

## **MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **MINUTES of a MEETING of the COMMUNITY WELL BEING POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held on Tuesday 3 December 2013 at 2.15pm**

#### **Present**

**Councillors:** Mrs H Bainbridge (Chairman), E J Berry, Mrs S Griggs, Mrs C Heal, M R Lee and P F Williams

#### **Apology**

**Councillor:** Mrs N Woollatt

#### **Also present**

**Councillors:** N V Davey and R M Deed

#### **Also Present**

**Officers:** A Jarrett (Head of Finance), A Tregellas (Head of Communities and Governance), J Bodley-Scott (Community Development and Regeneration Manager), R Fish (Principal Accountant), S Bennion (Leisure Facilities Manager), A Barrett (Accountant) and S J Lees (Member Services Officer)

#### **38 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no members of the public present.

#### **39 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Special Meeting held on 5 November 2013 were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

#### **40 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman congratulated the Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life for recently achieving a Gold Award for the Best Small Visitor Attraction.

#### **41 NEIGHBOURHOOD HEALTH WATCH**

The Group had been due to receive a presentation from the project facilitator for Neighbourhood Health Watch. However, due to unforeseen circumstances she had been unable to attend the meeting. The Group were informed that this item would therefore be deferred until the next meeting.

#### **42 PERFORMANCE AND RISK**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report \* from the Head of Communities and Governance (HCG) updating it on performance against the corporate plan and local service targets for 2013/14 as well as providing an update on the key business risks.

The HCG provided the Group with further information regarding the performance indicators that were currently performing below target.

Discussion followed thereon:

- The Supermarket store 'Aldi' would shortly be opening in Cullompton which it was hoped would bring more visitors to the town;
- She was confident that the 'empty shops' indicator in Crediton would improve by the end of the financial year;
- The Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Officer was working with the Head of Environmental Services to improve satisfaction rates for members of the public reporting ASB;
- Footfall figures for Tiverton were monitored from a number of different locations;
- It was suggested that the indicator regarding 'compliance with food hygiene law' ought to be set at 100% rather than 90%. The HCG explained that this indicator specifically related to high risk areas;
- The HCG was more than satisfied that Leisure Services were managing the risks in their area effectively.

The HCG informed the Group that the Scrutiny Committee had resolved to establish a task and finish group to look at performance management reporting. She also agreed to provide further information to the Group in relation to:

- i. Whether the Saturday markets with traders selling goods from gazebo's on Cullompton High Street was having a positive effect within the other shops of the town;
- ii. The actual number of food premises which were monitored regarding compliance with food hygiene law.

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

#### 43 **FINANCIAL UPDATE FOR THE SIX MONTHS TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2013**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report \* from the Head of Finance presenting it with a financial update in respect of the income and expenditure so far in the financial year. The Principal Accountant highlighted the following key areas:

- An over spend of £169K was currently showing as the forecasted figure on the General Fund balance for 2013/14. However, since publishing the report this deficit figure had improved to £115K, largely due to Housing Benefit subsidies;
- Forecasted income was broadly on budget for this Policy Development Group (PDG);
- The service areas falling under the remit of this PDG were performing well;
- Pressure on the recreation and sport budget from National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) could not have been predicted.

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

## 44 BUDGET 2014/15

The Group had before it a report \* from the Head of Finance presenting the options available in order for the Council to set a balanced budget for 2014/15 and to agree a future strategy for further budget reductions for 2015/16 onwards.

He outlined the contents of the report stating that at this stage the information provided was a best estimate on what it would cost to run services next year whilst providing the same service. Assumptions had to be made because of the timing of information regarding the Formula Grant, interest receipts, contributions to the capital programme, transfers from/to reserves and Council Tax levels.

The savings exercise that was undertaken by Service Managers in the summer had highlighted £576K. These cuts were yet to be approved by Members but the Officer informed the Group that if these savings were not agreed the money would need to be found from somewhere else.

The reconciliation of the main budget variances affecting the 2014/15 draft budget were as follows:

<b>Variances</b>	<b>Amount £000</b>
Reduction in formula grant	618
Savings incorporated from savings exercise (See Appendix 3 £628k – some reviewed as unachievable)	(576)
Vehicle replacement “sinking funds”	257
New annual borrowing costs – refuse & leisure	137
Removal of 2013/14 Council Tax Freeze Grant	52
2014/15 pay award – estimated at 1% + pension	138
All overtime now subject to superannuation	22
PDG reserve fully utilised in 2013/14	124
Council Tax income increase (1.5% rise)	(72)
Additional Council Tax from extra properties and changes to empty property discounts	(149)
Additional income (Leisure, Cemeteries, Car Parks)	(147)
Cut in Government grant for HBenefit and CTax administration of 8%	32
Decrease in recycling income (volumes & price)	40
Review of bad debt provision on DARs	66
Inflation on utilities, fuel and rates	56
Removal of bad debt provision for LCTS and localisation of Business Rates	(249)
Other minor variances	12
<b>Draft budget gap for 2014/15</b>	<b>361</b>

The following general assumptions had been made:

- 1) Formula Grant had been reduced by £618k as previously advised, the actual figure to be provided late December;

- 2) Council Tax income based on growing property base and an illustrative 1.5% increase on the band D figure of £182.15;
- 3) Government had indicated it may offer another Council Tax freeze grant for 2014/15;
- 4) 2014/15 salary budgets included an increase of 1%;
- 5) Actuaries forecasted an increase to pension contribution rates of 0.1%. Had also included figures for auto-enrolment and overtime;
- 6) All income flows had been reviewed and adjusted for changes in demand and unit price;
- 7) Investment income had been based upon the existing lending criteria now in force;
- 8) Nil transfer into the General Fund Balance;
- 9) Revenue contribution to Capital funding had been left at £350k - this did not balance the 2014/15 capital programme;
- 10) Fuel & utility costs had been inflated and reviewed against 2013/14 expenditure levels.

He further informed the Group that:

- A public consultation exercise had taken place, which although complex was a useful exercise in providing a steer to Members from local residents;
- £476K had been identified as savings for 2014/15 for services falling under the remit of this PDG;
- There was still a funding gap of £500K on next year's Capital Programme.

Discussion took place regarding:

- 'New annual borrowing costs' in table 1 related to the purchase of three refuse vehicles and gym equipment through a five year Public Works Liability Loan;
- The budget in relation to recycling had had to be lowered as a result of figures based on the current financial year;
- The Head of Finance had already assumed the extra Council Tax income from newly built houses within the district but these new houses would also have an effect on the cost of the Council's services to those properties;
- Whilst there was a zero budget allocated for Tourism in 2014/15 it was reported that the Tiverton Attractions Group would be looking at developing a strategy;
- Usage of the Tiverton Information Service since opening at the Museum on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2013 had exceeded expectation and footfall figures were very positive;
- Leisure Services had been able to maintain their service despite having their budget reduced by £500K and the Leisure Facilities Manager and her staff were to be congratulated;
- Future improvements to the Tiverton Pannier Market paving scheme;
- The Council had to pay pest control contractors for people in receipt of Housing Benefit.

**RECOMMENDED** to the Cabinet that the draft budget for services falling under the

remit of this Policy Development Group be approved.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

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

#### 45 **TARGETED FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMME**

The Community Development and Regeneration Manager had been asked to attend the meeting to provide an update regarding this programme. He explained that the programme was now 18 months into a 3 year funded project. There had been organisational difficulties in setting up the programme such as the sharing of data between agencies.

Devon County Council had recently issued a newsletter in which the Chief Executive had stated that "...we were beginning to influence positive outcomes with families". The programme had now been extended to include Cullompton and Crediton and in total 106 families had been identified as potentially needing support. The County Council was committed to continuing this approach beyond the life of the government funding.

However a major challenge for the future related to a loss of staff resource with skilled staff leaving the social services sector as a result of budget cuts. Retention of staff with the necessary skills to meet the needs of families was a cause for concern. Despite this, the point was made that important conversations took place at multi agency meetings and the sharing of knowledge was vital and this model of working to support families needed to be maintained.

#### 46 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

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

- A further 2014/15 budget update
- Neighbourhood Health Watch
- Update from the Head of Environmental Health Services

(The meeting ended at 4.00pm)

**CHAIRMAN**