

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a MEETING of the MANAGING THE ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held on Tuesday 18 November 2014 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 R Wright (substituting for Cllr Mrs N Woollatt)

Apology

Councillor: Mrs N Woollatt

Also Present

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

Present

Officers: A Jarrett (Head of Finance), P N Williams (Head of Environmental Services), N Sanderson (Head of Housing and Property Services), C Gillard (Accountant), L Wright (Accountant), S Noyce (Waste and Transport Manager), A Cook (Open Spaces Manager) C Yandle (Audit Team Leader) and J Stuckey (Member Services Officer)

Declarations of Interest:

Member	Minute No	Type of Interest
Mrs M E Squires	37	Personal

31. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions asked by members of the public present.

32. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 2 September 2014 were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

33. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman informed the Group that the Head of Environmental Services, Mr P Williams, was leaving the Authority and that this would be his last attendance at a Council meeting.

The Chairman and other Members thanked Mr Williams for his work with the Group, for being welcoming and informative, for always having a smile and for being like a 'breath of fresh air' at briefings.

Mr Williams thanked the Group for their kind words.

34. **MEETING MANAGEMENT**

The Chairman indicated that he intended to change the ordering of items on the agenda to the following 7, 10, 8, 5, 6, and 9.

35. **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 the second quarter of 2014/15 as well as providing an update on the key business risks.

The Audit Team Leader explained that there were no risks being reported to the Group. This was because although there were risks, none were at a high enough level to meet the criteria for reporting.

The Officer informed the Group that performance in recycling had improved for quarter 2 but this was a seasonal increase due to levels of garden waste collected.

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

36. **WILDFLOWER MEADOWS**

The Group had before it a briefing paper * from the Head of Housing and Property Services which provided an update on how wild flower trials had progressed and informing the Group on how wild flowers could be used within Mid Devon in the future.

The Open Spaces Manager updated the group regarding areas where wildflowers had been sown this year. The sites had been well received by the public, particularly the areas sown with poppies to commemorate the Great War.

The Officer informed the Group that further investigation of seed availability and suitability was being undertaken and that the use of wildflower mixtures would continue to be used where suitable and it was financially viable to do so.

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

37. **PROPOSED HIGHWAYS BUDGET REDUCTIONS (00hrs.30mins.27secs)**

The Chairman had requested that the Group make an official response to the Devon County Council (DCC) consultation * on proposed highways budget reductions.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The fact that Town and Parish Councils were also making a response to the consultation;
- The problems for rural areas and villages if roads were not cleared following snow;

- The use of Town and Parish Council volunteers for snow clearing and flood work and the cost implications to them for things such as storage of equipment;
- Devon County Councils budget and the extent of the cuts;
- The extent of the road network in Devon;
- The implications for Mid Devon's budget if DCC cut their grass cutting costs.

It was **AGREED** that Members would forward their views on the consultation to the Chairman within the next two weeks so that they could be compiled to form a united response.

- Note:
- i) Councillor Mrs M E Squires declared an interest as she was a Devon County Councillor;
 - ii) * Information previously circulated, copy attached to minutes.

38. **FINANCIAL MONITORING (00hrs.59mins.41secs)**

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 2014 in respect of the services within this PDG's remit.

The Officer outlined the potential deficit of £172K and explained that the main areas contributing to this were car parking and waste.

Car parking charges for the overnight period had not generated as much income as had been anticipated but in the last month, following some enforcement, this had risen.

Waste had an overspend, some of which related to the move from Silverton Mill to Foundry Depot and some was from predicted budget savings that had not materialised following Route Optimisation.

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

39. **BUDGET 2015-16 (01hrs.13mins.24secs)**

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 2015/16.

The Officer explained that since 2010/11 the Council had seen its Formula Grant reduced by circa £2.6m or 42% from £6.2m to the provisional figure of £3.6m announced for 2015/16. Going forward the current Government had maintained its pledge to continue the austerity programme, with most public sector commentators estimating further cuts of at least 10% per annum for the next 3 – 4 years. Once this was factored in to the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan it was predicted that there would be a funding deficit of circa £2.1m by 2018/19. This highlighted the need to take steps to plan for further reductions to ongoing expenditure levels.

The Head of Finance explained that at this stage the budget for 2015-16 was draft due to a number of unknowns. The Formula Grant would not be known until late in December, along with the referendum limit and the Council Tax Freeze Grant.

Senior Officers had looked at where savings could be made and these had been factored into the budget. He further explained that Leisure Services were not achieving predicted savings and that he had not yet estimated savings for the new Waste and Recycling scheme.

Reconciliation of 2015/16 budget variances

Variations	Amount £000
Savings identified in savings exercise	(983)
Cost pressures identified in savings exercise	659
Formula grant cut	656
Leisure savings not realised	218
Waste and recycling currently at 14/15 budget and known service pressures	97
Pay and price inflation – incl. pensions & NI	160
Interest adjustment from HRA	41
Council Tax property growth + 1.5% and reduction in Council Tax reduction grant	(136)
Transfer from New Homes Bonus to fund 2 new officers	(99)
Other costs	37
Draft budget gap for 2015/16	650

General Fund Summary

	2014/15 £'000	2015/16 £'000	2016/17 £'000	2017/18 £'000	2018/19£ '000
Total Gross Expenditure	36,710	37,012	37,623	38,037	38,520
Total Income	(27,618)	(28,130)	(28,591)	(28,307)	(28,551)
Net Cost of Services	9,092	8,882	9,032	9,730	9,969
Investment Interest/MRP	(44)	45	(12)	(43)	(75)
Cont. to/(from) Reserves		(99)	(99)		
Contribution to Capital	125	125	125	125	125
Total Budget Requirement	9,173	8,953	9,046	9,812	10,019
Funded by:					
Collection Fund Surplus	(75)	(50)	(50)	(50)	(50)
Formula Grant (1)	(4,181)	(3,525)	(3,128)	(2,816)	(2,534)
Council Tax	(4,917)	(5,114)	(5,168)	(5,253)	(5,339)
Total Funding	(9,173)	(8,689)	(8,346)	(8,119)	(7,923)
Cumulative (Surplus)/Deficit	Nil	264	700	1,693	2,096

Discussion took place regarding:

- The draft Capital programme was balanced, using the New Homes Bonus;
- Feedback from the public confirmed that the area's most important to them had not changed;
- Updated costs for waste and recycling would be brought to the January meeting of this Group;
- Issues regarding car parking;

- No cuts had been made to the Open Spaces and Grounds Maintenance budget;
- The need to maintain open spaces and play areas and the possibility of some being taken over by Town and Parish Councils or closed;
- The work carried out regarding public toilets had saved £50k;
- The need to purchase land to create a depot for the Waste, Recycling and Grounds Maintenance service;
- The possibility of sharing space within Phoenix House with other organisations;
- Expected savings on maintenance when new recycling vehicles arrived.

RECOMMEND to the Cabinet that:

- Consideration be given to the draft budget proposals for 2015/16 and planning for additional savings as identified in the Medium Term Financial Plan take place;
- Officers look at the current level of play area provision within the District and ascertain if surplus play areas could be omitted from any maintenance programme for 2015/16.

RESOLVED to:

Establish a Working Group of Members and Officers to look into the following issues and make recommendations to the PDG

- Condition survey and anticipated expenditure for next five years of all car parks
- Permit & Season ticket policy
- Occupancy Levels
- Benchmarking charges
- Consideration of charging for Amenity car parks
- Charging Policy
- Fees & Charges
- Review of overnight charging introduction

The membership of this Group to comprise of Cllrs J D Squire, Mrs D Brandon and B Wright with the Cabinet Member attending.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

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

40. **WASTE AND RECYCLING SERVICE (02hrs.00mins.29secs)**

The Group had before it a report * from the Head of Finance which asked them to consider changes to the proposed Waste and Recycling Scheme due for implementation in October 2015.

At a meeting of this Group on 23rd April 2014, a list of recommendations had been made to the Cabinet regarding the future waste collection scheme. Following this a joint Officer and Member Project Board had been established to consider details of the scheme. During the September Project Board meeting some issues were identified regarding the proposed scheme which resulted in some new recommendations being made, these were outlined in the report.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Anticipated savings had not yet been identified but would be brought to the next meeting of this Group;
- All previous recommendations, other than the collection of food waste on a weekly basis and the retention of the black sack waste collection, remained unchanged;
- Education/enforcement would be used regarding recycling;
- The food waste would be collected on the recycling vehicle one week and on a split body dustcart (along with garden waste) the following week;
- Garden waste customers could share bins with their neighbours;
- Savings made by Devon County Council regarding treatment costs would be shared;
- A trial would be held in February but the area had not yet been confirmed, Ward Members would be informed;
- There would be a questionnaire following the trial, which would include questions regarding charging for garden waste;
- Neighbouring Authorities were also making similar changes to their collection schemes.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that:

The following two changes be made to the previous recommendations:

- Collect food waste in a new kerbside caddy weekly
- Continue to collect residual waste in sacks

Previously agreed and not affected by changes:

- Adopt the same scheme for all households in District
- Collect household residual waste and recycling fortnightly
- Collect mixed plastics, excluding film, as kerbside recycling
- Collect card as kerbside recycling

- Retain the discretionary garden waste (which now excludes card and food) as a fortnightly, chargeable service (at a rate to cover cost of the service)
- Retain existing paid for bulky waste collection service
- Retain the contracted out clinical waste collection service
- Retain assisted collections and update eligibility for the service every two years
- Provide free and limitless boxes for recycling, including one additional per property of a different colour to permit greater separation

(Proposed by Councillor Mrs M E Squires and seconded by Councillor Mrs D Brandon)

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

41. **ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

Items for the next meeting 13 January 2015

Fixed Penalty Notices
 Financial Monitoring
 Car parking Charges
 Private Water Supplies
 Budget update

(The meeting ended at 16.30)

CHAIRMAN