

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a MEETING of the MANAGING THE ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held on Tuesday 15 January 2013 at 2.00pm

Present

Councillors: M A Lucas (Chairman), Mrs D L Brandon, D R Coren, J M Downes, J D Squire, Mrs M E Squires and Mrs N Woollatt

Also Present

Councillors: C J Eginton, R F Radford and R L Stanley

Also Present

Officers: A Jarrett (Head of Finance), P N Williams (Head of Environmental Services), N Sanderson (Head of Housing and Property Services), J Banks (Accountancy Manager), A Busby (Facilities and Corporate Buildings Manager), A Cook (Open Space and Cemeteries Manager) and S Gabriel (Member Services Officer)

48. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public present.

49. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 November 2012 were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

50. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman had the following announcements:

- He wished Members of the Group a Happy New Year
- He announced that Item 8 on the agenda (Budget 2013/14) would be taken as the next item of business.

51. BUDGET 2013-14

The Head of Finance distributed a paper which updated the PDG on the budget position following notification of the Formula Grant. Following the identification of further savings, other adjustments and the Formula Grant settlement it was likely that the budget shortfall would be about £173K. The provisional Grant settlement for 2014/15 indicated a further cut of £621K and steps would need to be taken to address such a significant funding reduction.

He advised Members of a paper by the Secretary of State called "50 Ways to Save Money" which was available on the DCLG website, any issues highlighted within the paper that were not being progressed would be investigated. He also reported that Officer Workshops regarding money

saving issues had taken place and the following issues raised were within the PDG's remit.

- Rationalisation of toilet block provision
- Grounds Maintenance
- Play Areas and Parks
- The use of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to support play area maintenance
- Trade waste
- Waste Collection

It was **AGREED** that the first 4 items be the subject of a report to a future meeting of the Group. Trade waste and waste collection would form part of the work of the Waste Efficiency Savings Group.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The original waste trials that had taken place in 2011
- How the CIL would be applied
- The use of Reserves to cover the budget shortfall
- Discretionary Services

It was further **AGREED** that a report highlighting discretionary/non-discretionary and possible shared services be brought before the next meeting of the Group.

52. **FINANCIAL MONITORING 2012/13**

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a report* of the Head of Finance detailing the financial monitoring for the eight months to 30 November 2012 in respect of the services within this PDG's remit. The Accountancy Manager outlined the contents of the report highlighting issues with regard to a small rise in the overspend from September to November specifically in the areas of trade waste and recycling income, both these issues would be addressed by the Waste Efficiency Working Group.

Note: *Report previously circulated, copy attached to signed minutes.

53. **REVIEW OF STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

The Group had before it a report* of the Facilities and Corporate Buildings Manager informing Members of the policies that were already in place with regard to climate change and seeking their ideas on the formulation of a new environmental strategy. He outlined the contents of the report stating that much good work had already taken place under the remit of climate change, a list of policies in place were available at Appendix A of the report. The Head of Environmental Services stated that the Private Sector Housing Policy would have to change in line with the agreed policy and that because of bankruptcy issues with Energy Action Devon a review of energy issues via the green deal would be required.

Discussion followed with regard to:

- The timing of the Local Plan 3 examination

- Planning versus energy issues, specifically the Article 4 Direction in Cullompton
- The Eco Stars Initiative that was being progressed
- Air Quality issues

RESOLVED that the Policies/Action Plans set out in the report be collated and that a draft environmental strategy be produced and presented to the PDG by the autumn of 2013

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Note: *Report previously circulated, copy attached to signed minutes.

54. **PLAY AREAS**

Following discussion at the previous meeting of the Group, Members had before them a further report* of the Head of Environmental Services containing additional information with regard to proposed costs and savings identified in a proposed strategy for future play area provision in Mid Devon. He outlined the contents of the report highlighting the gaps in funding for the maintenance of the play areas across the district and the findings of the Play Areas Working Group.

The Accountancy Manager outlined the financial situation to date: 43 play areas had been in situ prior to the availability of S106 monies, of the remaining 65, 51 of those play areas had S106 funding fully utilised and 9 play areas still had S106 funding of £10k per annum which was enough to maintain them for a further 19 years.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Working with Parish Councils to amalgamate separately owned rural play areas
- Inspection procedures
- The use of S106 monies for play equipment and maintenance issues.

It was therefore

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that

a) The Open Space and Play Area Strategy be reviewed after the Green Infrastructure Strategy had been agreed as part of the Local Plan Development Plan Documents;

b) For those play areas where the term for maintenance had passed, no further maintenance money be spent unless a business case establishes a need for the facility and separate funds can be found;

c) No play area offered for adoption by virtue of a new development be adopted and in future be

left in the hands of the developer for maintenance;

d) In principle, closing small plays areas to concentrate on refurbishment and maintenance of larger parks become the normal route; and that in any closure, consultation on the specific site be made with Ward Members, the Town/Parish Council and residents regarding take over or future use of the land; and

e) The Head of Environmental Services recommend those play areas to be closed in accordance with the dilapidation schedule and that subsequent consultation with Ward Members, and Town /Parish Councils be undertaken.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Note: Report* previously circulated, copy attached to signed minutes.

55. **NEW RECYCLING CAMPAIGN**

The Communications and Reputation Manager informed the Group of the launch of a new initiative to boost recycling rates in Mid Devon.

He highlighted the following issues:

- The need to boost income from the sale of recycled products
- The fluctuation in prices paid for different products
- Less recycling was being collected and there was a need to boost the dry recycling rate
- The need to increase materials recycled in the black box scheme
- Areas to be targeted and the planned campaign.

Discussion took place regarding:

- All local authorities were reporting a reduction in recycling rates
- Communication via schools, the website and local Parish Magazines

Members applauded the scheme and requested that the results of the campaign be reported to a future meeting of the PDG.

56. **ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING – 12 MARCH 2013**

The following items were identified for the next meeting:

- Play Area Inspection Policy
- Smoke Free Play Areas
- Recent flooding issues and the provision of sandbags
- Financial Monitoring
- Performance and Risk
- Statutory and possible Shared Services
- Chairman's Annual Report.

(The meeting ended at 4.30pm)

CHAIRMAN