

## MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the **MID SUFFOLK CABINET** held at the Council Chamber, Mid Suffolk District Council Offices, High Street, Needham Market on Monday, 10 July 2017

### **PRESENT:**

Councillors: Nick Gowrley – Leader of the Council in the Chair  
John Whitehead – Deputy Leader of Council

Councillors: Gerard Brewster                      David Burn  
Glen Horn    Penny Otton  
Andrew Stringer                                  David Whybrow

### **Also attending:**

Councillors: Roy Barker  
Diana Kearsley  
Suzie Morley

### **In attendance:**

Councillor Rachel Eburne  
Chief Executive  
Deputy Chief Executive  
Strategic Director (ME/KJ)

### 11 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillors Julie Flatman and Jill Wilshaw.

### 12 **TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY OR NON-PECUNIARY INTEREST BY COUNCILLORS**

There were no declarations of interest.

### 13 **MCA/17/5 CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5 JUNE 2017**

By a unanimous vote

### **RESOLUTION**

*That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2017 be confirmed as a correct record.*

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

None received.

15 **MCA/17/6 2016/17 FINANCIAL OUTTURN**

Councillor Whitehead in introducing the report said that the report summarised the 2016/17 financial outturn for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, and Capital Programme and that the outturn would be subject to an external audit for the fiscal year 2016/17.

The positive outturn was a result of the budget holders and their collective diligence to ensure that the outturn remained robust for Mid Suffolk District Council.

Councillor Whitehead proposed the recommendations which were seconded by Councillor Horn.

Councillor Whitehead, Cabinet Member for Finance, made Members aware of a correction on page 13 under the heading of Photo Voltaic (PV) Panels. The number of properties should be 168 and not 68.

Councillor Penny Otton said she appreciated that £250,000 had been allocated to the SnOasis planning application in the reserves, but queried what the consequence would be if staff pay was to rise above the 1% pay increase and if the reduction of interim officers would improve on the savings.

Councillor Otton wanted to know when it would be possible to begin a marketing campaign for the Building Control Service and expressed concern that insufficient had been budgeted within the Premises Expenditure. She stated that the cost of fencing and on site security should have been included in the original business case figures. She also asked for an update on Shared Legal Services' recruitment.

Councillor Otton continued by saying that she felt that too much money was being allocated to the Transformation Fund and that she could not support this allocation.

In response to Councillor Otton's questions, Councillor Whitehead, Cabinet Member for Finance responded that staffing had been budgeted for carefully and that the vacancy management saving of £100,000 had been exceeded. The Premises Expenditure related to an in-year purchase and was therefore not included in the budget. He said the Shared Legal Services was an ongoing process and that staffing was being addressed.

Arthur Charvonja, Chief Executive, informed Members that recruiting was still ongoing for Shared Legal Services and once this had been completed the service would be fully operational.

Councillor Nick Gowrley, Leader of the Cabinet, informed Members that the Transformation Fund was being reviewed and would come to a future Cabinet meeting.

Councillor Andrew Stringer asked if the £71,000 for Shared Legal Services was an overspend, which was confirmed by the officers. He also wanted clarification on what was included in the £41,000 under bullet point c in the Public Access Transformation and ICT. Councillor Stringer suggested it would have been possible to spend £16,000 on the Tree for Life project since there now was a saving of £32,000 under the Sustainable Environment budget.

Members were informed that Building Control had a 2.4% reduction in services and this had created a shortfall of £17,000. West Suffolk Building Control were assisting in the preparation of a business case to prepare for the next three years and it would look at whether it was appropriate for the service to be located in Endeavour House.

Councillor Gowrley agreed with Members that Cabinet would vote on recommendation 2.2 c separately.

By a unanimous vote

### **RESOLUTION 1**

*That the 2016/17 financial outturn as set out in the report be noted*

### **RESOLUTION 2**

*That the following net transfers of £528k be approved with the General Fund reserves:*

- a) Transfer of £250k, being the income from SnOasis **to** an earmarked reserve, referred to in paragraph 10.9 of the report*
- b) Transfer of £257k, being the 2015/16 deficit on the business rates Collection Fund **from** the Business Rates Equalisation reserve, referred to in paragraph 10.9 of the report*

### **RESOLUTION 3**

*That the General Fund carry-forward requests that individually exceed £25k and totalling £314k referred to in paragraph 10.2 of the report be approved*

### **RESOLUTION 4**

*That the Capital carry-forward requests referred to in paragraphs 10.20 and 10.21 of the report be approved*

### **RESOLUTION 5**

*That the transfer of £72k, being the HRA deficit for the year (£790k better than planned) per paragraph 10.25, from Reserves be approved*

## **RESOLUTION 6**

*That the HRA Capital carry-forward requests that exceed £25k referred to in paragraph 10.32 of the report totalling £751k be approved*

*By 6 Votes to 2*

## **RESOLUTION 7**

*c) Transfer of £535k, being the balance of the General Fund favourable variance, to the Transformation Fund, referred to in paragraph 10.8 of the report*

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## **MCA/17/7 BUSINESS RATES - DISCRETIONARY RELIEF SCHEME**

Councillor Whitehead introduced the report. He advised Members that after the revaluation from April 2017 the business rate reliefs were put in place as detailed in paragraph 9.10, page 38.

Local authorities had been urged to design their own relief policies for the £300m, so they could grant relief to businesses in the greatest need. Appendix A set out in detail the criteria and the decision and appeal procedures for the Local Rate Relief Policy.

Councillor Whitehead moved the recommendations which were seconded by Councillor Glen Horn.

Councillor Whybrow asked for clarification of the number of businesses being supported by this scheme and if the funding level in bullet point 3.1 on page 35 represented the full maximum funding available from Central Government.

In response to the question Councillor Whitehead said that the Shared Revenues Partnership had identified 14 properties, which the relief would apply to. He confirmed the funding was the maximum amount.

Members asked further questions on how the Council intended to communicate the Business Rate Relief and were informed that businesses which had been identified as appropriate for the relief would be contacted.

Councillor Otton asked for a report detailing what Mid Suffolk District had already done regarding discretionary relief for small village and rural factories and enterprises.

Members requested further information on what would happen to the unspent funding from the Business Rate relief scheme if not enough businesses were identified to fully spend the funding.

The Assistant Director – Corporate Resources said that a response from Central Government was expected to establish if unspent relief funds could be carried forward to future years. If this was the case, Cabinet Members and Officers were to review the policies to enable a redistribution of the underspent funds for the duration of the Relief Scheme.

There had been no feedback from Suffolk Chambers and Federation of Small Businesses as suggested in bullet point 6.3, page 36.

By a unanimous vote

**RESOLUTION 1**

*That Cabinet approves the discretionary local rate relief policy*

**RESOLUTION 2**

*That authority be given to the Assistant Director – Corporate Resources in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and the Leader to vary the scheme this year and in future years to keep it in line with Government guidance and local circumstances*

**RESOLUTION 3**

*That authority be given to the Shared Revenues Partnership to administer and determine applications for relief within the policy*

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**MCA/17/8 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT - SUMMARY OF THE 30 YEAR BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL PLAN 2017 UPDATE**

Councillor Gowrley introduced the Report and explained to Members that the self-financing scheme introduced in 2011/12 required that housing stock holding authorities had to have a 30 – year business plan outlining the management of the housing stock.

The summary of the updated position of the Business Plan now ensured that the Council would be in a financially secure position and revenue under the debt cap which enable the Council to deliver additional homes in the future.

Councillor Gowrley moved the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Brewster.

Members were generally pleased with the Business Plan as it reflected the Government White Paper for Housing. Some Member felt that caution was necessary when managing the community-led affordable housing schemes. It would also be necessary to be open minded for future change to the scheme and how it was managed. Some Members felt that the scheme could have included new build and higher levels of environmental standards.

Councillor Otton expressed some reservation on the Sheltered Housing and de-sheltering scheme which had taken place and thought it would be helpful to have a review on the success of the scheme.

Members were informed that a review was due in April 2018 as detailed on page 85 of the report.

Councillor Eburne, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee informed Members that the Committee had considered the report and that one of their concerns was that the report only recommended an annual review. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had forwarded a recommendation to Cabinet that a reporting framework for performance monitoring system be put in place.

Councillor Gowrley agreed that the Business Plan would need constant monitoring and updating and would be reviewed by Portfolio Holders' reports. The Business plan should also be reviewed by committees such as Joint Housing Board as it was important to have tenants' involvement in the monitoring process.

By a unanimous vote

## **RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL**

That the updated 30-year business and financial plan be approved

### **18 MCA/17/9 COMMUNITY HOUSING FUND**

Councillor Gowrley introduced the report and said that the Community Housing Fund was introduced at the start of 2017 and that Mid Suffolk had received a total of £225,746 for the first year's allocation. The Fund was supporting the local community-led affordable housing schemes and was to enable sufficient capacity, capability, and confidence within local groups to develop housing projects. The recommendations in the report detailed the allocation and spending of the Community Housing Fund.

Councillor Gowrley moved the recommendations as detailed in paragraph 8 on page 92 - 95 which were seconded by Councillor Whybrow.

Councillor Whybrow said that the Community Housing Fund Scheme depended on the allocations of funding detailed in paragraph 8, page 92 – 95 and that the management of funds would determine the success of the delivery of the Community Housing Fund Scheme.

Councillor Stringer said that the Government was attempting to target areas which had a high proportion of second homes and enquired if there was a corporate approach on how to target the appropriate areas of this scheme.

The Professional Lead – Housing Enabling explained that the report detailed the problems connected with not just second homes but also the affordability of homes and that a variety of data had been investigated to determine the allocation of the funding. She said that all parishes had problems with the affordability of homes and that this year's funding would be allocated to those parishes who were already investigating community-led housing initiatives. It was the intention to send information to all parishes to inform them of the Community Funding Scheme and encourage applications for funding. This will be followed up by a workshop in each district to give information on how to set up Community Land Trusts and how to apply for the funding.

Councillor Penny Otton said that the parishes were likely to need support to apply and manage the Community Housing Fund Scheme.

By a unanimous vote

**RESOLUTION**

*To approve the recommendations set out in paragraph 8, page 92 – 95.*

19 **MATTERS REFERRED BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY OR JOINT AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

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

Councillor Eburne, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee enquired if the recommendations forwarded to Cabinet with regards to the work on the Neighbourhood Plan were being responded to and if the Senior Leadership Team would report back to the Committee on how officers intended to support the parishes with the work on the Neighbourhood Plan.

Mike Evans, Strategic Director, said that officers were working on the recommendations and would report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee within the six months' deadline.

20 **MCA/17/10 FORTHCOMING DECISIONS LIST**

**RESOLUTION**

*That the Forthcoming Decisions List be noted.*

The business of the meeting concluded at 3.25pm.

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Chairman