

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a MEETING of the COMMUNITY WELL BEING POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held on Tuesday 27 May 2014 at 2.15pm

Present

Councillors: Mrs H Bainbridge, E J Berry, Mrs S Griggs, Mrs C Heal, D J Knowles, M R Lee and P F Williams

Also Present

Councillors: R M Deed, Mrs J Roach, C R Slade and R L Stanley

Also Present

Officers: A Tregellas (Head of Communities and Governance), L Reeves (Head of Customer Services), D Harris (Benefit Manager) and S J Lees (Member Services Officer)

- 1 **CHAIRMAN – ELECTION** (Cllr E J Berry, Chairman of the Council, in the Chair)

RESOLVED that Cllr Mrs H Bainbridge be elected Chairman of the Group for the municipal year 2014/15.

Cllr Mrs Bainbridge took the Chair

- 2 **VICE-CHAIRMAN - ELECTION**

RESOLVED that Cllr M R Lee be elected Vice-Chairman of the Group for the municipal year 2014/15.

- 3 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no members of the public present.

- 4 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 March 2014 were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

- 5 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (Recording 5 minutes and 15 seconds)**

The Chairman thanked Cllr R M Deed for the work he had undertaken during his time as Cabinet Member for Community Well Being. She stated that he had made an enormous contribution to the work of the Council and had always been 'at the top of his game'.

6 **DEVON COMMUNITY FOUNDATION (Recording 6 minutes)**

At the request of Cllr E J Berry, the Chief Executive from the Devon Community Foundation and Mr Mike Bull, a volunteer on the Management Board, had been invited to give a presentation to Members providing information on the work that the Foundation undertook.

The following background and summary information was provided:

- The premise they start from is that everybody in the community has something to offer either in terms of volunteering or donating money;
- There were 48 Community Foundation's nationally which collectively held over £400m in endowments. The Devon Community Foundation (DCF) covered the areas of Devon, Plymouth and Torbay and locally held funds in the region of £4.1m. This had increased significantly in recent times from £180k;
- The building of the endowment fund was key and was used as a catalyst for attracting matched funding; it chiefly relied on philanthropic donations;
- The average amount of grant was £2,500 but even smaller amounts could mean the difference between surviving or not for some groups;
- The DCF were proactive in developing links between philanthropic donor's, private companies and local authorities, that is, connecting the 'doner's' with the 'doers';
- They had no dependency on resources from the public sector;
- They had the ability to react quickly to emergency situations, for example, recent flooding events where they had been able to gather funds very quickly;
- The DCF had found that some people would rather give to a charity than to a local authority, therefore they were keen to foster closer links with District Councils especially in the area of grant provision.

Discussion then followed with regard to:

- The fact that the DCF had helped community shops in the past with such things as equipment and the funding of staff training although they did not provide capital funding;
- Applying for a grant was achieved through their website;
- There were issues with marketing, many people had not heard of the Devon Community Foundation but due to a lack of resources they had had to rely very much on word of mouth;
- The Cabinet Member for Community Well Being stated that he would be delighted to have a meeting with the DCF and the Grants and Funding Officer;
- The DCF were voted as the 'Charity of the Year' on Radio Devon and at the Devon County Show;

It was suggested that an update be provided at a future meeting.

The Chairman thanked the representatives for attending the meeting.

7 **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY AND REVIEW (Recording 52 minutes and 50 seconds)**

The Group had before it a report * from the Head of Communities and Governance updating Members on progress made with the Community Engagement Action Plan (2013-14) and reviewing the strategy and focus for 2014-15. It was explained that this was an overarching framework which did not list the specifics of individual consultations.

Discussion took place regarding the value of the survey's and consultations currently undertaken by the Council. The Head of Communities and Governance confirmed that any comments which came through the Community Development Team were fed back to relevant service areas for consideration and action. However, it was felt that more ought to be done to feed the results back to members of the public and also Elected Members. It was important that views expressed by the public and local business were valued and acted upon. It was suggested that survey results should be reported through the Members Weekly Information Sheet and that the comments expressed at the meeting be taken on board.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that:

- (a) The future focus for the Community Engagement Strategy, including a targeted and proportionate approach to consultations, be approved;
- (b) The results of survey's and consultations be reported back to members of the public and Members of the Council.

(Proposed by Cllr D J Knowles and seconded by Cllr Mrs S Griggs)

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

8 **PERFORMANCE AND RISK REPORT FOR THE 2013/14 FINANCIAL YEAR (Recording 1 hour, 18 minutes and 50 seconds)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, the Performance and Risk report for the 2013/14 financial year providing Members with an update on performance against the corporate plan and local service targets for the 2013/14 financial year as well as providing an update on the key business risks.

Discussion took place regarding:

Community Days – In some wards these events had proved popular in the past whereas in other wards they had been very poorly attended, there was not a 'one size fits all'. The Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour Officer was investigating the most effective way of disseminating multi-agency information in the future as due to austerity cuts it was becoming increasing difficult to arrange events. It was suggested that more could be done through social media and by attending other organisational events such as the Devon County Show.

Footfall figures – the comment was made that it would be useful to know on what day the data had been gathered, how had the weather been and had it been a market day? It was suggested that in some other towns data from CCTV footage was used at a different half hour time slot over several days in order to get a more representative figure for footfall with the towns.

Monitoring the performance of markets – there was currently not a measure in place to monitor the performance of markets within the district. However, work would be undertaken as part of drawing up the next Corporate Plan to whether it was possible to incorporate performance indicators on town centre markets in relation to economic development.

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

9 **LOCAL WELFARE ASSISTANCE (Recording 1 hour and 34 minutes)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report from the Benefit Manager updating it on the provision of Local Welfare Assistance scheme. She outlined the contents of the report stating that funding from Central Government would cease on 31 March 2015.

Discussion took place regarding:

- a) The underspend of £42k which would be rolled forward into 2015/16. Even though the scheme was coming to an end people would still need to receive money advice which was often a lengthy process and quite intensive, the underspend would be used to fund this ongoing advice and support;
- b) Concerns were raised regarding ‘administration costs’ stated in the appendix. It was explained that the scheme had been introduced on 1 April 2013 and had needed skills that staff within the Council simply did not have. Money advice had been provided by Wessex Resolutions and the ‘Money£wise team’ and had often involved intensive discussions designed at getting to the route of a person’s financial difficulty. A key element had also been on working with individuals to establish self-reliance wherever possible. Money£wise had also worked out of hours and over holiday periods when the Council offices had not been open.

It was **AGREED** that in future the word ‘administration’ should not be used to explain the kind of work undertaken by officers giving advice and support as it could be seen as misleading.

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

10 **OLDER PEOPLE’S STRATEGY (Recording 1 hour, 56 minutes and 10 seconds)**

The Cabinet had recommended that the Head of Communities and Governance (HoCG) be requested to develop the recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee regarding ‘Ageing Well’ into a five year Older Persons Strategy. The HoCG had wanted to seek Members views as to what they felt constituted being an ‘older person’ and to also get some feedback as to what the strategy should include.

The Head of Communities and Governance (HCG) provided the Group with some definitions and indicative ages of an 'older person' as defined by the World Health Organisation, the Department for Health, Age UK and the Department for Work and Pensions. The group considered that an 'older person' ought to be defined as anybody being 'in receipt of' or 'eligible for' a state pension and that an age in itself ought not to be stated.

The HCG had researched a number of 'Older People Strategies' as adopted by other local authorities with a consensus of priority areas being listed as follows:

- Access to information and services
- Promoting Well Being and activity
- Community cohesion
- Social interaction and activity
- Lifelong Learning and leisure
- Housing
- Income and employment

During discussion it was stated that it was important to engage with key partners such as Age UK, village groups and Neighbourhood Health Watch. Services such as assisted bin collections were vital but other services could be considered, for example, providing a list of trusted tradesmen or trying to stop vulnerable residents receiving junk mail. There needed to be a focus on the services the Council could realistically deliver. Further discussion identified a need to celebrate people's differences and the fact that people were capable of different things at different ages.

The Group were informed that a strategy would need to be drafted, consulted upon and approved by the end of the current financial year. It was suggested that it may be helpful to set up a working group to discuss the strategy when it had been drafted and prior to consultation. The HCG agreed to bring an update to the Group at their next meeting on 22 July 2014.

11 STARTING TIME FOR FUTURE MEETINGS (Recording 2 hours, 28 minutes and 20 seconds)

It was **AGREED** that meetings of the Group continue to be held at 2.15pm on Tuesdays.

12 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING – 22 JULY 2014 (Recording 2 hours, 32 minutes and 18 seconds)

There were no additional items identified for the next meeting other than those already listed in the work programme.

(The meeting ended at)

CHAIRMAN