

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a MEETING of the MANAGING THE ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held on Tuesday 19 November 2013 at 2.00pm

Present

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

Apology

Councillor: J D Squire

Also Present

Councillors: N V Davey, C J Eginton, R L Stanley, K D Wilson and R Wright

Present

Officers: P N Williams (Head of Environmental Services), A Jarrett (Head of Finance), S Newcombe (Waste and Transport Manager), A Cawdron (Finance Manager), L Wright (Accountant), C Yandle (Audit Team Leader), K Abbott (Recycling Manager), S Gabriel (Principal Member Services Officer) and J Stuckey (Member Services Officer)

Also present: Martin Hutchings and Jessica Bott (Flood Risk Management, Devon County Council)

32. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public present.

33. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 September 2013 were amended to show that A Lacey (Communications Manager) was present and were then approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

34. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman had the following announcements to make:

- He had written to Devon County Council Highways following the last meeting of this Group with regard to blocked drains and flooding issues following resurfacing of roads across the district. A response had been received which confirmed that this matter was in hand and that Devon County Council Highway Authority had taken measures to ensure that drains were kept clear following resurfacing.

- As this was her final meeting the Chairman thanked the Principal Member Services Officer, Mrs Gabriel, for all of her hard work with the Committee over a number of years.
- He expressed his appreciation to Accountant, Jim Banks, who retired earlier in the year after many years working for the Authority and this Committee.

35. **FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT**

The Committee received a presentation from the Flood Risk Manager at Devon County Council (DCC), regarding the proposed strategy for Local Flood Risk Management.

Mr Hutchings explained that the lead Local Flood Authority (DCC) for the area must develop, maintain, apply and monitor a strategy for local flood risk in its area and must consult Risk Management Authorities and the public. He informed the Group that the strategy was a tool kit in which previous documents, guidance and policies were forged. The strategy would provide information such as legislation, flood risk data, finance opportunities and an action plan. The action plan would be available on the website.

The strategy brought partners together and allowed partnership working; it provided transparent decision making on priorities and potential solutions.

The Local Strategy 'Draft for Consultation' would be available from 25 Nov 2013 until 25 Jan 2014.

The Technical Report, Summary and Action Plan would be available for comment on the DCC website www.devon.gov.uk/floodrisklfrms.

Discussion took place regarding:

- There had been no mention of consultation with Parishes to date but the Officer explained that they would be part of the consultation process.
- Drains not being cleared due to financial restraints and issues of flooding in Cullompton.
- Finance and cut backs were a big stumbling block but the Strategy was concerned with how funding could be raised and how working with partners could make savings and pool funds.
- Maps of flood areas and surface water flood areas would be available on the Environment Agency Website by the end of the year.
- The Strategy was concerned with how flood risk would be managed. Local risk authorities would still be responsible for action and the Strategy made it clear who would be responsible.

The Chairman thanked the Officers for their presentation and requested that they report back to the Group in March 2014, following the consultation.

36. **PERFORMANCE AND RISK**

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 2013/14 as well as providing an update on the key business risks.

The Audit Team Leader outlined the contents of the report and explained that some data from Waste Management was missing due to information from Devon County Council not being available in time for this meeting, this information would be available for the next meeting.

There was confusion regarding missed collection data which appeared to double in the second quarter but was in fact an accumulative total. In future a note would be made on the report to explain this.

She added that Health and Safety performance indicators would always be reported as high risk.

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

37. **MEETING MANAGEMENT**

The Chairman indicated that he intended to move to item 9 and then item 8 before returning to item 7.

38. **WASTE AND RECYCLING SERVICE**

The Group had before it a report* of the Head of Environmental Services advising Members of the initial analysis of potential collection scheme changes to the service, affecting all household collections in the district from October 2015.

The Officer explained that the overall budget for the service was £2.5m per annum making it a substantial part of the Council's overall expenditure. Following an away day on the 24 July, Members had identified a number of potential options for changes to the waste and recycling collection service in Mid Devon, in response to a range of current and on-going pressures, opportunities and threats in respect of service delivery. The report set out possible options for the service in the medium-long term, setting out potential arrangements that could be implemented from October 2015.

The Waste and Transport Manager explained to the Group that it would not be possible to model every possible scenario for collection schemes and that the options had been narrowed down to 5 possibilities.

The purpose of the report was to agree the broad principles for any future changes rather than operational specifics.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Charging for garden waste and whether this would result in other problems such as fly tipping.
- Seasonal collection of garden waste.
- Whether garden waste was not a statutory service.

- Collecting cardboard for recycling and its value.
- Extending the collection of plastic, which at the moment was only for milk bottles, to include all plastic bottles and potentially mixed plastic packaging.
- Whether the Council needed to look at providing an excellent recycling service as a priority or to look for financial savings as a priority.
- The urgent need to replace vehicles which were in a bad state of repair.
- The issue of keeping food waste for a two week period.
- The varying quality of plastic types and their values may impact on what it was worth collecting.
- The possibility of collecting recycling co-mingled in a dust cart and sorting at a Material Recycling facility in Exeter or possibly building one in Mid Devon. This was felt to be a long term plan.
- The procurement process for vehicles has a long lead in time and the vehicles were required urgently.

Officers had also been asked to investigate the possibility of having recycling bring banks for cardboard in the District and centralised collection points for flats.

Collection points for flats would be very difficult to manage and should be the responsibility of the landlord.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that:

1. The broad principles for any future changes be agreed as follows:
 - a) to reduce service delivery costs while meeting statutory obligations;
 - b) to improve the recycling service to include card, plastic bottles/plastic packaging and food waste;
 - c) to continue to provide a garden waste collection service;
 - d) to reuse our investment in wheeled bins to hold residual refuse and improve safety conditions for staff.
2. That officers develop a detailed business case as outlined in the report, based on the above principles and report back to the PDG in March 2014.
3. The recommendation set out in section 8.3 of the report be agreed and that the Council commence the procurement process for replacement recycling vehicles, as outlined.

(Proposed by Cllr Mrs D L Brandon and seconded by
Cllr Mrs N Woollatt)

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

39. **DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL TOUGH CHOICES**

The Committee had before it and **NOTED** a letter from the County Waste Manager regarding Devon County Council's Waste Services Review.

The Head of Environmental Services was asked to continue to communicate with Devon County Council regarding this.

Note: - Letter previously circulated, copy attached to signed minutes.

40. **FINANCIAL MONITORING**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report* of the Head of Finance detailing the financial monitoring for the six months to 30 September 2013 in respect of the services within this PDG's remit. He outlined the potential deficit of £170k for the first six months of the year. This was not a significant cause for concern at this stage and some funds which had been allocated to the Council Tax Support Scheme and Business Rates may not be required.

Waste and recycling was down on budget due to the drop in material value and reduction in tonnage collected.

Car park income was up on budget and had been up every month throughout the year, apart from August, following changes to long stay parking charges

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

41. **BUDGET 2014-15**

The Committee had before it a report * of the Head of Finance requesting that Members consider options available in order for the Council to set a balanced budget for 2014/15.

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:

Variances	Amount £000
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
Draft budget gap for 2014/15	361

The Head of Finance explained that the vehicle replacement sinking fund was a budget adjustment to allow for the Waste and Recycling vehicle replacement plan.

The £361K gap needed to be filled and Service Managers were being asked to look at their budgets again for further savings. All budgets for 2014/15 were down except Managing the Environment, this was due to the vehicle sinking fund.

Budget cuts already highlighted within the remit of the PDG included:

- Cemeteries – 10% increase in charges
- Sandbags - £4k reduction
- Solar Panels – saving money
- Tourist Information Centre – increased rent from building

The Capital Programme for 2014/15 would be £500k short if all projects were agreed and £1m short for 2015/16, most of this was for essential asset maintenance.

Private Sector Housing had not used its full budget because loans rather than grants had not proved popular and uptake had been low.

The New Homes bonus receipts had been included in the budget.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that the draft budget be accepted if balanced but if not balanced other options for savings be looked at.

(Proposed by Cllr D R Coren, seconded by Cllr Mrs D L Brandon)

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

42. **SILVERTON MILL**

The Chairman had requested at the previous meeting that the Head of Environmental Services update the Committee regarding issues relating to the Recycling Depot at Silverton Mill. As the discussion involved the business affairs of various local businesses, it was therefore:

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the next item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

(Proposed by Cllr D Coren and seconded by Cllr Mrs D L Brandon)

Note: Following receipt of the information requested, the meeting was reopened to the press and public.

43. **‘PINK FAIRY’ CAMPAIGN UPDATE**

It was agreed that this item would be added to the agenda for the next meeting of this Group on 14 January 2014.

44. **ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING – 14 JANUARY 2014**

The following items were identified for the next meeting:

- Budget Update
- Climate change/environmental strategy
- Financial Monitoring
- Waste Update
- Fixed Penalty Notices
- 2008 Off Street Parking Order (Amenity Car Parks)
- Silverton Mill
- Pink Fairy Campaign

(The meeting ended at 5.15pm)

CHAIRMAN