

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **MID SUFFOLK CABINET** held in the King Edmund Chamber, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich on Monday, 4 July 2022

PRESENT:

Councillor: Harry Richardson (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Julie Flatman Peter Gould
Lavinia Hadingham Harry Richardson
John Whitehead Gerard Brewster

In attendance:

Councillors: John Field
Andrew Mellen

Officers: Chief Executive (AC)
Deputy Monitoring Officer (JR)
Director – Corporate Resources and Section 151 Officer (ME)
Director – Housing (GF)
Director - Customers, Digital Transformation and Improvements (SW)
Director – Assets and Investments (EA)
Director – Environment and Commercial Partnerships (CC)
Corporate Manager - Finance Operations (RH)
Corporate Manager - Economy and Business (MG)
Corporate Manager – Tenant Services (RL)
Choice Based Lettings Team Manager (KC)
Senior Empty Homes Officer (AT)
Senior Governance Support Officer (HH)

Apologies:

David Burn
Jessica Fleming
Suzie Morley (Chair)

13 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

There were no declarations declared by Councillors.

14 MCA/22/5 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 6 JUNE 2022

It was RESOLVED:

That the meeting held on the 6 June 2022 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

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

None received.

16 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS

None received.

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

There were no matters referred by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or the Joint Audit and Standards Committee.

18 FORTHCOMING DECISIONS LIST

There were no comments made for the Forthcoming Decisions List.

19 MCA/22/6 GENERAL FUND FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2021/22

19.1 The Chair, Councillor Richardson, invited the Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Whitehead, to introduce the report.

19.2 The Cabinet Member for Finance provided Members with an overview of the report and moved the recommendations as detailed in the report.

19.3 Councillor Gould seconded the recommendations and thanked the Cabinet Member for Finance and the Finance department for their hard work.

19.4 In response to questions from other Members attending the meeting, the Cabinet Member for Finance commented that he believed the budget setting process was correct, and that time and effort had been put into developing additional projects.

19.5 The Chief Executive agreed that services were continuing to be delivered as effectively and efficiently as possible.

19.6 The Cabinet Member for Finance responded to a further question from other Members attending the meeting and advised that there were no figures available for the spend from April to June 2022, however these would be available shortly.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

1.1 That the 2021/22 General Fund financial outturn of £1.208 m surplus as set out in this report be noted.

1.2 That the revenue carry-forward requests totalling £399k be noted.

1.3 That the following transfers be approved;

a) Surplus of £193k be transferred to the Growth and Efficiency Fund

b) £500k be transferred to a new Inflationary Pressure Reserve

c) £361k to be transferred to the Planning Legal Reserve.

d) £154k to be transferred to the Waste Reserve

1.4 That the total Capital carry-forward of £20.16m be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION

To ensure that Members are kept informed of the outturn position for both General Fund Revenue and Capital and to approve earmarked reserve transfers.

20 MCA/22/7 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) DRAFT FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2021/22

20.1 The Chair, Councillor Richardson, invited the Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Whitehead, to introduce the report.

20.2 The Cabinet Member for Finance outlined the key points of the report. He then thanked the Director for Housing, Gavin Fisk for his hard work whilst working for the Council and wished him well in his new role. The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Whitehead and seconded by Councillor Hadingham.

20.3 In response to a question from other Members attending the meeting the Cabinet Member for Finance, and the Director for Assets and Investments, provided clarification regarding the proposed carry forward request and commented that although the figure was high this reflects the significant acquisitions and new build projects currently being undertaken.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

1.4 That the 2021/22 HRA financial outturn as set out in this report be noted.

1.5 That the transfer of £113k, being the HRA revenue surplus for the year (£11k more than planned) as per paragraph 6.4, to the Strategic Priorities Reserves be approved.

1.6 That the HRA capital carry-forward requests referred to in paragraph 6.19 of this report totalling £24.631m be approved.

REASON FOR DECISION

To ensure that Members are kept informed of the outturn position for both Housing Revenue and Capital and to approve earmarked reserve transfers and carry forward requests.

21 MCA/22/8 THE APPROVAL OF THE HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN

- 21.1 The Chair, Councillor Richardson, invited the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Hadingham, to introduce the report.
- 21.2 The Cabinet Member for Housing provided Members with an outline of the final business plan and its key aims. Councillor Hadingham moved the recommendations, as detailed in the report and this was seconded by Councillor Flatman.
- 21.3 The Director for Housing responded to questions from other Members attending the meeting regarding future rent increases and advised that the percentage increases would follow guidelines set by central government. Final decisions would be made over the forthcoming months as part of the budget setting process. The Assistant Director then provided clarification with regard to the scenarios outlined in paragraph 6.3 of the report, confirming that seven scenarios had been scoped. However, these had been distilled down to the two scenarios detailed in the report.
- 21.4 The Director for Asset and Investments responded to further questions from other Members attending the meeting and outlined how new build schemes and acquisition schemes were assessed to ensure that they achieve best value for the authority. The Director went on to provide clarification of the commitments and aspirational criteria detailed in the design guide and explained that the Council would strive to achieve all of the aspirational criteria however, a degree of flexibility would be required.
- 21.5 Councillor Whitehead commented that it was vital that a business plan was adopted.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

- 1.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approve the proposed HRA Business Plan along with the overarching aims as set out in this report.
- 1.2 It is recommended that an annual review of the HRA Business Plan takes place, and any amendments, changes, or updates are reported to Cabinet as part of the annual budget setting process.

REASON FOR DECISION

To ensure Mid Suffolk have an HRA Business Plan, which will be meet the Councils overarching Housing aims over the next five years

22 MCA/22/9 EMPTY HOMES POLICY 2022

- 22.1 The Chair, Councillor Richardson, invited the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Hadingham, to introduce the report.
- 22.2 The Cabinet Member for Housing provided Members with details of the report and moved the recommendations detailed in the report.
- 22.3 The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Brewster.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

- 1.1 Option 1 - Approve the new Empty Homes Policy, as set out in Appendix A of this report and considering the recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 25th April 2022.**
- 1.2 The Assistant Director for Housing, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing has delegated authority to make minor changes to the Empty Homes Policy**

REASON FOR DECISION

- 1.1 There is a demand for housing in the Mid Suffolk District and long- term empty properties, which could otherwise be made available for; sale, rent or owner occupation are a wasted housing resource and give rise to complaints.
- 1.2 If a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) is applied for, the Empty Homes Policy will help satisfy the Secretary of State of the process the Council has taken.

23 MCA/22/10 RENT AND SERVICE CHARGE POLICY

- 23.1 The Chair, Councillor Richardson, invited the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Hadingham, to introduce the report.
- 23.2 The Cabinet Member for Housing introduced the report and provided Members with details of the Rent and Service Charge Policy. Councillor Hadingham moved the recommendations detailed in the report and this was seconded by Councillor Flatman.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

- 1.1 That Cabinet approves the Rent and Service Charge Policy attached in Appendix A with the following decision:**
- A – That rent flexibility is not applied.**

B – That rents in certain Temporary Accommodation, which is excluded from the rent standard, may be set at LHA rates

C – That service charges are de-pooled.

REASON FOR DECISION

A – That rent flexibility is not applied. Due to the current economic climate and challenges around affordability for the Council's tenants, Rent Flexibility will not be used for any new tenancies. Should there be a requirement to change this decision and adopt any level of Rent Flexibility, a decision will be taken by full Council and will have a clear rationale, considering local circumstances and affordability. Tenants will be consulted about the proposals and their views taken into account by the Councils.

B – That rents in certain Temporary Accommodation, which is excluded from the rent standard, may be set at LHA rates. The Policy provides for both BMSDC to continue to set rents at LHA in circumstances such as this, where the Rent Standard and Rent Policy Statement do not apply. Doing so provides greater opportunity to provide temporary accommodation in new settings and maximise income for the HRA.

C – That service charges are de-pooled. It is generally considered to be inequitable to fund or to subsidise the cost of services from the general rent pool, and fairer to charge the cost of services to those tenants who benefit directly, referred to as 'de-pooling'. De-pooling service charges will free-up limited funds of within the HRA budgets which are currently subsidising services to meet changes in national housing policy which benefit all tenants. Exemptions to this rule could be made if its application meant that a service became unaffordable, as could be the case with some support services. In these cases, the service charges would be pooled across multiple locations.

24 MCA/22/11 GATEWAY TO HOMECHOICE ALLOCATIONS POLICY REVIEW AND AMENDMENTS

24.1 The Chair, Councillor Richardson, invited the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Hadingham to introduce the report.

24.2 The Cabinet Member for Housing highlighted the main changes to the policy which were in response to changes in legislation, and moved the recommendations as detailed in the report. These were seconded by Councillor Flatman.

24.3 In response to questions from other Members present at the meeting, the Director for Housing and the Choice Based Lettings Team Manager outlined the ongoing work to monitor trends in movement into and out of the District and confirmed that advertising of the properties was restricted to within the District and therefore applicants were required to have a connection to the District.

24.4 Councillor Whitehead commented on the legislative requirement for the

review of the policy.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

- 1.1 To approve the Allocations Policy amendments, as set out in Appendix A of this report.**
- 1.2 The Assistant Director for Housing, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing has delegated authority to make minor changes to the Allocations Policy.**

REASON FOR DECISION

- 1.1 To ensure that the Allocations Policy meets legal requirements.
- 1.2 To clarify wording in the policy so that key decisions are made fairly and consistently by all Gateway Local Authorities.
- 1.3 Delegated Authority for minor changes to reduce the burden of committee work, improve efficiency and be more responsive to minor changes required.

25 MCA/22/12 Q4 PERFORMANCE

- 25.1 In the absence of the Leader of the Council, Councillor Morley, the Chair, Councillor Richardson introduced paper MCA/22/12 and provided an overview of the performance highlights for each of the six strategic priorities.
- 25.2 In response to questions from other Members attending the meeting the Director for Environment and Commercial Partnerships advised that the figure relating to recycling identified as contaminated was in line with the figures across Suffolk, and that work was being undertaken by Suffolk Waste Partnership to raise awareness regarding the recycling process and which items could and could not be recycled. The Director also advised that additional options were available to any residents struggling with their waste.
- 25.3 The Chair thanked the Director for Environment and Commercial Partnerships for her hard work whilst working for the Council and wished her well in her future role.

The Q4 Performance was noted.

26 MCA/22/13 UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND

- 26.1 The Chair, Councillor Richardson, invited the Cabinet Member for Communities, Councillor Flatman, to introduce the report.
- 26.2 The Cabinet Member for Communities provided Members with details of the

UK Shared Prosperity Fund and moved the recommendations as detailed in the report. This was seconded by Councillor Brewster.

A break was taken from 11:40am until 11:55am.

26.3 Councillor Whitehead asked whether the submitted plan covered the entire three years and expressed his concerns that the deadline of 01 August 2022 for submitting finalised plans was so close.

26.4 The Corporate Manager for Economy and Business confirmed that the deadline was for a three-year plan, however a detailed plan was only required for year 1, with years 2 and 3 being indicative plans.

26.5 Councillor Flatman thanked the Officers involved for producing the plan within a tight deadline.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

- 1.1 To note progress on the development of the draft investment plan which is attached at Appendix A.**
- 1.2 To note the consultation process underway that will inform the final Investment Plan which is attached at Appendix B.**
- 1.3 To agree delegation to the Assistant Director for Economy and Regeneration in consultation with the Portfolio holders for Economic Development & Communities to finalise the Investment Plan prior to submission to government.**

REASON FOR DECISION

The receipt of Shared Prosperity Funding to implement the initiatives contained within the draft Investment Plan will provide a unique opportunity to support economic growth and community activities for our Districts.

This key funding opportunity could help to address the substantial loss of funding following the UK's EU Exit and loss of access to European Funding for employment & skills projects.

A robust set of investment priorities in the draft plan will enable the Council to provide funding for skills, employment, culture and community projects in the local area and wider county to support the Levelling Up agenda and create opportunities for all bringing true inclusive growth to local communities.

27 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC (WHICH TERM INCLUDES THE PRESS)

It was not considered necessary to exclude the public.

28 MCA/22/5 TO CONFIRM THE RESTRICTED MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD

ON 6 JUNE 2022

It was RESOLVED

That the restricted minute of the meeting held on the 6 June 2022 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 12:02 p.m.

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Chair