

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 Tuesday, 3 October 2023

PRESENT:

Councillors:	Teresa Davis	Rachel Eburne
	Andrew Mellen	Andrew Stringer
	Tim Weller	Richard Winch

In attendance:

Guest(s): Shirley Jarlett - IBC Assistant Director—Governance & Monitoring Officer
Shaheen Warren - Principle Practice Lead – New Local

Officers:

- Chief Executive (AC)
- Deputy Chief Executive (KN)
- Director – Planning and Building Control and Interim Director – Communities & Wellbeing (TB)
- Director – Economic Growth and Climate Change (FD)
- Director – Operations (ME)
- Director – Customers, Digital Transformation and Improvement (SW)
- Corporate Manager – Finance, Commissioning & Procurement (BP)
- Corporate Manager - Customer Operations (SL)
- Corporate Manager – Strategic Policy (JH)
- Corporate Manager – Communities (VM)
- Sustainable Travel Officer (KD)
- Cost of Living Coordinator (ED)
- Assistant Manager - Community Safety and Resilience (RY)
- Communities Officer (BT)
- Assistant Manager – Governance (HH)

32 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

32.1 None received.

33 MCA/23/16 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5 SEPTEMBER 2023

It was Resolved:

That with the following changes, the minutes of the meeting held on the 5 September 2023 be confirmed and signed as a correct record:

Paragraph 26.5: ‘The response would be ...’ – Amend to ‘*A response will be ...*’
Paragraph 26.7: Capital Expenditure would be carried over *from* the previous year.

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

34.1 None received.

35 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS

35.1 None received.

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

36.1 There were no matters referred from the Overview and Scrutiny or the Joint Audit and Standards Committees.

37 FORTHCOMING DECISIONS LIST

37.1 The following comments were made by Members:

37.2 That the Joint Local Plan should be added to the Forthcoming Decisions List.

37.3 That the 30 Year Housing Revenue Account Business Plan should be added now to the Forthcoming Decisions List.

38 MCA/23/17 VARIATION OF AGREEMENT OF THE SHARED REVENUE PARTNERSHIP

38.1 The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, to introduce the report.

38.2 Councillor Eburne gave an overview of the report and proposed the recommendations. Councillor Winch seconded the motion.

38.3 Councillor Winch outlined that the ability to call in was a good addition, and the clarification on delegation of responsibilities was useful.

38.4 Councillor Eburne highlighted that the Shared Revenues Partnership, in addition to their usual work, administered discretionary housing payments and energy rebates which aided vulnerable households.

By a unanimous vote.

It was RESOLVED: -

That Cabinet authorised the Director of Corporate Resources in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance to enter into the Deed of Variation at Appendix A to the report.

REASON FOR DECISION

To enable changes to be made to the Partnership Agreement dated 7 January 2011 to ensure the continued effective operation of the Joint Committee.

39 MCA/23/18 COST OF LIVING: REVIEW OF 6 MONTH PLAN AND BEYOND

- 39.1 The Chair introduced the report as Cabinet Member for Performance and Resilience.
- 39.2 Councillor Mellen gave an overview of the report and proposed the recommendations. Councillor Weller seconded this motion.
- 39.3 Councillor Eburne queried how frequently Town and Parish Councils would be liaised with. The Corporate Manager – Customer Operations responded that the Council wanted Town and Parish Council's views on the plan and the existing Town and Parish Liaison meetings would be used as well as reaching out to Town and Parish Councils directly.
- 39.4 Councillor Stringer highlighted that homelessness applications had increased, many due to issues with private rented accommodation, which showed that the Council's role in providing housing was vital.
- 39.5 Councillor Winch stated that an impressive set of activities had taken place over the past year and that there was a comprehensive plan going forward. He added that the vulnerable customer policy should be a core element of the plan going forward.
- 39.6 Councillor Eburne stated that whilst interest rates were coming down this did not mean that costs overall were coming down. Additionally, the upcoming housing insulation scheme could feed into this work.
- 39.7 Councillor Mellen agreed that residents should be engaged with in multiple ways as many do not have internet access. He was confident in the work that officers were doing to combat cost of living, and thanked officers for their work.

By a unanimous vote.

It was RESOLVED: -

To note phase 3 of the Cost of Living Action Plan and endorse the commitment to develop a longer term approach to preventing poverty which sought to understand the underlying drivers of poverty across both districts at a hyper local level through continued work with internal and external stakeholders and to include wider engagement with Town and Parish Councils.

REASON FOR DECISION

The Cost of Living Action Plan is a proactive response to the quickly changing nature of the cost of living crisis and has been developed in partnership with internal and external stakeholders to ensure a holistic approach.

Our approach must continue to work across systems to consider the needs of our residents and the work being delivered across our organisation and by partners. Failure to sufficiently coordinate our approach risks missing opportunities to work more efficiently and in a way which reduces duplication and will mitigate gaps in support for the most vulnerable.

Equally, while the delivery of support to residents experiencing crisis is crucial at this time of heightening financial pressures, we are mindful that it would be prudent to balance crisis support with the need to work more preventatively. Without comprehensive work to understand and address the underlying drivers and mitigations of poverty across our districts, we cannot sustainably equip our communities with the tools they need to remain resilient to economic shocks in the longer term.

40 MCA/23/19 CORPORATE PLAN REFRESH

- 40.1 The Chair introduced the report as Leader of the Council.
- 40.2 The Chair invited the Principle Practice Lead – New Local to present to the committee.
- 40.3 Councillor Weller questioned how those who do not usually engage would be engaged with. The Principle Practice Lead – New Local responded that facilitated sessions would be held with community groups, and they would attend existing upcoming events in order to engage with people. Additionally, the method of engagement and content would be tailored to the needs of the group being engaged with.
- 40.4 Councillor Weller further questioned what the timescale for this work was and if there would be an interim update on the progress. The Principle Practice Lead – New Local responded that the online survey will close on the 15th November and in person sessions should be completed by this date. Additionally, a system for feeding back progress to Members would be developed ahead of this date.
- 40.5 Councillor Davis questioned how the consultation was being advertised to residents of Mid Suffolk. The Principle Practice Lead – New Local responded that a communications plan had been developed, and that promotion through community groups and their networks would be utilised.
- 40.6 Councillor Mellen proposed the recommendations as set out in the report. Councillor Eburne seconded this motion.
- 40.7 Councillor Stringer highlighted the importance of the Corporate Plan refresh and the necessity to engage with those who do not usually engage with the Council, and working with communities to develop the plan was essential.

- 40.8 Councillor Eburne added that in the development of the plan it was important that as many voices were heard as possible, and it should be ensured that their views are heard.
- 40.9 Councillor Winch outlined that the community engagement plan was comprehensive and could be used in development of policies going forward.
- 40.10 Councillor Mellen highlighted that the timeframe for the consultation was short however, this was so that the development of the plan could link with the planning of the budget. He added that he was grateful to the officers for the work they had done on this project.

By a unanimous vote.

It was RESOLVED: -

To endorse engagement on the emerging vision and strategic priorities as set out in Appendix A.

REASON FOR DECISION

To enable the progression of the refresh of the Corporate Plan.

41 MCA/23/20 MSDC RINGFENCED FUNDING FOR ELECTRIC BUS / RURAL TRANSPORT PROVISION

- 41.1 The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for Thriving Towns and Rural Communities to introduce the report.
- 41.2 Councillor Davis gave an overview of the report and proposed the recommendations. Councillor Weller seconded this motion.
- 41.3 Councillor Eburne questioned if there was the resource to move this scheme forward. The Chief Executive responded that currently there was the resource for the scheme. However, if the ambitions from the Corporate Plan overshadowed the scheme there would not be the resource.
- 41.4 Councillor Stringer questioned whether Section 106 funds for bus service improvements could be accessed by the Council. The Sustainable Travel Officer responded that this depended on the wordings of the agreements in each case.
- 41.5 Councillor Mellen queried whether under option 3 that the potential for electric buses would not be ruled out should they become available. The Sustainable Travel Officer confirmed that this did not rule out electric buses in the future, additionally it was proposed that some funding be put towards a partnership bid with Suffolk County Council for zero emission buses from the national government grant scheme.

- 41.6 Councillor Winch asked whether there was any feedback from the East Suffolk Katch scheme. The Sustainable Travel Officer responded that a report had been received and would be analysed, additionally she had contact with the officers involved in the project who could be asked for advice.
- 41.7 Councillor Winch outlined that the scheme showed the Council's commitment to make improvements in rural transport, and that he was in favour of the speed and flexibility of option 3.
- 41.8 Councillor Eburne highlighted that she supported option 3 and the importance of going forward with the scheme as it helped address issues for communities. Additionally, as funds were set aside for this in February 2022 it was greatly important to that this went ahead.
- 41.9 Councillor Mellen highlighted that as public transport was an area covered by the County Council, it was important for the Council to be flexible and utilise partnership working to best aid communities.

By a unanimous vote.

It was RESOLVED: -

- 1.1 That Cabinet agreed for officers to proceed with the 'option 3' proposal outlined in section 4 of this report, whilst recognising the associated risks and the limitations with regards to evidence currently available that this investment will be feasible and offer good value for money.**
- 1.2 That Cabinet informed officers of any further stipulations they wish to be added to the proposed next steps.**
- 1.3 That Cabinet delegated the further development and delivery of 'option 3' to the Director for Economic Growth and Climate Change, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Thriving Towns and Rural Communities.**

REASON FOR DECISION

The fact that this funding has been ringfenced by MSDC has been in the public domain for a significant length of time, which has raised expectations across the district. During this time, officers have been working to research different delivery models and develop a proposal that offers a least-risk approach to how the funding is spent. Officers believe that option 3 reduces as much risk as possible, as it brings in experienced and expert delivery partners, and avoids investing capital in electric vehicles from the outset/early days of the project, which is deemed as a risky investment at this time.

42 MCA/23/21 BMSDC ELECTRIC VEHICLE (EV) INFRASTRUCTURE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

- 42.1 The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for Thriving Towns and Rural

Communities to introduce the report.

- 42.2 Councillor Davis gave an overview of the report and proposed the recommendations. Councillor Eburne seconded this motion.
- 42.3 Councillor Stringer questioned whether there was a way to monitor how often EV charging points were unavailable. The Director – Economic Growth and Climate Change responded that officers had a log of use of charge points with more in depth reports from service providers. Additionally, whilst there were currently multiple service providers that were being used a contract for a single provider would be sought in future which would make monitoring easier. Councillor Davis added that a communication plan could be included in the terms when the contract went out to tender.
- 42.4 Councillor Stringer raised concern on the reliance on service providers for figures on use.
- 42.5 Councillor Winch praised the monitoring scheme and highlighted that reliability was critical. Additionally, the pricing for the charge points should be included going forward and a decision needed to be made on whether the Council kept charges below market value or matched the current market rate.
- 42.6 Councillor Davis outlined that whilst pricing was currently set at 48p across the board, there was always movement in pricing that it could not be set in the implementation plan. Additionally, for residents with off road parking, using EV charging points in car parks, there was a charge of 20% VAT, however for home charging points this was set at 5% VAT, which was an ongoing national issue. The Director – Economic Growth and Climate Change added that an annual review of pricing could be added to the implementation plan in order to ensure that pricing was fair.
- 42.7 Councillor Eburne highlighted the importance of the plan and the focus on community led infrastructure as many villages were putting EV charging points in place and this provided support going forward.
- 42.8 Councillor Mellen raised that whilst there were issues accessing working EV charging points, Stowmarket was well served with EV charging points and this should be promoted to residents.

By a unanimous vote.

It was RESOLVED: -

- 1.1 That Cabinet approved that option 1 is taken forward and that the joint councils' draft EV Infrastructure Implementation Plan was approved.**
- 1.2 That the completion of the final documentation was delegated to the Director for Economic Growth and Climate Change in consultation with portfolio holders for Environment, Culture & Wellbeing in Babergh and Thriving Towns and Rural Communities in Mid Suffolk.**

REASON FOR DECISION

- 1.1 The approval of the EV Infrastructure Implementation Plan will support the councils' future ambitions around the growth of EVs.
- 1.2 The EVIIP will support and provide guidance and opportunities for third party investment in the districts, including community organisations.
- 1.3 The EVIIP provides a clear plan for generating future investment and makes the case for external funding.
- 1.4 The EVIIP supports local and national strategies with the future transition to EVs beyond the life of internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles.

43 MCA/23/22 EMPLOYER SUPPORTED VOLUNTEERING POLICY

- 43.1 The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for Environment, Culture and Wellbeing to introduce the report.
- 43.2 Councillor Weller gave an overview of the report and proposed the recommendations. Councillor Davis seconded this motion.
- 43.3 Councillor Stringer outlined that the policy gave the opportunity for people to get involved in their communities, and having people volunteer in the communities that the Council served would be beneficial in informing policy.
- 43.4 Councillor Eburne commented that giving people the time to volunteer was valuable as it enabled community groups and organisations to carry out their work.
- 43.5 Councillor Mellen questioned what percentage of officers were predicted to take up this scheme. The Communities Officer responded that a survey had been undertaken by officers on volunteering with 60% of the 68 officers that responded stating that they currently volunteered. However, under the new policy it was predicted to rise to 20% of officers volunteering across the whole Council.

By a unanimous vote.

It was RESOLVED: -

To note and support the implementation of the Councils first Employer Supported Volunteering Policy.

REASON FOR DECISION

Through research carried out by the National Council of Voluntary and Community Organisations (NCVO), we know that paid work is the number one reason why people do not volunteer. In response to this, by working closely with VCFSE

organisations through an Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV) scheme, the councils can strengthen the support and trust between residents, communities and key anchor organisations, whilst also benefitting staff wellbeing, building the strength and capacity of the VCFSE sector and aligning with its own Community and Wellbeing strategies.

44 MCA/23/23 REVISED SAFEGUARDING POLICY - CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS AT RISK

- 44.1 The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for Environment, Culture and Wellbeing to introduce the report.
- 44.2 Councillor Weller gave an overview of the report and proposed the recommendations. Councillor Davis seconded this motion.
- 44.3 Councillor Winch questioned how the new policy would be advertised. The Deputy Chief Executive responded that various methods of communication would be used including in the staff newsletter and through team meetings.
- 44.4 Councillor Winch stated that it was essential to have a policy like this in place and that it was clear and comprehensive policy.

By a unanimous vote.

It was RESOLVED: -

- 1.1 That Cabinet agreed Option 1 and approved the revised Safeguarding Policy for Children, Young People and Adults at Risk**
- 1.2 That Cabinet agreed for the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio Holder to have delegated authority to make minor amendments to the Safeguarding Policy in line with outcomes derived from the Annual Section 11 Audit or future Internal Audit Reviews.**

REASON FOR DECISION

To ensure that an overarching approach to safeguarding is embedded across the councils, identifying roles and responsibilities of employees, councillors, and volunteers ensuring the safety of children, young people, and adults at risk

The business of the meeting was concluded at 11:16 am.

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Chair