

## **MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **MINUTES of a MEETING of the COMMUNITY WELL BEING POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held on Tuesday 28 January 2014 at 2.15pm**

#### **Present**

**Councillors:** Mrs H Bainbridge (Chairman), E J Berry, Mrs S Griggs, Mrs C Heal, M R Lee, J D Squire and Mrs N Woollatt

#### **Also present**

**Councillors:** R M Deed and R L Stanley

#### **Also Present**

**Officers:** A Jarrett (Head of Finance), P N Williams (Head of Environmental Services), L Reeves (Head of Customer Services), R Fish (Principal Accountant), S Bennion (Leisure Facilities Manager), A Barrett (Accountant) and S J Lees (Member Services Officer)

#### **47 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no members of the public present.

#### **48 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 December 2013 were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

#### **49 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman had no announcements to make.

#### **50 LEISURE PRICING POLICY**

The Group had before it a report \* from the Leisure Facilities Manager advising it of the proposed leisure pricing strategy for 2014/15. She explained that recently the Leisure Service had received a large investment in order to enhance its facilities and the aim had been to maximise the potential that the new facilities could bring to Leisure Centre users. An analysis had been made of the fees charged by competitors and careful consideration had been made not to price Mid Devon's Leisure Centres out of the market. It was confirmed that an increase in both usage and income at Lords Meadow had been seen as a direct result of the improvement of the facilities. Feedback from customers had been extremely positive.

Discussion took place regarding the tennis courts. Currently this was charged per head which was very expensive in comparison to other leisure providers. Therefore the recommendation was to offer tennis courts on a court hire basis. Consideration would be given to putting a dome over the tennis courts in the long term so as to make them multi-use areas during inclement weather but this may prove to be cost prohibitive.

**RECOMMENDED** to the Cabinet that the strategy and proposed price increases be approved.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Note: \* Report previously circulated; copy attached to the signed Minutes.

**51 FINANCIAL MONITORING**

The Principal Accountant provided the Group with a financial monitoring update for the nine months to 31 December 2013 in respect of the services included within this PDG's remit. He explained that the overall position showed a forecasted underspend of £35K which was broadly on budget. This situation had improved by £200K since the last meeting of this Group. The sole reason for this related to a release of £200k bad debt provision in relation to the new Council Tax Scheme. He further explained that income flows were on budget and had not moved significantly since September. A financial update up until 31<sup>st</sup> January 2014 would be provided at the next meeting.

**52 BUDGET 2014-15**

The Head of Finance provided an update to the Group regarding the draft 2014/15 budget position. He explained that this was the final update to Members, discussions having been held at the other Policy Developments Group meetings, Scrutiny Committee and the Cabinet. Following the announcement of the Formula Grant settlement on 19 December 2013, the Head of Finance had held additional meetings with service managers and was now able to inform Members that the draft budget showed a balanced General Fund and Capital Programme position. The 2014/15 draft budget would be presented to Council for approval on 26 February 2014.

**53 CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE OF CHILDREN'S HOME SERVICES**

The Group had been in receipt of a consultation paper \* from Devon County Council and had been asked to consider whether they wanted to provide any feedback in relation to the future of Children's Home Services provided at Birchen Lane, Blossom Corner and Rifford Road.

Comments were made regarding what were perceived to be inefficiencies in how the service had been structured. There were deep concerns about how the budget in this area had been allocated and the amount of money it had cost to provide the service in the three homes. The report needed to have more financial detail especially in relation to building costs, maintenance costs, front line staff costs and management staff costs. It was felt that in order to give a meaningful response to a consultation Members needed to have more detail.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The legislation which required a certain number of staff to be in attendance at all times when supervising minors; this was why the costs in running a children's home were so high;
- The frustration Members felt in being asked to contribute to consultations but never receiving any feedback or feeling that their comments made a difference to the outcomes.

**RESOLVED** that the following comments be referred back to Devon County Council as part of the consultation on the Future of Children's Home Services provided at Birchen lane, Blossom Corner and Rifford Road:

- (i) The Group agreed that it would be inappropriate to keep Birchen Lane and Rifford Road homes open given the information contained within the report. However, the Group would want to see Blossom Corner remain open given that the report says it is 'well run' and that there ought to be at least one home retained for emergency or short term provision. The Group would not want to see children moved out of their locality;
- (ii) The Group requested that they receive feedback regarding the final decision in relation to this matter.

(Proposed by Cllr Mrs N Woollatt and seconded by Cllr Mrs S Griggs)

Note: \* Consultation paper previously circulated; copy attached to the signed Minutes.

## 54 **DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a briefing paper from the Head of Customer Services providing information on how the Council was working towards responding to an increasing demand from customers to communicate either from home using a PC or when on the move using a smart phone. It was explained that in addition to maintaining the current ways of interacting with customers the Digital Transformation agenda would grow and would change the way in which the Council interacted with its customers.

The Head of Customer Services brought the Group's attention to the following:

- The County wide project to roll out Broadband;
- The aim of taking services to people in their homes who may not necessarily want to come into the office;
- Digital Transformation was at the heart of social inclusion;
- A recent survey carried out with customers showed that 72% of customers had access to the internet or a smart phone;
- It was not just about technology but also about education and the need to help people use the technology;
- She was working with services such as Housing to draw up a 'wish list' in relation to their specific customer needs;
- The cheaper costs of text messaging as opposed to sending correspondence through Royal Mail;
- On-line services, for example, customers being able to look up how much they owe in Council Tax.

Discussion took place regarding:

- A website project group which had been set up to look at improvements in each service area;
- The important need for feedback on the website to come from all different ages including young people;
- The project being in the very early stages and that it would take four years to fully implement. However, some of the changes would be immediate, for example, electronic wage slips, otherwise the Council ran the risk of falling behind;
- A target will be set to make savings and ultimately this might lead to a reduction in costs relating to printing, postage and administration but these potential savings were not known yet.

Note: \* Briefing paper previously circulated; copy attached to the signed Minutes.

## 55 **ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH UPDATE**

The Head of Environmental Services provided the Group with a verbal update on the services within the Environmental Health area, specifically he provided information in relation to the following areas:

### Private Water Supplies

- 1219 premises were not serviced by a mains water supply;
- In 2013 there were 145 separate water samples taken of which 34 failed and required further investigation;
- Each supply had to be risk assessed for dangerous bacteria such as 'Ecoli'.

### Licensing

This included providing licenses for:

- The sale of alcohol;
- Temporary Event Notices;
- Hackney carriages and private taxi hire;
- Gambling and betting establishments;
- Animal boarding premises;
- Scrap Metal workers;
- Tattoo parlours and ear piercing premises.

### Health and Safety

He explained that premises were categorised in terms of whether they were high risk or low risk. Only two were classed as very high risk whereas 740 fell within category C, for example shoe shops.

The national priorities for 2011/12 have been identified as listed below and as such officers only visit premises where these activities are taking place rather than routine inspections:

- Legionella;
- Potential explosions caused by liquid petroleum gas (LPG);
- E.coli and Cryptosporidium;
- Vehicle accidents;
- Falls from heights;
- Carbon monoxide poisoning.

All of these areas were linked to the public health agenda.

### Food

It was confirmed that the majority of food premises within Mid Devon had been rated as scoring a '5' for hygiene. There had been a continuing improvement in the quality and cleanliness of food premises since the scoring system had been introduced. Premises were re-checked regarding their rating every 6 months to 3 years depending on the category of risk and whether or not a complaint had been received.

### Food sampling

Officers had been issued with devices that could identify the phosphates given off by bacteria meaning that officers could instantly tell a proprietor whether bacteria was within acceptable levels or not.

### Enforcement

One tonne of illegally slaughtered meat had recently been seized by Environmental Health Officers and had been condemned.

## 56 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

In addition to the items already identified in the work programme the following item was requested to be on the agenda for the next meeting:

The new NHS programme intending to share people's personal information – Members expressed concern regarding a recent leaflet circulated to

householders. Members of the public may not be aware that they have to make a specific request to their GP practice not to share their personal information with other NHS bodies otherwise this information could be shared with others. Members felt there was a need to discuss this further and seek some clarification.

The Chairman also requested that an update be provided to the Group at their meeting May from Age Concern.

(The meeting ended at 4.02pm)

**CHAIRMAN**