

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a MEETING of the COMMUNITY WELL BEING POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held on Thursday 13 November 2014 at 2.15pm

Present

Councillors: Mrs H Bainbridge (Chairman), E J Berry, M R Lee, F J Rosamond and Mrs J Rendle (substituting for Cllr Mrs S Griggs)

Apologies

Councillors: Mrs S Griggs and Mrs C Heal

Also Present

Councillors: R M Deed, N V Davey, R F Radford, C R Slade and K D Wilson

Also Present

Officers: A Tregellas (Head of Communities and Governance), J Bodley-Scott (Community Development & Regeneration Manager) and J Stuckey (Member Services Officer)

Declarations of Interest

Councillors:

Member	Minute No	Type of Interest
F R Rosamond	32	Personal
K D Wilson	32	Personal

29 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

With reference to item 5 (Grants) on the agenda Mr Duncan Wood the Chief Officer for INVOLVE Voluntary Action in Mid Devon said; we have worked as a significant partner with MDDC for over 10 years and this cut comes as a staggering surprise and out of proportion with any other grant recipient. Our work is more in demand now than ever, to keep front line services running. I feel that I should put on record that in the last 2 years in response to funding cuts we have reduced our staff team by over 40% and our establishment costs by 60%. In terms of efficiency savings I think that everyone will recognise that this is a real achievement. Having read the extensive report before the panel I am concerned at some of the conclusions drawn both for ourselves and some of our member charities. The level of direct service provided by INVOLVE and the impact that our work has in helping to sustain front line services for others does not appear to have been understood. There are other inaccuracies within the report which my colleagues from other charities will no doubt challenge in due course. We feel that these inaccuracies have led to assumptions that are erroneous. My first question is,

the MDDC corporate plan has four elements, one being empowering our communities, within this, one of the key challenges being work with voluntary groups within the district and help them with advice training. In response to this within the corporate plan the Council cites the development of strategies and this grant review process that we are currently involved in. Whilst I recognise the need for this council to make savings and follow process I am not sure that this sort of assistance will meet the challenge. It is INVOLVE that has delivered and delivered again against this aim, not the Council, but we are funded by the Council to do that role. How will the Council deliver on this pledge if INVOLVE is no longer able to sustain its key professional advisors to do it on their behalf? My second question, alongside the limited time allocation given to the Councils Grants Officer we offer support to all the groups who may receive funding cuts as a result of this process. How can we continue to do this if the council removes so much funding that our service becomes destabilised?

Fay Ashton of Tiverton and District Community Transport and Crediton and District Community Transport speaking with reference to item 5 (Grants) on the agenda stated; we provide transport services to frail elderly and rurally isolated people throughout Mid Devon. Our main two towns are Tiverton and Crediton as well as 46 parishes. We offer front line services and play a major role with transport to health. My first question is if the provision of front line services was a factor in decision making for the grant cuts can the Council please explain why there is no reference to this in the consultation therefore making the consultation flawed. My second question is did the Council carry out an equality impact assessment of each cut and if so where has each document been published.

30 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 September 2014 were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

31 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman had no announcements to make.

32 **GRANT PAYMENTS TO EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS 2015/16**

The Committee had before it a report from the Grants and Funding Officer seeking Member approval for the level of grant awards to external organisations for 2015/16.

The Head of Communities and Governance informed the Group that the 2014/15 financial year marked the final year of a three year review of grants to external organisations. During this period, grant allocations had been more closely aligned with the Council's corporate priorities.

As the Corporate Plan's current term ended in 2015, the review period covered by this report was for 2015/16 only. Grant allocations would be reassessed once the Council's strategic objectives began to emerge following the appointment of a new administration in May 2015.

At the beginning of the three-year review in 2011/12, the Council's grant programme supported 25 agencies. By 31st March 2015 this would have been reduced to 13 agencies providing 15 services.

Agencies had been assessed against the following criteria:

- How the services they provided met the Council's corporate strategic objectives as set out in the Corporate Plan 2012-15;
- Detailed service and performance data;
- Three years' worth of accounts;
- A current business or development plan, or strategic objectives for the next twelve months;
- Impact on services of a percentage grant reduction; and
- An analysis of the social, economic and environmental benefit of the services provided.

The need to identify savings in anticipation of a reduction in the Council's government grant settlement for 2015/16 and 2016/17 was a further factor in the review. The Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer was budgeting for a 15.3% decrease in Government grant for 2015/16 and assumed a further 10% reduction in 2016/17.

All Heads of Service had been asked to identify budget savings to alleviate the reduction in Government grant. The indicative saving from the council's grant budget for 2015/16 was £20,000. This would represent a 10% overall reduction in budget.

The Group proceeded to look at the table in Appendix 1 of the report, which outlined the proposed grant for 2015/16, showing as a percentage any cut recommended.

Discussion took place regarding the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) for whom an 11% cut of £4500K had been suggested.

- The Authority had been in receipt of a grant from the Council Tax Reduction Scheme which had allowed them to use a member of Moneywise staff to give advice to Council tenants, reducing calls to the CAB;
- Performance reports showed a reduction in the number of enquires relating to benefits and debt;
- The CAB was now operating in other areas of Devon which may have meant that the performance reported was not an accurate reflection of actual calls within the District;
- Other District Councils were supporting the CAB, although to a lesser amount than this authority;

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that:

A reduction of £2500.00 be made to the Grant payable to the Citizens Advice Bureau, making their grant payment for 2015-16 £47,500.00.

(Proposed by M R Lee, seconded by E J Berry)

Discussion took place regarding the Tiverton and District Community Transport and Crediton and District Community Transport for whom a 10% cut had been proposed:

- The two organisations had joined together so were still operating separately but were reporting to one centre;
- Performance had increased in the last year;
- Merging should have resulted in less management costs;
- Rural isolation was a problem for the District.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that:

The grant payable to the Tiverton and District Community Transport and Crediton and District Community Transport be cut by 5%.

(Proposed by E J Berry and seconded by F J Rosamond)

Discussion took place regarding the Market Centre Youth Drop In, Tiverton for whom an 8% cut had been suggested:

- The Centre was doing well financially and was now in a position to make rental payments;
- The Centre had been slow to provide information requested;
- Youth provision in Mid Devon was being maintained at the Youth Centre.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that;

That the reduction in grant proposed in the report be accepted.

(Proposed by Mrs J R Rendle and seconded by E J Berry)

Discussion took place regarding INVOLVE (Voluntary Action in Mid Devon) for whom a 33.33% cut had been proposed;

- The Chief Executive was now working Devonwide so spending less time working on behalf of Mid Devon;
- The value of the work performed by INVOLVE;
- The valuable link with voluntary agencies;

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that;

The grant payable to INVOLVE be cut by 5%.

(Proposed by F J Rosamond and seconded by J R Rendle)

The Group discussed the Seed Fund and accepted that the amount available for distribution would be less due to some of the funds being used to lessen cuts to grant allocations.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that subject to the changes indicated, and the use of Seed Fund to finance those changes;

- a) Members endorse the 2015/16 levels of grant funding for external and charitable organisations as set out in Appendix 1 of the report subject to the following amendments:
 - i. A reduction of £2500.00 be made to the Grant payable to the Citizens Advice Bureau, making their grant payment for 2015-16 £47,500.00.
 - ii. The grant payable to the Tiverton and District Community Transport and Crediton and District Community Transport be cut by 5%.
 - iii. The grant payable to INVOLVE be cut by 5%.
- b) Members approve the 2015/16 budget allocation to the Seed Fund as amended.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

The Committee expressed their thanks to the Officers involved in producing the report.

Notes: i) Councillor F R Rosamond declared an interest as he was the Mid Devon representative for the Citizens Advice Bureau.

ii) Councillor K D Wilson declared an interest as he was involved with a number of the Organisations included in the report.

iii) Report previously circulated; copy attached to the Minutes.

33. IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING – 2 DECEMBER 2014

- Community Safety Partnership update
- Financial Monitoring
- 2014/15 Budget consultation
- Performance and Risk
- Single Equalities Scheme
- Leader Funding Bid Results
- CCTV Annual Report

(The meeting ended at 3.50pm)

CHAIRMAN