

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 Monday, 20 March 2023

PRESENT:

Councillor: James Caston (Chairman)
Paul Ekpenyong (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:	Gerard Brewster	David Burn
	Terence Carter	Austin Davies
	Rachel Eburne	John Field
	Julie Flatman	Jessica Fleming
	Dr Helen Geake	Kathie Guthrie
	Lavinia Hadingham	Matthew Hicks
	Sarah Mansel	John Matthissen
	Andrew Mellen	Richard Meyer
	Suzie Morley	Dave Muller
	Mike Norris	Penny Otton
	Timothy Passmore	Dr Daniel Pratt
	Harry Richardson	Keith Scarff
	Andrew Stringer	Rowland Warboys
	Keith Welham	John Whitehead

In attendance:

Officers: Chief Executive (AC)
Deputy Chief Executive (KN)
Monitoring Officer (IA)
Corporate Manager Governance & Civic Office (JR)
Director Planning & Building Control (TB)
Professional Lead - Key Sites and Infrastructure Development
Manager (CT)
Infrastructure Officer (JM)
Chief Planning Officer (PI)
Corporate Manager - Strategic Planning (RH)
Head of HR and Organisational Development (SH)

Apologies:

Peter Gould
Barry Humphreys

110 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

110.1 There were no declarations of interests by Councillors.

111 MC/22/40 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 FEBRUARY 2023

111.1 Councillor Mansel requested that the minutes be amended to reflect that the guillotine vote was a majority vote, not a unanimous vote.

It was RESOLVED:-

That subject to the amendment above, the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2023 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

112 MC/22/41 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

112.1 The Chair referred Councillors to paper MC/22/41 for noting.

112.2 The Chair thanked those who had attended the Chairman's dinner at the Officers Mess, Wattisham Flying Station on 4th March and confirmed that over £2,500 was raised for his chosen charity, the Stowmarket ASD Saturday Clubs.

112.3 The Chair went on to say that being Chairman for the past municipal year had been a wonderful experience and thanked Councillors for all their work and support. The Chair also thanked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Morley, and the group leaders, Councillor Mellen and Councillor Field.

113 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor Morley, Leader of the Council made the following announcements:-

New emergency services hub in Stowmarket

I was delighted to attend the opening earlier this month of the new police and fire station off Needham Road, Stowmarket.

Suffolk's emergency services have recognised the excellent value for money and benefits that collaborative working provides for our residents and communities, and this is the latest example of that.

Mid Suffolk District Council agreed a £431,000 contribution to the project through the Community Infrastructure Levy, and this new station will provide excellent facilities for emergency workers.

The building also has a range of green credentials, including photovoltaic panels, an air source heat pump system, and 14 electric vehicle charging points.

Our council is proud to support this.

New homes in Needham Market

The transformation of the former Needham Market Middle School site has now been completed, and we have received the keys to 41 new affordable homes.

This development, delivered by Mid Suffolk District Council and supported by funding of £1.42million from Homes England through the Affordable Homes Programme, is a great investment in the town and a boost for the community.

It has provided more good quality housing in our district - a mix of two and three bedroom properties which will be used as affordable rent, social rent and shared ownership homes.

The provision of a range of housing options is vital for the sustainability of our communities.

The former Victorian school building has also been converted into a new library for the community.

Award winning council

And finally, many congratulations to everyone involved in ensuring that Mid Suffolk is once again an iESE award-winning council, alongside Babergh district.

The awards are an annual opportunity to celebrate and share the most innovative practice in transforming local public services and this year we were in the running for two categories.

We won silver in the 'Green Public Services' award category for our tree canopy survey and tree planting initiative - a pioneering project which allows us to understand and measure our existing tree coverage and use it to support and improve biodiversity in our districts.

We also won bronze in the 'Asset Management and Regeneration' award category for Gateway 14 – which, as we know, is set to bring thousands of jobs to the area.

Well done to everyone involved in delivering these projects. As a council, we should be extremely proud of these achievements.

Thank you to all our District Councillors for the last 4 years – we have achieved a lot together and I thank you all for your energy and enthusiasm, not to mention your endurance. Thank you.

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

114.1 None received.

115 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

115.1 None received.

116 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

116.1 None received

117 MC/22/42 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT

117.1 The Chair invited Councillor Welham, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee to introduce paper MC/22/42 which was for noting.

117.2 Councillor Welham advised Councillors that since the report was published, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had met to consider an Information Bulletin reviewing the impact of bringing public realm in house.

117.3 Councillor Welham thanked the members of the Committee and officers for their work during the last year.

117.4 Councillor Passmore referred to the review of the Tourism Strategy and enquired whether the Committee had any concerns over the delivery of the strategy.

117.5 In response Councillor Welham advised that there were no objections to the strategy and that comments were made that a delivery plan was required, and there were suggestions made for additional areas to be included in the strategy.

117.6 With regard to Pre-Application Planning Advice, Councillor Eburne enquired whether there had been any discussions by the Committee relating to making the details of pre-application discussions public or advising Parish Councils which elements had been discussed.

117.7 Councillor Welham responded that although this was discussed by the Committee, it was not considered to be an essential part of the pre-application process.

117.8 Councillor Mellen commented on the low level of customer satisfaction regarding the pre-application advice received and asked whether the Committee had been able to identify the reasons for this.

117.8 Councillor Welham responded that the data collected regarding customer satisfaction fluctuated, with some aspects of the service performing differently at different times. A Key Performance Indicator had been set for general satisfaction levels.

118 MC/22/43 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) - CIL EXPENDITURE FRAMEWORK - FIFTH REVIEW MARCH 2023

118.1 The Chair invited Councillor Burn to introduce the paper MC/22/43.

118.2 Councillor Burn introduced the report, highlighted the key points and **PROPOSED** the recommendations within the report.

118.3 Councillor Mansel **SECONDED** the recommendations.

118.4 Councillor Eburne asked whether consideration had been given in relation to the inclusion of professional fees, and the reasons why these were not included.

118.5 Christine Thurlow, Professional Lead - Key Sites and Infrastructure advised that although professional fees are not included, work is undertaken with alternative funders to secure payments for these elements.

118.6 Councillor Fleming requested that traffic calming measures could be included within the next review of the expenditure framework.

118.7 The Professional Lead - Key Sites and Infrastructure responded that formal consultations took place as part of the planning application process and that the highways authority was included in these and considered road safety and cumulative impact. Members had reconsidered this matter within in the review and agreed with the previous decision, subject to the inclusion of highway traffic calming measures as part of a Local Cycling and Walk Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) case.

118.8 Councillor Burn commented that traffic calming was an important issue to many communities.

118.9 Councillor Eburne commented that there was a need to ensure that the CIL funds were spent within communities in a timely manner, particularly those where development had taken place.

118.10 Members debated the issues within the report including the benefits of traffic calming measures, the complexity of the process for obtaining funding, the need to ensure that CIL funds were spent within communities in a timely manner, particularly where development had taken place, the consultation responses received from the Suffolk County Council Highways Authority on planning applications, the need for securing ongoing maintenance costs, and the benefits of liaising with the health authorities.

By a unanimous vote of 29 votes for,

It was RESOLVED:

1. That Mid Suffolk Council approve the amendments to the CIL Expenditure Framework – March 2022 (arising from the fifth review) – (Appendix A) and the CIL Expenditure Framework Communications Strategy – March 2023 (Appendix B).
2. That Mid Suffolk Council agree that the CIL Expenditure Framework and the CIL Expenditure Framework Communications Strategy be reviewed again whilst Bid round 12 is being considered (October 2023) so that any amended scheme can be in place before Bid round 13 occurs (May 2024).
3. That Mid Suffolk Council agree that the Joint Member Panel be retained to inform this (sixth) review.

119 MC/22/44 DRAFT JOINT LOCAL PLANNING ENFORCEMENT PLAN 2023

Councillor Guthrie joined the meeting at 6:38pm.

119.1 The Chair invited Councillor Burn to introduce paper MC/22/44.

119.2 Councillor Burn introduced the report, and outlined the work undertaken in producing the Draft Joint Local Planning Enforcement Plan and the policies contained within the Plan.

119.3 Councillor Burn **PROPOSED** the recommendations in the report which was **SECONDED** by Councillor Flatman.

119.4 Councillor Fleming asked a question regarding how conditions concerning construction would be dealt with by the new plan. The Chief Planning Officer confirmed that the prioritisation strategy described how breaches of conditions would be dealt with, and provided assurance that officers were aware there are issues with construction management and that these were being investigated.

119.5 Councillor Norris queried whether a provision could be made within the plan for Members to receive a periodic update regarding open enforcement cases within their Ward, and also brief details of the outcomes of closed enforcement cases.

119.6 Councillor Burn agreed that the outcomes of closed cases would be beneficial to Members. The Chief Planning Officer clarified that the details and reasoning for some cases could be considered confidential and therefore not appropriate to share widely.

119.7 Councillor Stringer requested confirmation that elected Ward Members would be considered, under the policy, to be interested parties and commented that Councillors were bound by confidentiality agreements. In response the Chief Planning Officer confirmed that the information which could be shared would be assessed on an individual case basis.

119.8 Councillor Matthissen enquired whether any action had been taken regarding the proposed use of a drone for planning enforcement purposes. The Chief Planning Officer confirmed that issues surrounding personal privacy and data protection issues had been difficult to resolve making the project unfeasible to continue with.

119.9 In response to a further question from Councillor Matthissen regarding data analysis, the Chief Planning Officer advised that the Joint Task and Finish Group were provided with general statistics regarding the workloads across both Councils.

119.10 Councillor Davies referred to the flowchart contained in the policy, and asked whether this should include court cases. The Chief Planning Officer advised that this had been considered however the number of cases was a small proportion of the total.

119.11 The Director for Planning and Building Control responded to a question from Councillor Passmore and advised that the capacity of the team was under constant review. The team was currently full staffed and would be monitored as the team progresses and develops.

119.12 Following a query from Councillor Pratt regarding whether an alternative to drones had been considered, the Director for Planning and Building Control confirmed that officers were continuing to explore technological options.

119.13 Councillor Mansel asked whether consideration had been given to a self service webpage for Members to use, and raised a question regarding updating Members when cases are closed. The Chief Planning Officer advised that consideration had been given to the sharing of information and this was currently being looked at. The Chief Planning Officer went on to advise that the information being shared regarding case closures would be pursued via the Chief Planning Officer and the Director for Planning and Building Control.

119.14 The Chief Planning Officer responded to a further question from Councillor Mansel regarding repeat offenders, outlining the difficulties of the inclusion of this issue within a policy.

119.15 Following a question from Councillor Welham regarding the investigation of breaches of planning conditions relating to landscaping, the Chief Planning Officer advised that the prioritisation strategy described the process to be undertaken for an investigation into such a breach. The Director for Planning and Building Control confirmed that there were sufficient resources in place for these to be undertaken, and that the efficiencies being introduced would provide scope and opportunities to address the matters.

119.16 Councillor Eburne enquired whether alternative ways of working had been considered to ensure the plan was as effective as possible. The Director for Planning and Building Control confirmed that a range of different approaches had been considered.

119.17 In response to a question from Councillor Carter regarding Members contacting Enforcement Officers, the Chief Planning Officer commented that conversation between Members and Officers was actively encouraged.

119.18 Members debated the report on issues including the importance of having adequate resources to deliver the new plan.

The meeting was adjourned between 7:18pm and 7:30pm.

119.19 Members continued to debate the report on issues including: Members having access to a list of enforcements cases to enable them obtain information on individual cases, the need for a review of the plan in the future, transferring the responsibility for recognising and reporting breaches of landscaping conditions to Parish Councils, and the importance of construction managements plans.

By a unanimous vote of 30 vote for,

It was RESOLVED:

1. That the draft Joint Local Planning Enforcement Plan 2023 (JLPEP) set out at Appendix A be adopted and published on the Councils website.
2. That the Director of Planning and Building Control be authorised to make any necessary consequential amendments to finalise and publish the JLPEP.
3. That the policy be reviewed by a Joint Member Working Group within 12 months of its implementation.

120 MC/22/45 COUNCILLORS PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY

120.1 The Chair invited Councillor Morley to introduce paper MC/22/45.

120.2 Councillor Morley introduced the report which contained details of the draft policy.

120.3 Councillor Morley **PROPOSED** the recommendations in the report, which was **SECONDED** by Councillor Richardson.

120.4 Councillor Otton queried the wording used in the policy which she felt did not reflect a non-traditional family unit. In response Jan Robinson, Corporate Manager – Governance & Civic Office advised that the policy had been written to include all types of partnership. The Corporate Manager - Governance & Civic Office then provided details of the reasons for the 25-week timescale for parental leave following a miscarriage.

120.5 The Corporate Manager - Governance & Civic Office responded to a question from Councillor Mansel and clarified that the policy would allow Members a six-month dispensation for attending meetings before the expiry of the standard 6 month attendance requirement.

120.6 Councillor Geake questioned the definition of a designated carer within the policy. The Corporate Manager - Governance & Civic Office confirmed to Members that the designated carer would be the person within the partnership undertaking the care of the child.

120.7 Councillor Geake requested that the reference to 'the' designated carer be replaced with 'a' designated carer. The Corporate Manager - Governance & Civic Office confirmed that this change should be made.

120.8 Members debated the report on issues including: the benefits of the policy to younger Councillors, and the openness of the wording in the policy.

By a vote of 29 votes for and 1 abstention,

It was RESOLVED:

That Council approves the adoption of a Parental leave policy for Councillors.

121 MC/22/46 SPECIAL URGENT DECISIONS TAKEN BY OFFICERS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 2 OF THE CONSTITUTION

121.1 The Chair invited Arthur Charvonja, Chief Executive to introduce paper MC/22/46 which was for noting.

121.2 The Chief Executive acknowledged that two questions had been received from Councillor Mellen and advised that responses would be provided to these outside of the meeting.

121.3 Councillor Eburne requested reassurance over the procurement process for the Company providing the services.

121.4 The Chief Executive advised that a response would be provided outside of the meeting.

122 MC/22/47 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2023/2024

122.1 The Chair invited Arthur Charvonja, Chief Executive to introduce paper MC/22/47.

122.2 The recommendations were **PROPOSED** by Councillor Morley and **SECONDED** by Councillor Richardson.

By a unanimous vote of 30 votes for,

It was RESOLVED:

- 1. That the proposed pay policy statement for 2023/24 as set out in section 3 be approved.**
- 2. That publication of the Council's gender pay gap, as of 31st March 2022, be noted.**

123 MC/22/48 REVIEW OF JOINT CHIEF EXECUTIVE REMUNERATION

123.1 This item had been withdrawn.

124 COUNCILLOR APPOINTMENTS

124.1 There were no changes to Councillor appointments.

125 MOTIONS ON NOTICE

125.1 None received.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 8.08pm.

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Chair