

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a MEETING of the MANAGING THE ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held on Tuesday 12 March 2013 at 2.00pm

Present

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

Apology

Councillor: Mrs D L Brandon

Also Present

Councillor: R F Radford

Also Present

Officers: P N Williams (Head of Environmental Services), J Banks (Accountancy Manager), C Yandle (Internal Audit Team Leader), J Stuckey (Waste Awareness Officer) and S Gabriel (Member Services Officer)

57. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public present.

58. MINUTES

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

59. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman had the following announcements to make:

- He thanked officers in the Waste Team for their quick response following a litter issue at Post Hill the previous day.
- He reported that he had attended Scrutiny Committee the previous day and informed Members of the proposed recommendations from the Committee to Cabinet regarding car parking fees.
- As this was the last meeting of the municipal year, he thanked Members and Officers for their contribution to the work of the Group. The Members of the Group recorded their thanks to the Chairman for his continued hard work.

60. FINANCIAL MONITORING 2012/13

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a report* of the Head of Finance detailing the financial monitoring for the ten months to 31 January 2013 in respect of the services within this PDG's remit. The Accountancy Manager outlined the contents of the report highlighting a reduction of £14K on the previously reported final year forecast overspend for this PDG's services.

Increased fuel costs, vehicle maintenance and reduced income from recycled materials had had a major impact on the waste budget. Discussion followed with regard to current fuel costs, the impact this was having across the whole authority and the current maintenance contract for refuse and recycling vehicles.

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

61. **BUDGET 2013/14 – STATUTORY/NON STATUTORY SERVICES**

Following a request at the previous meeting, the Group had before it a report* of the Head of Finance identifying statutory and non-statutory services provided by the Council. The Accountancy Manager outlined the contents of the report stating that the report had been based on the Finance Section's interpretation of statutory and non-statutory allocation. Appendix 1 to the report showed details of the final General Fund approved budget highlighting the direct costs attributable to the PDG; with Appendix 2 showing a breakdown of service level budgets and indicating whether services were statutory or non-statutory. He emphasised the fact that the Council might be required to provide a statutory service, however this did not preclude questioning the method or level of service provided.

RESOLVED that the PDG take account of the required statutory service provision when considering savings options which will be required in the light of the on-going reduction in Central Government Funding.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

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

62. **PERFORMANCE AND RISK REPORT FOR THE FIRST NINE MONTHS OF THE FINANCIAL YEAR.**

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a report* of the Head of Communities and Governance providing Members with an update on performance against the Corporate Plan and local service targets for the 2012/13 financial year as well as providing an update on the key business risks. The Head of Environmental Services highlighted issues with regard to missed collections and the need to establish what constituted a missed collection, generally the service was good with only 0.3% of missed collections across the district in the last quarter.

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

63. **STREET NAMING AND NUMBERING**

The Group had before it a report* of the Head of ICT informing Members of the Street Naming and Numbering Service and the requirement to have a policy in place. The Council had always provided a Street Naming and Numbering service, the policy provided clear guidelines for developers and the public as well as providing ground rules that were enforceable, for example, complying with street name plate provisioning.

Members highlighted two amendments to the flow chart which required correction prior to Cabinet approval.

RECOMMEND to Cabinet that the Street Naming and Number Policy and Procedure be approved.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

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

64. **PLAY AREA SAFETY INSPECTION**

The Group had before it a report* of the Open Spaces and Bereavement Services Manager following a review of the play area risk assessments and safety inspections. The Head of Environmental Services outlined the contents of the report highlighting the review findings and recommendations. He reported that the Council would shortly have a qualified in-house inspector to oversee the annual inspection of play areas; his services would become available at cost to Parishes within Mid Devon who were responsible for their own play areas.

RECOMMEND to Cabinet that the findings of the review of play areas risk assessments and safety inspections be endorsed.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

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

65. **SMOKE FREE PLAY AREAS**

The Head of Environmental Services explained an initiative by NHS Devon to encourage no smoking in play areas across the district; although signage discouraging smoking could be erected on entrances to play areas, such a request could not be enforced.

Members felt that such signage may have an effect on those using the play areas and it was agreed that possible signage from NHS Devon be considered. It was therefore:

RESOLVED that this item be deferred until the next meeting to allow further information on signage to be obtained.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

66. **SANDBAG PROVISION**

The Group had before it a report* of the Head of Environmental Services examining the arrangements for providing sandbags at times of flooding. He outlined the contents of the report stating that the recent flooding especially in Mid Devon, had again focussed attention on the provision of sandbags and

the difficulties around satisfying the demand. As a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingency Act, the Council had a duty

- to assess local risks to inform emergency planning
- to put emergency plans into place
- to provide information on civil protection; and
- to maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public as well as other business continuity planning and advice.

The Council had traditionally provided assistance with the provision of sandbags; it had no policy on who received them, when, where or how they would be delivered or how many it would provide. The 'call' for sandbags had regularly outstripped the ability to provide them. Whilst callers had been asked to collect sandbags, the Council had also made delivery of sandbags to those making requests, again with no clear policy of which staff and vehicles would be used, bearing in mind the Council had no specialist/dedicated vehicles.

Discussion followed with regard to:

- The responsibility of the private property owner
- Possible information leaflets to be made available to householders
- Parish Emergency Plans
- Local Flood Wardens
- Necessary information to be passed to Town and Parish Clerks
- The small supply of sandbags to be held by the Council in case of emergency be increased to 200.

RECOMMEND to Cabinet that:

a) the general provision of sandbags, except to our own housing stock cease;

b) the Council assists Parish and Town Councils to make provision locally and takes opportunities to remind individuals of their responsibility; and

c) the Council supports the Pathfinder bid with Devon County for resources to highlight individual responsibility.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Notes: i) Cllr J M Downes requested that his abstention from voting be recorded;

ii) *Report previously circulated, copy attached to signed minutes.

67 CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

The Group had before it a draft report* by the Chairman on the work of the Group since May 2012, a final copy of this report would be submitted to Council on 24 April 2013.

Following discussion on the provision for waste, Members received information regarding a new mobile “App” called “Binfo” which would be made available to all residents in Mid Devon in the near future. The “App” would inform residents of collection details, for example a reminder would be sent to a resident’s mobile the night before collection. Residents would also receive up to date information regarding issues with collection. Possible further “apps” could also be added in time referring to other Council facilities.

Members **AGREED** that this was an excellent facility and requested that all Members be informed of the scheme at the earliest possible convenience.

68. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING – 14 MAY 2013

The following items were identified for the next meeting:

- Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman
- Air Quality Issues
- Waste Efficiencies Savings Working Group update
- Waste Management and Recycling Policy
- Smoke Free Play Areas

(The meeting ended at 4.02pm)

CHAIRMAN