

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, 23 September 2021

PRESENT:

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

Councillors: Oliver Amorowson Gerard Brewster
David Burn 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 (Councillor) Mike Norris
Dr Daniel Pratt Harry Richardson
Andrew Stringer Rowland Warboys
Keith Welham John Whitehead

In attendance:

Officers: Chief Executive (AC)
Monitoring Officer (EY)
Strategic Director (KN)
Section 151 Officer (KS)
Assistant Director – Assets and Investments (EA)
Corporate Manager – Finance Operations (RH)
Corporate Manager – Communities (VM)
Corporate Manager – Strategic Planning (RH)
Corporate Manager – Governance and Civic Office (JR)
Neighbourhood Planning Officer (PB)
Licensing Officer (KG)

Apologies:

Councillors: Terence Carter
Penny Otton
Timothy Passmore
Stephen Phillips
Keith Scarff
Wendy Turner

17 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

There were no declarations of interests.

18 MC/21/7 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 MAY 2021

It was RESOLVED:-

That the Minutes of the Annual meeting held on 24 May 2021 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

19 MC/21/8 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

19.1 The Chairman thanked everyone that had supported his BBQ event at Cedars Park and informed Council that over £550 had been raised for the Chairman's charity.

20 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

20.1 The Leader informed Council that she was not giving an update because of the length of the agenda and that all information had already been circulated.

20.2 Councillor Eburne asked for an update on the Afghan refugee situation and what support was being put in place for them.

20.3 In response Councillor Morley informed Council that plans were underway, and Councillors would be kept updated as more information became available from the Home Office.

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

21.1 There were no petitions received.

22 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

Question 1 Councillor Penny Otton to Councillor Suzie Morley, Leader of the Council

The menopause is a natural stage of life but can lead to long term changes in physical and emotional health for women, including transgender. It is rarely discussed. What support does the council and its partners have in place to help and advice?

Response

There is guidance on Connect which details how we can support women through this stage in their lives. The guidance also offers tips and support from our people. The Employee Assist Programme which all staff and councillors can access has a section in the app that can also provide guidance and support.

As with all of our guidance, we do review and whilst this is comprehensive, it is one that we will look at as part of our policy and guidance review.

Question 2 Councillor Mellen to Councillor Morley, Leader of the Council

This Council declared a climate emergency in July 2019 and is making progress towards the goal of being a carbon neutral local authority by 2030. However, this will be futile if we do not also see a reduction in carbon emissions from all sources in the District. Given the recent “code red” warning from the IPCC and the urgency of this task, what measures is the administration taking to encourage everyone in Mid Suffolk – residents, homeowners, landowners, businesses and all other organisations - to reduce their own carbon emissions with the aim of achieving net zero by 2030?

Response

You are right to say that we are making progress. We have just switched our waste fleet to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil, immediately reducing its carbon emissions by 90% - the first rural Council to do so.

We are installing a solar carport at our Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre in Stowmarket, enabling electric car users to charge their vehicles but also to capture clean energy for use within the leisure centre.

We will soon see the results of the extensive mapping exercise undertaken with the Suffolk Wildlife Trust to understand our habitats and enabling us to protect and enhance wildlife corridors in our District.

We are offering free trees and hedgerows to towns and parishes and have seen a fantastic take up off this offer, again increasing the infrastructure for our biodiversity.

We are a community leader in this space. We must encourage and influence our communities by setting an example. But our biggest message is simply making a conscious change. As small as it may seem – not wasting water, not wasting food, stop using plastics, avoid the car where possible, switch to a green energy tariff.

But to highlight just two areas where we are specifically encouraging change.

Firstly, our Local Energy Showcase. Businesses and community organisations are being urged to tackle climate change by joining Babergh and Mid Suffolk’s first ever showcase event celebrating sustainability and green energy.

The Local Energy Showcase, organised by Mid Suffolk District Council, along with Babergh Council, will promote how different types of energy can be used by communities and businesses help reduce their impact on the environment, lower costs and contribute to the fight against climate change.

Tickets, which are free, are now available for the two-day extravaganza, at Wherstead Park in Ipswich on 21 and 22 October. The event is open to all businesses with an interest in finding out more about local energy solutions and as well as community groups and parishes who would like to understand and explore the benefits of using local energy solutions.

The Local Energy Showcase, marks the Councils' recognition of a climate emergency and their commitment to the Suffolk-wide aim to become carbon neutral by 2030, aims to inform and update visitors on the latest in green energy. Featuring keynote speeches from specialists in the field, workshops, as well as the chance to participate in a Q&A session with a panel of experts on a range of topics.

The event will also feature a marketplace for green energy businesses and organisations to showcase their products and services, demonstrate how local energy solutions can be installed and used, and how switching energy supplies can lower greenhouse emissions and reduce energy costs.

Delegates will have the opportunity to network with and learn from leaders in the fields of carbon reduction, heat networks and solar energy.

Practical workshops will include understanding the concepts of becoming net zero, how to access green grants and funding, and how to reduce energy consumption.

I would encourage everyone to attend this exciting and informative event.

Secondly, I would like to highlight our Food Savvy campaign. This campaign led by the Suffolk Waste Partnership, helps the people of Suffolk reduce their food waste and save money at the same time.

52,000 tonnes of food get thrown away in Suffolk every year. About a third of our black bin rubbish is wasted food.

The food savvy project teaches people about planning a food shop, store food, portion control, freezing, sharing and composting.

We know for certain that each of us changing our behaviours and making environmentally friendly choices will make the biggest difference to achieving our aspiration of carbon neutrality.

Supplementary Question

We are going to have to start asking our residents to start making difficult choices in the years ahead about how live, how they travel, what they eat, and how they heat their homes. Is this administration ready to provide the leadership on this issue that Mid Suffolk needs?

Response Cllr Morley

Yes, we are.

Question 3 Councillor Stringer to Councillor Burn, Cabinet Member for Planning

Would the Portfolio Holder agree that we need to give back to local communities, a strong voice in local housing and planning policy, both to ensure development is appropriate to local need and to engage communities in shaping sustainable development.

Response

Thank you, Councillor Stringer. As you know from our conversations not just as part of the Member Working Group for the Joint Local Plan, but also from the detailed conversations we had as part of framing our Council's response to the Planning White Paper, we share a desire to see our communities having a stronger voice in the Planning process. Indeed, I have been developing a motion to present to Council that would emphasise this very point. That draft motion currently states,

"This Council applauds the Government's desire to improve and simplify the planning system, encourage greater community involvement in the plan making process and provide increased importance for neighbourhood plans. To achieve this, this council believes planning works best when developers and the local community work positively together, and do so early in the process, to shape local areas and deliver necessary new homes and related infrastructure. It therefore supports the right of communities to engage fully in the whole planning process by the full use of digital technology, participation in local and neighbourhood plans and maintaining the right to object to individual planning applications, whether they conform with the local plan or not."

Following the recent changes to Cabinet roles within government, and the subsequent news that Michael Gove is going to pause the proposed planning reform, I will be writing to him to make similar points and to emphasise the importance of community participation in the planning process.

Supplementary Question

The planning regime has been simplified over the last decade leaving communities feeling that they have less power over the system than they had a decade ago. Would the portfolio holder agree that is this government best placed to give us back this power?

Response Cllr Burn

I am not necessarily going to agree to answer that question as you put it, but I do accept what you are saying about the simplification of the planning system

has eroded the contribution that communities can provide. It may be that as a result of looking at that motion again and looking at the development as I have seen it happen over the last few weeks on the approach to the planning reforms. I may well not include the word simplify in the letter to Michael Gove. That letter has not yet been written but it will be drafted along similar lines to the one I just read out to you as a motion. The simplification element of it, I think you are probably right, does not necessarily fit to the ideal of increasing community involvement. So, I will make sure that is the principal message and nothing much more.

Question 4 Councillor Eburne to the Councillor Fleming, Cabinet Member for Environment.

Following the Local Government Association (LGA) General Assembly meeting in July please can you report to Council what initiatives were made to support local government involvement at this year's UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, COP26, and advise Council of the task force work towards net zero. In view of this, what will Mid Suffolk be doing to support the COP26 work?

Response

Thank you for your question, Cllr Eburne. As you point out, COP26 was high on the agenda of the recent (July) LGA General Assembly meeting where the important role local councils can play in achieving climate change goals nationally was recognised. Quote: *Councils have a significant role to play in tackling the climate emergency. They are well-placed to translate national climate ambitions into transformative action through their roles in: Place Shaping, Purchasing, Direct Delivery, managing their Assets (including social housing), and as Communicators.*

I am proud to say that this Council is being recognised as a leader in environmental initiatives and is ahead of most councils in England in this regard. Cllr Morley has mentioned the HVO and Leisure Centre projects which tackle our two highest CO2 emission sources over which the Council has influence, and other actions are in process. But I would like to make brief reference to some specific topics which the LGA has singled out in support of the COP26 objectives.

Place Shaping – Here the council as the local planning authority has perhaps the most potential to make positive changes. Given the expectations in the new NPPF that [good design](#) is 'fundamental to what [planning](#) and [development](#) should achieve', I understand that our own Planning team is fully on board with current expectations for positive change and will consider how best to put into practice the messages in the NPPF and more widely through consideration of a Local Design Code, through neighbourhood planning, work with communities. These latter actions are already being put into place as part of the Carbon Reduction Management Plan (refer to S8, Business and Communities).

Purchasing - One of the actions in our Climate Change Action Plan is to review procurement arrangements and to adopt a whole life costing approach for projects (refer to S9.3, Culture Change and Governance). We understand that there is a lot more work to be done on this area as we address the more challenging aspects of carbon management within the supply chain.

Direct Delivery - By this the LGA implies support for new technologies and putting actions in place 'on the ground' so to speak. Here the District is leading in innovations such as its HVO programme, its solar car ports, and hedge and tree planting programme. On a grander scale, I hope that Gateway 14 and the anticipated Free Port status will enable this District to really show its capacity to lead on an important national scale exemplar commercial project.

Managing Assets – We are in the process of assessing and investing in improving Council assets and assisted housing, providing grants for improvements to those needing them most (refer to S6 Council & Commercial Estate).

Communication – Here the District is also actively involved with communities and its own staff, increasing environmental awareness and training. Our 2-day Energy Showcase taking place later in October is a case in point.

Given time constraints I will stop there, but there are many areas where this Council is leading and its actions reassuringly consistent with the priorities advocated by the LGA leading up to COP26.

Regarding the Task Force for Net Zero – A Climate Change Task Group has been set up to provide strategic oversight of the LGA's political engagement in the lead up to the November summit.

- **There is a dedicated local government day on 11 November**
- **LGA is asking for a dedicated chapter for subnational governments in the official agreement reached at COP26**
- **LGA is asking for a commitment be made by Government to empower local government to work within the updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).**

The LGA will have an exhibition stand at [COP26](#), for one day – the Cities, Regions and Built Environment Day – on 11 November 2021. Open to all councils in the UK, Councils are invited to participate by sending a digital photograph of innovative local climate activity.

Supplementary Question

I specifically would like to know if at that meeting it was discussed that the Glasgow food and climate declaration and the UK 100 that is about energy, that we have just heard about, will Mid Suffolk be signing up to those protocols?

Response

I will have to get back to you concerning those two protocols, but I can say that Mid Suffolk is participating in the local government open day on the 11th November. We are going to be putting forward some photographs and a description of our HVO project at a COP26 exhibition.

Question 5 Councillor Field to Councillor Hadingham, Cabinet Member for Housing

Many of the population after a visit to hospital for treatment after an event require adaptations to their accommodation. The process usually commences with reference to an Occupational Therapist who determines what adaptation is appropriate then work is undertaken by our staff. Could you tell us how long it is currently taking from initial OT referral for adaptations to be implemented on average and as a maximum.

Response

Members will be aware that at the turn of the year Suffolk Authorities introduced an Independent Living Service which now provides a Disabled Facilities Grants service to residents. At present internally Babergh and Mid Suffolk are unable to report the length of time individual elements of the DFG process takes from end to end. Work is underway to introduce Key Performance Indicators that will be recorded by the systems we use. During the first nine months of this year officers have been prioritising the transfer of data from existing Orbit systems to our own. Alongside catching up on the historic OT backlog.

We can confidently advise Members this evening that the process of administering Minor Adaptations and Grants are currently completed in a matter of a few weeks. Historically for several years' Members will be conscious that a significant proportion of DFG budgets were unspent year on year. However, the outturn for 20/21 demonstrates the budget was fully committed which is ensuring the volume of works and performance of the service has improved rapidly and significantly during the past 12 months. Of course, Disabled Facilities Grants will vary in complexity and scale, so can take up to 6 months or longer.

Your question Councillor Field, refers specifically to hospital discharge, in addition to the Independent Living Service there are services within Suffolk namely Stepping Home which supports the process of hospital discharge and is aimed at reducing housing related hospital admission, and delayed discharge. The project has units of accommodation to temporarily house patients who are at imminent risk of hospital admission due to their housing or are unable to be discharged for housing reasons.

The performance of our Independent Living Service is being monitored by Suffolk Housing Board at a Countywide level whilst we expect to bring updates on performance to the Overview and Scrutiny committee in due

course.

23 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

23.1 There were no questions received.

24 MC/21/9 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT

24.1 Councillor Welham introduced his report which covered the last three meetings of the Committee. Details of the reviews were detailed in the report and Councillor Welham invited questions from Councillors.

24.2 Councillor Eburne asked if the review of Cabinet arrangements as detailed in the work plan would include the proposal from Babergh DC to review the governance arrangements of the Council. In response Councillor Welham informed Council that this matter would be discussed at the Chair's briefing tomorrow.

24.3 Councillor Eburne also asked if a review of GP and dentist provision in Mid Suffolk could also be added to the work plan.

24.4 In response Councillor Welham informed Council that this suggestion would be taken to the Committee for discussion.

24.5 The report was noted by Council.

25 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET / COMMITTEES

25a MC/21/10 ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT – 2020/21

25a.1 Councillor Muller introduced the report and informed Councillors that the Treasury Management 2020/21 outturn report was discussed at Joint Audit and Standards Committee on 26 July 2021.

25a.2 The report provided details of investment performance, effects of decisions taken during the period and confirmed compliance with the Council's Treasury Management Policy.

25a.3 The COVID pandemic and the impacts of a global lockdown dominated 2020/21. The start of the financial year saw many central banks cutting interest rates as lockdowns caused economic activity to grind to a halt. The UK Government provided a range of fiscal stimulus measures, the size of which had not been seen in peacetime.

25a.4 The vaccine approval and subsequent rollout programme were both positives, but there remained much uncertainty in and around the level of losses that banks and building societies would suffer due to the economic slowdown.

25a.5 The Bank of England held the Bank Rate at 0.1% throughout the year but extended its Quantitative Easing programme by £150 billion to £895 billion in November 2020.

25a.6 The UK unemployment rate was 5.0% in the three months to January 2021. Unemployment is expected to increase as the various Government job support schemes come to an end.

25a.7 Inflation has remained low over the 12-month period. Latest figures showed the annual headline rate of UK Consumer Price Inflation (CPI) fell to 0.4% year on year in February, below expectations (0.8%) and still well below the Bank of England's 2% target.

25a.8 Councillor Muller then informed Council that specifically for Mid Suffolk, the Council was able to take advantage of holding additional cash from government grants received relating to Covid 19 until they were paid out to support local businesses. This has increased treasury management investment activity during the year.

25a.9 The Council operated within the daily bank account limits.

25a.10 Mid Suffolk's short- term debt increased by £19.6m, offset by the repayment of £12.4m medium/long term borrowing to take advantage of lower rates after the PWLB rates were increased. The increase in debt was mainly due to the £19.3m of approved investments in the non-treasury investments of CIFCO Ltd and £600k to the Gateway 14 Ltd.

25a.11 All investment activities undertaken were in accordance with the approved Counter Party list.

25a.12 Investment in funding circle has reduced by 53k as unallocated funds had been reclaimed and existing loans repaid leaving the balance as at 31st March 2021 as £162K.

25a.13 The Council was compliant with the upper limits for interest rate exposure. The investment activity undertaken throughout the year was done so in priority order of security and liquidity over yield as prescribed in the Treasury Management Strategy.

25a.14 Finally, Councillor Muller drew attention to two figures in Appendix C paragraph 1.14 Table 24 in the Mid Suffolk table and informed Council that the figures should read CCL £5m and Investec £2m he confirmed that no change had been made to the investment in these funds.

25a.15 Councillor Muller then **MOVED** the recommendations in the report which Councillor Caston **SECONDED**.

25a.16 Councillor Matthissen drew Council's attention to the risk table in 8.2 of the report and said that the second risk of achieving a poorer return of investment rated as probable and asked should the Council increase their security around their

investments by divesting off their assets in fossil fuel as it risked poorer returns and capital losses if the investments became stranded assets.

25a.17 In response, the Section 151 Officer said that this had been the subject of a long debate at Joint Audit and Standards Committee and they had looked at the investment in fossil fuels in the ESG policy and ways of doing better in that regard.

25a.18 In terms of potential divestment, the current values were below what the Council originally invested so if they were divested, they could make a potential loss. Currently her advice as the Section 151 Officer was to wait for the values to come up and then consider how we can reinvest. There was also the point to consider that the Council may make a loss in order to potentially make a different investment.

25a.19 Councillor Amorowson questioned whether JASC had already made a recommendation and said that the quandary was that the Council would lose funds whenever it divested and asked what the predicted timescale was?

25a.20 In response, the Section 151 Officer said that as she recalled the recommendation from JASC to Cabinet was to go back to the fund managers to ask them to examine the potential for divestment the timescales for this had not been set.

25a.21 Councillor Field queried why the CCL investment had only dropped a small amount where others had seen a much more substantial drop and asked if any action was being taken?

25a.22 In response, the Section 151 Officer said that the markets were dependent on economic conditions and different funds had different valuations at different points. The funds that had fared worst were the ones that had equity investment. But these fluctuated and the figures were a reflection of the market at that point in time. The Section 151 Officer said that these were monitored and there was no action being taken at this time.

25a.23 Councillor Welham drew Council's attention to page 41 of the report and said that the total amount of borrowing was £142m which was approximately £2k of borrowing for each adult member of Mid Suffolk District Council.

25a.24 In response, the Section 151 Officer said that a large proportion of the figure related to the Housing Stock. In 2012 the Council had taken on approx. £80m of debt to take all the rental income from the housing stock from the government. The rest of the borrowing was related to CIFCo which will be discussed later in the agenda.

It was RESOLVED: -

1.1 That the Treasury Management activity for the year 2020/21 be noted. Further, that it be noted that performance was in line with the Prudential Indicators set for 2020/21.

1.2 That it be noted that both Councils treasury management activity for 2020/21 was in accordance with the approved Treasury Management Strategy, and that the Councils have complied with all the Treasury Management Indicators for this period.

25b MC/21/11 GAMBLING ACT 2005 'NO CASINO' RESOLUTION

25b.1 Councillor Guthrie introduced the report and informed Council that in 2018, a Councillor requested that full Council consider a “No Casino” resolution”.

25b.2 Full Council requested that Licensing and Regulatory Committee provide a full evidence base for full Council to be able to make a full deliberation on.

25b.3 Licensing and Regulatory Committee met on 16th August 2021 and recommended that full Council determine whether to adopt a “No Casino” resolution” based on the evidence that was captured in the report.

25b.4 Councillor Guthrie said that if the Council resolved not to adopt a “No Casino” resolution” this matter would not be debated again unless the allocation of casinos under the Gambling Act was increased by the Secretary of State.

25b.5 The key evidence within the report in as far as the full allocation of casinos for the country was that the allocation had already been fully utilised under the Act, of 8 small casino’s 8 large Casino’s and 1 regional Casino.

25b.6 No provision was available for a licence to be granted anywhere in England. Furthermore, as the full allocation under the Act had been granted it would need a suitable economic climate and the political will of the Government for the Secretary of State to lay legislation for a further allocation of casinos. A further allocation was highly unlikely to happen in the foreseeable future as the current Government was tightening restrictions to gambling.

25b.7 The original concern regarding casinos stemmed from a planning application for Snoasis which included plans to have a casino on site. This application has now been withdrawn and the new proposed development in this area, Valley Ridge has removed all references to the provision of a casino.

25b.8 Councillor Guthrie added that Mid Suffolk District Council had not received any applications for a casino from when the Gambling Act 2005 had come into force until present day. Research had also shown that none of the surrounding district and borough councils that border with Mid Suffolk have adopted a “No Casino Resolution.

25b.9 Councillor Guthrie informed Council that Mid Suffolk only had two betting shops and all other gambling activities were either EWP machines in amusements with prizes in licensed premises or other small lottery registrations.

25b.10 Councillor Guthrie then **MOVED** the recommendations in the report which Councillor Muller **SECONDED**.

25b.11 Councillor Mansel sought clarification on the recommendations in the report.

25b.12 Councillor Eburne asked whether the Licensing and Regulatory Committee had a view on this, what the benefits were of a “No Casino” approach and whether there were any applications in the pipeline?

25b.13 In response, Councillor Guthrie said that the “No Casino” resolution was a full Council decision, and as there were no allocation left for casinos there was little benefit to the Council. She was not aware of any applications in the pipeline.

25b.14 Councillor Stringer sought clarification on the risk management element in the report.

25b.15 Councillor Amorowson felt that despite there being conflicting evidence regarding casinos in the report, it had been proven that gambling places a greater burden on social services and felt that the Council should adopt a “No Casino” resolution.

25b.16 In response, Councillor Guthrie said that it was very unlikely that there would be any further licences issued and if the Council were to pass a “No Casino” resolution it would be an unnecessary cost to the Council. If the Council were ever to decide to increase the number of licences it could be brought back to the Council at that appropriate point.

25b.17 Councillor Humphreys stated that there were four hundred and thirty thousand people in poor debt and the detrimental effect this was having to their health and wellbeing. He was totally against gambling and felt that the Council should act and do whatever it could to protect its residents from the dangers of gambling.

25b.18 Councillor Eburne endorsed what Councillor Humphreys had said, that the Council should be sending out a strong message and that she supported the “No Casino” resolution.

25b.19 Councillor Whitehead said that he was more concerned about people buying lottery tickets and scratch cards and felt that by bringing in a “No casino” resolution could be the start of a slippery slope to restricting freedom of choice.

25b.20 Councillor Fleming said that if the Council adopted a “No Casino” resolution it would not provide any more protection from gambling in the district and instead would incur additional costs and the need to bring the resolution back to Council every three years for them to ratify.

25b.21 Councillor Morley said that she found gambling abhorrent, however there was no mechanism for a casino in this district, the original request was brought about by the Snoasis development which was not now going forward. There was therefore no need for this resolution. By having a resolution, it would mean that it would need to come back to Council every three years at a cost to the Council and

would not achieve anything.

25b.22 Councillor Stringer cautioned against saying never and said that although the threat was not imminent it could happen and although there was a cost to the Council it was an investment to stop developers going down this route and he would be supporting the “No Casino” resolution.

25b.23 Councillor Richardson agreed with Councillor Morley that gambling was abhorrent but said that if the Council did not agree to a “No Casino” resolution it would not need to be debated again unless the Secretary of State increased the number of licences. He felt that a “No Casino” resolution would have no meaningful impact in deterring gambling.

25b.24 Councillor Caston said that he did not believe in a blanket decision for the whole of the district and would want to see the detail behind any application coming forward.

25b.25 Councillor Stringer sought a point of clarification on how soon the recommendation could return to Council.

25b.26 In response, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that the six- month rule would apply however there was provision in the Constitution if a third or more of the Council wanted to bring the decision back before then.

25b.27 Councillor Welham said that casinos were glitzy places that made gambling look fun and therefore the Council should make a stand by having a “No Casino” resolution.

25b.28 Councillor Warboys gave examples of the devastating effects of gambling and that although the government were strictly limiting licences at this point in time, he felt that it was important that the Council sent out a strong message.

It was RESOLVED: -

That a ‘No Casino’ Resolution be adopted.

**26 MC/21/12 CAPITAL INVESTMENT FUND COMPANY (CIFCO CAPITAL LTD)
BUSINESS TRADING AND PERFORMANCE REPORT 2020/21 - PART 1**

26.1 The Chair welcomed Sir Christopher Howarth - Chairman of CIFCO Capital Limited, Henry Cooke – Director of CIFCO Capital Limited, Nigel Golder – Director of Asset Management at JLL, and Helen Rumsey of Ensor’s to the meeting.

26.2 Councillor Gould introduced the report which detailed CIFCO Capital’s performance for the last 12 months and the proposed business plan for the next 12 months.

26.3 Councillor Gould informed Members that since its inception in 2017, CIFCO had provided the Councils with close to £5.5m of net income and had delivered approximately £2.2m to the Councils in the last financial year. This was testament to

the strong management of the CIFCO portfolio.

26.4 The Business Plan takes a prudent approach to CIFCO's financial management over the next few years ensuring the portfolio provides income to the Councils, and a creates a long-term legacy for the Districts to benefit from in the future.

26.5 Councillor Gould provided Members with details of some of the key points in relation to CIFCO's performance.

26.6 Councillor Gould then **MOVED** the recommendations in the report.

26.7 Councillor Ekpenyong **SECONDED** the recommendations.

26.8 The Assistant Director for Assets and Investments responded to questions from Councillor Mellen on issues including the current value of the equity invested in CIFCO, the timescales for publishing the financial accounts, and the capital expenditure which has been made to improve the estate.

26.9 Councillor Mellen then asked how the Council would continue to fund its investment at the current rate over the coming years in the current inflation environment which could lead to higher interest rates.

26.10 The Assistant Director for Corporate Resources responded that advice was taken from treasury management advisors regarding the type of borrowing, and that the Council is currently benefitting from lower rates as a result of short-term borrowing.

26.11 In response to questions from Councillor Welham, the Assistant Director for Assets and Investments advised that the equity value could not reduce to lower than zero, and that no further funds would be required to be invested as equity. The Assistant Director confirmed that the low equity value would not affect how decisions are made.

26.12 Councillor Mansel asked for clarification regarding the categories referred to in paragraph 4.11 of the report. In response, Nigel Golder confirmed that the leisure sector was included under the section of the chart titled alternatives. The Assistant Director for Assets and Investments advised that this could be amended for future reports.

26.13 The Assistant Director for Corporate Resources responded to a question from Councillor Field regarding the percentage return figures and confirmed that these were comparable to the figures previously seen from CCLA and Schroder.

26.14 Councillor Field then queried whether it was a valid assumption that values would recover, particularly in light of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Assistant Director for Assets and Investments advised that it was expected that the value of the portfolio would increase. Nigel Golder commented on the robustness of the current investments, and the changes in the market following the pandemic.

26.15 Following a question from Councillor Amorowson, the Assistant Director for Assets and Investments confirmed that she would be happy to liaise with colleagues within the Council regarding sustainable investments and divesting away from fossil fuels.

26.16 The Assistant Director for Assets and Investments responded to questions from Councillor Eburne regarding the expectations of future sales of existing properties, the purchases of new properties, and the timeframes for these, and whether there were any costs included in the budget for Energy Performance Certificate works.

26.17 Councillor Norris queried the difference in the interest paid figures for Babergh District Council and Mid Suffolk District Council as detailed under Financial Performance and Acquisition Progress in the report.

26.18 The Assistant Director for Corporate Resources explained that this was as a result of the difference in borrowing strategies of the two Councils.

26.19 In response to questions from Councillor Warboys, the Assistant Director for Assets and Investments provided clarification of the losses and how this was calculated.

26.20 Councillor Warboys then queried the risk management process undertaken. The Assistant Director confirmed that a comprehensive risk register was in place and advised that details of this could be shared with Members in future reports.

26.21 Councillor Meyer questioned CIFCO's performance when measured against industry standards. The Assistant Director for Assets and Investments commented that CIFCO had performed better than the industry standard in terms of rent collection.

26.22 The Assistant Director then responded to a question from Councillor Meyer regarding the impact on revenue in the short term once capital values improve.

26.23 A break was taken from 7:55pm to 8:09pm.

26.24 Members debated the report on issues including: whether there would be any benefit in selling the assets and spending the money on housing, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the level of risk compared to the size of the Council, the principles of borrowing money to invest, and the importance of the success of CIFCO to the residents of the District.

26.25 As the meeting was fast approaching the guillotine, the Chairman called for a motion to extend the meeting.

26.26 On the proposal of Cllr Richardson and seconded by Cllr Hadingham.

It was RESOLVED:-

To extend the guillotine to 10.00pm to enable the remaining business on the Council agenda to be conducted.

26.27 Members continued to debate the report on issues including: the potential to reinvest funds from the sale of properties into building homes within the District, and the ability to make investments which are sustainable.

26.28 By 17 votes for and 11 votes against

It was RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the CIFCO Capital Ltd trading activity and performance for the year to 31st March 2021 be noted.**
- (2) That the CIFCO Capital Ltd.'s 2021/22 business plan for adoption by CIFCO Capital Limited be approved.**

27 MC/21/13 JOINT WELLBEING STRATEGY

27.1 Councillor Richardson introduced the report and said he was delighted to introduce to the Council Mid Suffolk's first Wellbeing Strategy.

27.2 By way of background, Councillor Richardson said that Members would be aware that this Strategy was conceived before the pandemic and had been in development for well over a year.

27.3 An all member workshop was held in August last year to discuss our priorities followed by an additional workshop in May to consider how the £1 Million wellbeing funding could help to deliver them.

27.4 Councillor Richardson stated that this strategy sets out the Council's priorities and objectives for wellbeing over the next 6 years. If approved it would be followed by a more detailed delivery plan that sets out how the Council would achieve those priorities and objectives and, as mentioned, would be supported by the £1 Million wellbeing funding that the Council agreed back in February. This was important as understanding the Council's wellbeing priorities would enable the Council to make the most effective use of resources.

27.5 Councillor Richardson said that simply put, the Council's wellbeing vision was that the residents of Mid Suffolk will have the best possible conditions for good wellbeing and will have lives that are healthy, happy and rewarding. It was recognised of course that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on communities, and the Council wants to be explicitly clear that this strategy will play a central role in helping support our residents through the aftermath of this immensely challenging period.

27.6 To that end we have identified three overarching long-term outcomes which are: for families to lead active, healthy, safe and independent lives and manage their own health and wellbeing. For communities to have sustainable and inclusive places

and spaces which maximise health and wellbeing opportunities and benefits. And to achieve a reduction in health inequalities.

27.7 Councillor Richardson informed Council that the strategy spanned the period to 2027 with long term outcomes that were supported by a set of shorter-term outcomes that would focus on the next two years and which would be accompanied by more detailed objectives which were set out in the strategy and in turn would be delivered in partnership with both internal and external stakeholders.

27.8 Councillor Richardson pointed out that it was well recognised that the broader determinants of wellbeing were particularly important in ensuring a healthy and happy population and these were also the types of wellbeing issues over which councils have some control and influence, for example: through stimulating our local economy, managing our environment, developing and managing our homes, or by providing leisure facilities to our residents.

27.9 This strategy, therefore, did not aim to duplicate the wellbeing aspects contained already within the economy, housing, environment and communities' strategies. However, these other strategies would be reviewed to ensure that wellbeing outcomes were being optimised and performance in relation to those aspects would be included when reporting on performance in respect to wellbeing.

27.10 Councillor Richardson said that in particular the strategy cited the 10 measures of national wellbeing developed by the Office of National Statistics which organises nationally surveyed and gathered data into different areas of life effecting wellbeing. The Council has chosen to adopt these 10 areas with a focus on personal wellbeing, relationships, health, the communities where we live, and what we do with our time. The remaining 5 will then be incorporated into the other strategies that Councillor Richardson had already mentioned and supporting this was extensive data contained at the end of the Strategy which helped to underpin the areas of focus.

27.11 Whilst developing the Strategy, however, the Council has not stood still and have delivered a number of projects and supported many of our communities. These included the active schools and the active wellbeing programmes, Chill, Chat and Play, and the outdoor explore and family cooking days, all of which have already had a profoundly positive impact for residents.

27.12 In developing this strategy, the Council had also engaged broadly with our two clinical commissioning groups Suffolk County Council, and key community stakeholders. Councillor Richardson emphasised the importance of this as it was crucial to identify clearly the role of a district council and not duplicate the work of other statutory functions such as public health.

27.13 Instead, the Council has had an opportunity to look at health and wellbeing in a much broader sense and to enhance the role it plays in supporting residents and our communities.

27.14 Councillor Richardson was exceptionally proud of both this Strategy and the broader purpose behind it. He thanked the officers involved in producing the document in the shadow of the worst global health crisis in a century and felt this was nothing short of heroic. He also recognised the work contributed by Councillor Flatman as Cabinet Member for Communities who lead on this Strategy before his portfolio was created, and Councillor Morley who, as Leader, has been an enthusiastic supporter of the wellbeing agenda.

27.15 Finally, Councillor Richardson commended the Strategy as the means of promoting the health and wellbeing of our residents and ensuring that the resources allocated and targeted intelligently to those that need them most.

27.16 He then **MOVED** the recommendations in the report which Councillor Flatman **SECONDED**.

27.17 Councillor Mansel welcomed the Strategy and referred to paragraph 4.11 long term outcomes and asked how it was planned to measure against those outcomes?

27.18 In response, Councillor Richardson informed Council that a dedicated delivery plan would be in place, provided the long-term outcomes were agreed. The measures in the delivery plan would provide the mechanism by which we can benchmark against the specific deliverables in place.

27.19 Councillor Mansel asked if there was a baseline of where the Council was currently, and had this been benchmarked?

27.20 In response, Councillor Richardson informed Council there had been extensive analysis of the data of our performance. The Strategy was the high-level policy and as the delivery plan was brought forward the data would be included in that.

27.21 Councillor Eburne asked if it would be possible to use the Strategy in regard to determining planning applications.

27.22 In response, Councillor Richardson said that it could not be referenced in a planning determination as it would not carry any weight. However, there had already been discussions about adding aspects of it into the Joint Local Plan and also in future a possible supplementary planning document that referred to this.

27.23 Councillor Geake asked if Councillor Richardson would consider lobbying the government to get them to reverse or mitigate the cut of £20 to universal credit.

27.24 In response, Councillor Richardson said that although his portfolio was still evolving, he did not consider this to be part of his remit.

27.25 Councillor Welham welcomed the Strategy and asked if local ward Councillors would be involved in delivering the plan in their wards, he also asked if the fact that Babergh had not got as much funding available to deliver the strategy whether this would affect the delivery of the Strategy in Mid Suffolk?

27.26 In response, Councillor Richardson stated that cross party workshops had already been held and any ideas and outcomes had been fed into the delivery plan. He was happy to arrange a further workshop and work with ward members in their wards where it was appropriate. With regards to the Babergh funding this would not impact on Mid Suffolk as Mid Suffolk would do whatever it needed to do as part of this agenda.

27.27 Councillor Amorowson asked if the Council recognised that GDP was not a good measure of wellbeing and also asked if anything was being done about the detrimental effects of social media particularly on young people and their mental health?

27.28 Councillor Richardson in response, stated that the local economy was an enormously significant part of the Strategy and was contained within it. Ten indicators had been pulled out and included and he had made this clear in his introduction. There was a distinction between the role that we can play as a district council and the implementation of the broader welfare state which was not in the remit. With regard to the digital problem there was a comprehensive plan for youth social prescribing where this type of mental health crisis would be picked up and digital awareness monitored.

27.29 Councillor Warboys asked if Councillor Richardson would be prepared to exceed the budget he had available to him to meet the ideals in the strategy?

27.30 In response Councillor Richardson said he probably would.

27.31 Councillor Geake questioned the short to medium term outcomes for people to have access to affordable homes that were well built, attractive and in tune with their surroundings and asked what was in the strategies that could deliver this?

27.32 In response, Councillor Richardson said that aspects of the Strategy will interlink with other strategies and could also be embedded into documents that we do have such as the Joint Local Plan and potentially a supplementary planning document in the future. The Strategy sets out what we want to achieve, and we will go away and try to deliver that.

27.33 Councillor Eburne supported the Strategy and said that the approach used to inform the process had been very good and she hoped that it would be used for other processes. Councillor Eburne said she was concerned that the THRIVE index had just been published and Mid Suffolk had dropped in the rankings. Councillor Eburne requested that officers look at what the top councils in the rankings are doing to see if there was anything that could be replicated in Mid Suffolk.

27.34 Councillor Burn referred to the comments that had been made regarding the links between planning and the strategy and quoted from an email that the Assistant Director for Planning had sent about the Council's approach to planning and the significant impact it had on wellbeing.

27.35 Councillor Geake requested that the government was lobbied to improve the factors that underpin wellbeing.

27.36 Councillor Warboys acknowledged the huge effort that had already been made by the Communities team and the work they were already carrying out in the committee and said that demand was growing, and he was concerned that the budget would not be sufficient.

27.37 Councillor Morley said she was immensely proud of the strategy and the work that had gone into producing it and said that partnership working would be the key to achieving this Strategy.

27.38 Councillor Welham made a plea to ensure that all councillors were kept involved in the delivery of the Strategy.

27.39 In his summing up, Councillor Richardson said that he taken on board the comments of councillors and hoped he would get unanimous support to adopt the strategy.

27.40 By unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

- (1) The Joint Wellbeing Strategy, attached as Appendix 1 of the report, be approved.**
- (2) That the Assistant Director for Communities and Wellbeing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing, be given delegated authority to make future minor amendments and updates to the Strategy in response to changing needs.**
- (3) After the Strategy has been approved, that the Assistant Director for Communities and Wellbeing in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing, be given delegated authority to develop and implement a Delivery Plan.**
- (4) That the Delivery Plan and subsequent implementation of the Strategy be supported by the £1m Wellbeing funding agreed by the Council on 18 February 2021.**

28 MC/21/14 PAY POLICY REPORT

28.1 The report was withdrawn by the Leader.

29 MC/21/15 REVISIONS TO INTERNAL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING PROCEDURES

29.1 Councillor Burn introduced the report and informed Council that it had come a long way since the first few parishes began the neighbourhood planning journey. The Council's internal decision-making procedures had served us well, and the Council had continued to find ways to improve on the way we interact with our NP Groups, including placing greater emphasis on the earlier informative stages. Most importantly of all, the Council continued to think about what we can do better.

29.2 Councillor Burn said that the report before Councillors today was self-explanatory. It looked at two key regulatory processes that fall to this Council:

- decision making on the recommendations set out in the independent examiners report, and the advancement of that Plan to referendum (Regulation 17A), *and*
- subject to a majority yes vote, the adoption of the Plan (Regulation 18A).

29.3 The report proposed changes to the agreed procedures which, with appropriate checks in place, should ensure that the Council can be 'better, smarter and swifter' in the way its guided neighbourhood plans through these stages.

29.4 In Mid Suffolk to date, 15 NPs have been through the examination process. Of those, 11 have now been adopted and 4 were in the final stages of being modified prior to being made ready to go to referendum.

29.5 In all cases, no objections were raised by either the District or Parish Council to implementing in full the examiners recommendations. That would suggest that earlier and on-going engagement with these groups was working.

29.6 Councillor Burn trusted that the Council would agree with him that the proposed changes to how the Council managed Regulation 17A and 18A stages were both sensible and practical.

29.7 In simple terms, this would remove the need for Cabinet to specifically approve the progression of a neighbourhood plan to referendum and would simplify the process by which the Council adopted a Neighbourhood Plan where it has received a majority yes vote.

29.8 Councillor Burn then **MOVED** the recommendations in the report which Councillor Guthrie **SECONDED**

29.9 Councillor Mansel asked if there were any plans to speed up the earlier engagement exercises between the Neighbourhood Plan Groups and the Council.

29.10 In response the Corporate Manager for Strategic Planning confirmed that in the past six months two new members of staff had been recruited and were being trained up on the neighbourhood plan process.

29.11 Councillor Welham queried under the new arrangements where the delegation was given to officers whether the officers had sufficient capacity to deal with their additional responsibilities

29.12 In response the Chief Executive confirmed that they would have sufficient capacity and said that the recommendations actually meant less work for officers not more.

29.13 By unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

- (1) That the procedure for automatically taking a post-examination Neighbourhood Plan to Cabinet seeking approval to proceed to Referendum be changed. The proposal would automatically allow a Plan to proceed to referendum where the parish and district council have agreed to implement any required modifications. Where there are other considerations, a report will still be presented to Cabinet. The revised procedures would allow prompt publication of a decision notice, reduced administrative work, and ensure closer compliance with the relevant regulations.**
- (2) That the procedure that requires taking a post-Referendum Neighbourhood Plan with a majority 'yes' vote to Council seeking formal adoption be changed. The new proposal, which would be to obtain Chief Executive approval endorsed by the Cabinet Members for Planning, would enable a Neighbourhood Plan agreed at Referendum to be formally adopted quickly, efficiently, and within the eight-week statutory time limit.**

30 COUNCILLOR APPOINTMENTS

30a TO NOTE THE FOLLOWING APPOINTMENTS

30a.1 The appointments detailed on the agenda were noted.

30b ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN OF DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE A

30b.1 On the proposal of Councillor Meyer and seconded by Councillor Flatman, a nomination for Councillor Humphreys to be appointed Vice-Chairman of Development Control Committee A was tabled.

30b.2 On the proposal of Councillor Matthissen and seconded by Councillor Eburne, a nomination for Councillor Mansel to be appointed Vice-Chairman of Development Control Committee A was tabled.

30b.3 The nominations were **PUT** to Council.

It was RESOLVED: -

That Councillor Barry Humphreys be appointed as Vice-Chair to Development Control Committee A.

31 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN OF DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE B

31.1 On the proposal of Councillor Meyer and seconded by Councillor Flatman, a nomination for Councillor Muller to be appointed as Vice-Chair for Development Control Committee B was tabled.

31.2 This was **PUT** to the Council.

It was RESOLVED: -

That Councillor Dave Muller be appointed as Vice-Chair to Development Control Committee B.

32 APPOINTMENT TO OUTSIDE BODY - SUFFOLK JOINT EMERGENCY PLANNING POLICY PANEL

32.1 On the proposal of Councillor Richardson and seconded by Councillor Flatman,

It was RESOLVED: -

That Councillor Suzie Morley be appointed as the Council's representative on the Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Policy Panel.

32.2 Councillor Eburne asked if Councillor Morley would report back from any meetings of the Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Policy Panel.

32.3 In response, Councillor Morley informed Council that the Panel had not yet met but she would report back once they had met.

33 MC/21/16 DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE UNDER DELEGATED POWERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 2 OF THE CONSTITUTION

It was RESOLVED: -

That the decisions taken under delegated powers by the Chief Executive as detailed in Appendix A of the report be noted.

34 MOTIONS ON NOTICE

34a TO CONSIDER THE MOTION ON NOTICE RECEIVED FROM COUNCILLOR PRATT

34a.1 The Motion on Notice was deferred to the next Council meeting as the meeting was adjourned at 9:54 pm.

34b TO CONSIDER THE MOTION ON NOTICE RECEIVED FROM COUNCILLOR MELLEN

34b.1 The Motion on Notice was deferred to the next Council meeting as the meeting was adjourned at 9:54pm.

35 RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC

35.1 As Members had completed their discussion of Paper MC/21/12 Capital Investment Fund Company (CIFCO Capital Ltd) Business Trading and Performance Report 2021/21, the Chair refrained from going into closed session.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 9.54pm

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Chair