAL 31	TOTAL 2	TOTAL 1

Note: The meeting was adjourned between 8:27pm and 8:41pm.

62 MC/20/25 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) 2021/22 BUDGET AND FOUR-YEAR OUTLOOK

64.1 The Chair invited Councillor Whitehead to introduce Paper MC/20/25 and to

move the Recommendations in the report.

- 64.2 Councillor Whitehead encapsulated the main subjects in the report and **MOVED** Recommendations 3.1 to 3.7.
- 64.3 Councillor Hadingham **SECONDED** the Recommendations and reserved her right to speak.
- 64.4 Councillor Field **PROPOSED** the Amendment, which was detailed in the Agenda and made a short introduction of the Amendment.
- 64.5 Councillor Warboys **SECONDED** the Amendment and outlined the reasons behind the Amendment, including that Council had a responsibility, as a major provider for housing, and that this Amendment would bring economic resilience to the budget. The Amendment had been scrutinised by the Section 151 Officers and did not include any increases to council tax or rents.
- 64.6 The Chair asked whether Councillor Whitehead accepted the Amendment, and Councillor Whitehead replied that he did not accept the Amendment, as the Capital expenditure had a modest increase of £2.5m over two years and an ambitious 30 Year Housing Revenue Plan which would be brought forward later in the year.
- 64.7 Members debated the Amendment and Councillor Otton began by stating that she supported the Amendment, as there was a lack of good insulated social housing, which would be essential in the coming years, as an increasing number of families would be unable to provide housing for themselves.
- 64.8 Councillor Eburne thought that the Amendment would improve the lives of tenants and that the Council would need to look to the future when budgeting for the HRA. She was not aware of the referred Housing Revenue Plan and asked that this information was shared with Members.
- 64.9 Councillor Mansel said that the Council should be committed to build its own housing for social rent and not only affordable rent, which was only a reduction to 80% of the rent. Some tenants could not afford this. Mid Suffolk District Council had a high tenancy rent in comparison to income. It was important to undertake the work for retrofitting of council housing stock to reduce carbon emissions when heating up homes, as this would not only support tenants but also help the Council to meet the challenge of carbon neutral by 2030.
- 64.10 Councillor Geake stated that social housing was the only way to solve the housing crisis, and there was a need to provide good social housing, which would enable tenants to save up for a deposit to buy their own homes.
- 64.11 Councillor Amorowson thought this amendment would allow the Council to show leadership for the spirit of wellbeing and embrace those values.

64.12 The Chair asked if Councillor Field would like to provide a finishing statement before the vote, which he declined.

64.13 Councillor Whitehead informed Members that the HRA Business Plan would be presented to Members in due course.

64.14 The Amendment was put to Members for voting.

By 16 votes for and 18 against, the vote was **LOST**

To Vote on the amendment to the 2021/22 HRA Budget as proposed by the Green and Liberal Democrat Group.

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 Gould	
	Lavinia Hadingham	
	Matthew Hicks	
	Barry Humphreys	
Sarah Mansel		
John Matthissen		
Andrew Mellen		
	Richard Meyer	
	Suzie Morley	
	David Muller	
Mike Norris		
Penny Otton		
	Timothy Passmore	
	Stephen Phillips	
Daniel Pratt		
	Harry Richardson	
Keith Scarff		
Andrew Stringer		
Wendy Turner		
Rowland Warboys		
Keith Welham		

	John Whitehead	
TOTAL 16	TOTAL 18	

- 64.15 The Chair invited questions from Members on the Recommendations in the report.
- 64.16 Councillor Field queried the framework for increasing the tenant rents.
- 64.17 The Chief Executive explained that previously Central Government had set the policy by which the Council had been obliged to reduce the rents on a year-on-year basis. This was no longer the case and Council was no longer obliged to reduce rents.
- 64.18 Councillor Eburne referred to paragraph 5.12 in the report and queried if it was possible to amend the Capital Programme for social rent, as the Council was making purchases of houses on various housing developments but none of these was for social rent.
- 64.19 The Assistant Director – Housing, replied that it was unlikely to change as the funding was set out in advance by Homes England who provided the funding.
- 64.20 The Assistant Director – Assets and Investments informed Members that on the Needham Middle School site and the Stowmarket Middle School site, social and affordable rent housing was included in the developments.
- 64.21 Councillor Eburne followed up with a question for how many social rent properties there were in the HRA programme for the next three years and the Assistant Director - Assets and Investment said she would provide this information outside the meeting.
- 64.22 Members debated the issues and Councillor Field thought it would be an advantage if the Opposition was kept informed of developments. There was a reason for the Government to reduce the rent by 1% and he could therefore not support this budget.
- 64.23 Councillor Eburne said that cross party support would have been preferable for the HRA budget and could have been achieved if the opposition had been contacted in October to work on the budget. She thought that the Council must focus on social rent, as affordable rent was too high. As a result of furloughed workers and people losing their jobs, (especially women) an increasing need to provide housing with social rent was on the rise. The retrofit programme needed to be stronger to reduce the cost of living in these houses, and she questioned whether new build was truly highly sustainable as stated.
- 64.24 Councillor Scarff referred to the right to buy scheme from which the Council only kept 30% of these sales and had to find the remainder 70% to purchase additional housing stock. He commented that the Covid-19 pandemic had delayed the Council's Housing Development Programme.

- 64.25 Councillor Mansel referred to Recommendation 3.4 asked for clarification of the of the increase in rent percentages, and whether it was £1.25 increase in service charges and £1 in rent per week for sheltered housing.
- 64.26 Councillor Matthissen implored the Council to deliver the maximum social housing.
- 64.27 Councillor Stringer thought that the Council needed quite a radical programme for retrofitting, so that social housing was affordable to live in and to move with the times.
- 64.28 Councillor Hadingham, who had reserved her right to speak, thanked Councillor Whitehead for the HRA Budget, which supported the Council tenant programme. The work of the Council enabled tenants to manage their lives to be successful and thrive. The Covid-19 Pandemic had impacted on the housing delivery services; however, officers had managed to continue to work in innovative ways to maintain and deliver the services to the community housing. New ways of working had been developed to make the service more efficient. Investment in existing homes and capital investment in new homes was included in the budget in the short term, whilst the HRA business plan would provide investments for medium and long term for housing.
- 64.29 Councillor Whitehead in response to comments made during the debate, clarified that Mid Suffolk District Council had 285 units across 14 sites and all units had a common charge of £30.85 per week. The increase of £1 per week for service charges was a of total 3.24%. He reminded Members that the budget had been to Cabinet on the 4 January and scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 14 February and on both those occasions he had hoped for cross-party support for the modest increases.
- 64.30 The Chair informed Members that on the advice of the Section 151 Officer the Recommendations would be voted on block.
- 64.31 Recommendations 3.1 to 3.7 were put to Members for voting.

By 17 votes for and 16 against, 1 abstention.

It was RESOLVED: -

1.1 That the HRA Budget proposals for 2021/22 and four-year outlook set out in the report be approved.

1.2 That the CPI + 1% increase of 1.5% in Council House rents, equivalent to an average rent increase of £1.25 a week be implemented.

1.3 That garage rents are kept at the same level as 2020/21.

1.4 That Sheltered Housing Service charges be increased by £1 per week to ensure recovery of the actual cost of service.

1.5 That Sheltered Housing utility charges are kept at the same level as 2020/21.

1.6 That the budgeted surplus of £102k be transferred to the Strategic Priorities reserve in 2021/22.

1.7 That in principle, Right to Buy (RTB) receipts should be retained to enable continued development and acquisition of new council dwellings.

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		
	Sarah Mansel	
	John Matthissen	
	Andrew Mellen	
Richard Meyer		
Suzie Morley		
David Muller		
	Mike Norris	
	Penny Otton	
Timothy Passmore		
	Stephen Phillips	
	Daniel Pratt	
Harry Richardson		
	Keith Scarff	
	Andrew Stringer	
	Wendy Turner	
	Rowland Warboys	
	Keith Welham	
John Whitehead		

TOTAL 17	TOTAL 16	TOTAL 1
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63 RECOMMENDATIONS AND REPORTS FROM CABINET / COMMITTEES

64 MC/20/26 JOINT CAPITAL, INVESTMENT AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES 2021/22

65.1 The Chair invited the Chair of the Joint Audit and Standards Committee, Councillor Muller to introduce Paper Mc/20/26 and to move the Recommendations in the report.

65.2 Councillor Muller provided Members with a summary of the report including the Appendices and **MOVED** Recommendations 3.1 to 3.7 in the report.

65.3 Councillor Caston **SECONDED** the Recommendations.

65.4 Councillor Eburne referred to the appendices and the Environment and Social Government report for Gateway 14 (ESG) (page 152). There seemed to be a reticence on behalf of the Council to implement the report. She asked why there was such a reticence and for the time frame for when the Council would be implementing the ESG on its investments.

65.5 The Assistant Director – Corporate Resources responded there was not reticence but that the Council would have to move funds to be able to implement the ESG and that Council was not in a position currently to do that. This had been discussed at the last Joint Audit and Standards Committee (JASC) meeting and the Committee had requested for a report for ESG to be presented at the May JASC meeting.

65.6 In response to Councillor Eburne’s question concerning the implementation date for ESG, the Assistant Director responded that this would be a Cabinet decision, as this was a policy to be implemented and it would not be possible to provide a timescale until the report had been written and discussed.

65.7 Members move to debate and Councillor Matthiessen commented that the problem was that the Treasury Management Policy did not support the climate change policy. The County wide pension scheme had moved forward and had saved a great deal of pension fund staff money and he wished the Council would follow suit soon.

65.8 Recommendations 3.1 to 3.7 were put to Members for voting.

By 17 votes for and 17 votes against

The Chair used his casting vote, and the vote was **CARRIED**

It was RESOLVED:-

That the following be approved:

- 1.1 The Joint Capital Strategy for 2021/22, including the Prudential Indicators, as set out in Appendix A.
- 1.2 The Joint Investment Strategy for 2021/22, as set out in Appendix B.
- 1.3 The Joint Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/22, including the Joint Annual Investment Strategy as set out in Appendix C.
- 1.4 The Joint Treasury Management Indicators as set out in Appendix D.
- 1.5 The Joint Treasury Management Policy Statement as set out in Appendix G.
- 1.6 The Joint Minimum Revenue Provision Statement as set out in Appendix H.
- 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.

65 COUNCILLOR APPOINTMENTS

The were no updates to Councillor appointments

66 MOTIONS ON NOTICE

There were no Motions on Notice.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 9:44pm

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Chair