

Annual Chairman's Report Policy Development Group

Managing the Environment

April 2013 – March 2014

During the last 12 months the group have been engaged on a number of important projects, which in due course will have a significant impact as to future policy on services supplied by the Authority.

Waste and Recycling Service

The main thrust of the group during 2013/14 has been the question of future policy relating to the above subject, which in the view of the majority of the public delivers a good service. Therefore, in the current economic situation, it was important to consider all aspects of current and future delivery of this service, especially as MDDC had inherited an elderly recycling fleet that needed to be upgraded for the benefit of all concerned. Allied to that was the critical finance required to process this undertaking. During 2013, MDDC had improved the waste fleet and it was now necessary to undertake investment of the recycling fleet.

Initial reports were raised and debated by the Group, then enhanced by an 'away day' in July attended by a wider group than the PDG Members, during which many ideas/suggestions were aired, giving a steer towards future policy. In September a recommendation was made to cabinet outlining aims and desires concerning the future of waste services and the steps that needed to be taken to achieve this goal. Cabinet supported the recommendation that would see the report coming back to the PDG with a detailed and costed analysis of future commitment. In November following full debate/discussion on reports received a recommendation was made to the Cabinet as to the future commitments to the waste and recycling service. This was supported by the Cabinet. Part of the recommendation to Full Council, debated and supported in February 2014, was to commence a procurement process for replacing the existing recycling fleet, which over the course of the last year has seen the maintenance budget hugely increased. The future looks bright, and in the forthcoming months much work will need to be carried out to fulfil those aims.

Other matters that have been in in the PDG programme this year included:

Smoke Free Play Areas

This subject was discussed/debated and resolved that MDDC progress a scheme to erect free signage in play areas within the Authorities jurisdiction. The actual signage (graphics) used were as designed by school children outlining their concerns of smoking in their play areas. The work undertaken by Cllr D Coren is appreciated by the PDG in setting up contacts and the final outcome.

Dog Control Orders

The policy relating to the above topic came into force in December 2012. However further discussion took place within the PDG to clarify certain responsibilities and coverage of the order, this was achieved.

Wild Flower Meadow

At the July 2013 PDG meeting it was decided that trial planting of best flora be undertaken in grounds under the control of MDDC.

The Open Spaces and Cemetery Team, in an area of Tiverton Cemetery, created three trial beds of assorted wild flora, the aim being to study the best flora planted that could in future be used in other areas of MDDC owned parkland, in order to encourage wildlife to otherwise sterile parts.

Following these trials it is deemed that during 2014 other areas will be seeded using the results of best flora. It is a small step to work with nature but an important one and the PDG is mindful of the enthusiasm shown by Cllr J Downes to take this project forward.

Flood Risk Management

The PDG were given a presentation in November 2013 by the Flood Risk Manager (Devon County Council) relating to the new proposed strategy for local flood risk. Earlier in the year (July) the PDG had taken account of the latest MDDC Emergency Plan and this presentation showed how the proposed strategy could fit in with these plans, in that, it proposed to draw all current policies, guidelines and documents relating to local flood defence into one Policy and would allow partnership working and undertakings to create better schemes. A further presentation is due to be given to the Group in March/May 2014 so it will be interesting to note what lessons have been learnt following the recent inclement weather, and whether the future aims of the proposed strategy can be implemented into our existing emergency plan.

Local Air Quality Issues

A report to the PDG was submitted following the annual report to DEFRA.

The outcome of that report showed that concentrations outside the Air Quality Management areas in both Cullompton and Crediton (both towns being part of the LAQM's) were below the objectives set which is good news, however concentrations of nitrogen dioxide remained above air quality objectives in both towns. Only time will tell if the new road will have an effect on future reduced figures. The MDDC website shows daily updated graphs and figures, these can be found under air quality.

Also discussed by the PDG during the year were Financial Monitoring, Performance and Risk, Recycling Campaign, Drains/Flooding along with an update on the 'Pink Fairy Campaign' undertaken in Cullompton during October 2013 highlighting the incidence of dog poo. A big thank you has been given to the Officers involved and Cllr Mrs N Woolatt, they all entered into the spirit of the event and it is hoped that during 2014, this campaign will be widened in its scope.

Finally it has been an exciting year, and 2014 will hopefully see the outcome of much debate/discussion that this PDG has undertaken during 2013/14, which based on various recommendations made and supported will see a better prepared and fit for purpose authority, keen to meet the challenges.

In closing this report may I thank all Members for their keen observations, their time spent on debating matters before them and their support to me, it is much appreciated. It is also pleasing to note that the PDG are fully committed to improving the quality of service that MDDC give to the community. My thanks again to a great team of Officers who by their expertise and professional attitude make my dealings with them a pleasure, it has been good fun with the hard work.

Finally I need to single out Mrs Sally Gabriel who over many years has held my hand and guided me through the minefield of legal understanding and most importantly has put up with my manner in the Chair, one needs fortitude in this respect, thank you Sally. I am more than sure that Ms Julia Stuckey will continue to assist and help this PDG in the future.

Here ends my report for 2013/14.

M A Lucas

Chairman

PDG (MTE)