

## **MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**MINUTES** of a **MEETING** of the **ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP**  
held on 14 July 2020 at 5.30 pm

### **Present**

#### **Councillors**

B G J Warren (Chairman)  
E J Berry, W Burke, D R Coren, B Holdman,  
Miss J Norton, R F Radford, R L Stanley  
and J Wright

### **Also Present**

#### **Councillor(s)**

L J Cruwys, R M Deed, R Evans, L D Taylor,  
Ms E J Wainwright and A White

### **Also Present**

#### **Officer(s):**

Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Andrew Busby (Group Manager for Corporate Property and Commercial Assets), Ian Chilver (Group Manager for Financial Services), Stuart Noyce (Group Manager for Street Scene and Open Spaces), Catherine Yandle (Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security), Clare Robathan (Scrutiny Officer) and Carole Oliphant (Member Services Officer)

## **1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN (CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL IN THE CHAIR) (00.00.15)**

Cllr B G J Warren was duly elected Chairman of Environment PDG for the municipal year 2020-2021

(Proposed by Cllr E J Berry and seconded by Cllr D R Coren)

## **2 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN (00.01.00)**

Cllr J Wright was duly elected Vice Chairman of Environment PDG for the municipal year 2020-2021

(Proposed by Cllr B Holdman seconded by Cllr D R Coren)

## **3 VIRTUAL MEETING PROTOCOL (00.01.53)**

The Group had before it and **NOTED** the \*Virtual Meeting Protocol.

Note: \*Virtual Meeting Protocol previously circulated and attached to the minutes

## **4 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (00.02.09)**

There were no apologies or substitute members.

5 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (00.06.13)**

Members were reminded of the need to declare any interests when appropriate.

6 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (00.06.33)**

There were no members of the public present.

7 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (00.06.40)**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

8 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (00.10.08)**

The Chairman announced that Stuart Noyce, Group Manager for Street Scene and Open Spaces was leaving the authority after 6 years and the Group thanked him for his support and wished him well for the future.

9 **REVENUE AND OUTTURN REPORT (00.12.32)**

The Group had before it and **NOTED** the \*Outturn report for 2019-2020 from the Group Manager for Finance who explained that the report had previously been presented to the Cabinet on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

The Chairman expressed a view that the PDG could add little to the report as it had been previously seen and approved by the Cabinet. The Leader stated that he would investigate the timing of the report being sent to the PDG.

In response to concerns raised with regard to the £0.5m variance in the budgeted and actual Planning income for 2019/2020 the Cabinet Member for Finance stated that the Cabinet were constantly looking at the revenue streams for Planning but the current crisis would have an effect on the current years projections.

The Chief Executive explained that the shortfall in the 2019/2020 Planning service figures was due to the number of smaller planning applications which had come forward and a downward trend in the number of medium and large scale applications received which generated the most income.

The Group discussed the impact of the current crisis on the financial year 2020-2021.

Note: \*Outturn report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

10 **CONTRACTED OUT ENFORCEMENT DUTIES (00.24.16)**

The Group received a verbal update from the Group Manager for Street Scene and Open spaces who explained that he had been investigating the PDG's request to explore a trial of contracted out enforcement duties for littering and dog fouling. He stated that negotiations prior to lockdown had been ongoing with a local authority company who provided this service for 8 other local authorities and that a meeting

had been scheduled with the company to meet with himself and the Councils Legal Services Team to discuss the options available.

He explained that traditional contracted out enforcement used by other Authorities had resulted in low payment rates and increases in their Legal Services time as more people were handed fines but more people had challenged them. The company who had been approached claimed an 87% pay rate and as it was a local authority company the Council would not need to go out to tender for the trial. The company did have concerns that the MDDC District may not be financially viable for them to operate in as it had a relatively low number of instances and was very rural.

Members discussed the increase in the amount of litter which appeared to be affecting many rural parishes as people had been home for longer periods during the lockdown and had been using the countryside for leisure pursuits and not taking their litter home.

In response to a question about how using an external company for enforcement would increase the number of enforcement officers the Group Manager for Street Scene and Open Spaces explained that by using an external company it could increase the number of officers by 2-4. He explained that there would have to be a dialogue with the company about where it operated within the district and include a caveat that our rural parishes would be included. He explained that even with more officers patrolling the service would continue to rely on intelligence from members of the public who witnessed littering and dog fouling.

Members then discussed the possibility of catching fly tippers from take away receipts but the Group Manager for Street Scene and Open Spaces explained that this would not meet the evidence level set and would unlikely lead to a successful prosecution.

The Group discussed the possibility of putting up signs on the main trunk roads within the district which encouraged people to take their litter home. The Group Manager for Street Scene and Open Spaces explained that the Council worked in partnership with other groups such as Highways England, Clean Devon Group and DCC Highways. He explained that there were currently a few vacant spots on sponsored roundabouts in the district and that anti littering signs could be erected on them whilst new sponsors were found. He stated he would provide costings for signs to be erected at suitable roundabouts.

The Group discussed the potential to have wildlife camera's installed on fly tipping or dog fouling hotspots once the use of CCTV Camera's Policy and Guidance had been investigated by the Community PDG.

In response to a question asked about trade waste the Group Manager for Street Scene and Open Spaces explained that trade waste generated an income for the Council. Trials had been conducted of food waste from schools and that if that led to reduced costs of disposing of the residual trade waste it could be something to consider but as the Council would be in direct competition with other waste providers it would need to be competitive.

## 11 CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE (00.48.18)

The Group had before it and **NOTED** the \*Climate Handbook presented by the Group Manager for Corporate Property and Commercial Assets who explained that it had been rolled out to support the Climate Change Action Plan.

He explained that the Council had identified various work streams and that the Renewal Energy Fund would be tracked via the action plan. He stated that a decision making tool was in development and that the Councils housing policy would play a major part in the reduction of Climate Change.

Consideration was given to:

- Whether the power network infrastructure was able to support the installation of more domestic solar panels on council houses
- If future open spaces designated to the Council from ongoing local developments could be turned into wild flower meadows
- Whether the plan would get the Council to Carbon Neutral by 2030
- Other Councils and if they had more assertive plans
- Did current budget schemes support the Council to 'go green'

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change explained that currently there was no budget for officer support but that they were looking at other funding streams to support the work including the recently announced Government Green Homes Bonus. She explained that public meetings would feed into the plan and that communication with the local population was important and that the Handbook would help with this. She encouraged Members to share ideas and learning.

The Group Manager for Street Scene and Open Spaces reminded the Group that all reports produced by Officers were required to state the impact on climate change and that the Council were hosting an electric vehicle day so that neighbouring authorities could come and see what commercial electric vehicles including refuse lorries were currently available.

Note: \*Climate Handbook previously circulated and attached to the minutes

## 12 PERFORMANCE AND RISK (01.16.12)

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a \*report of the Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security presenting Members with an update on performance against the corporate plan and local service targets for 2020-2021 as well as providing an update on key business risks.

She outlined the contents of the report stating that this was the first report against the new corporate plan.

The Groups expressed its thanks to the Waste and Recycling teams for they way in which they had coped with the impact of Covid 19 which had increased the amount of household waste by 2.53% compared to the same period last year.

In response to a question asked, the Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security confirmed that no enforcement had been conducted at the beginning of the lockdown as staff had been moved to other duties.

Note: \*Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

### 13 **START TIME OF MEETINGS (01.23.00)**

The Group **AGREED** that the start time of the meetings should remain at 5.30pm for the remainder of the municipal year.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

### 14 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS (01.27.20)**

The following items were identified:

- Members requested whether commercial and trade waste could be added to the performance and risk register.
- Members wanted to look at the figures for trade waste and compostable waste, to see if there were opportunities to increase the rates of trade waste (and therefore the Councils income)
- Members requested an external enforcement update
- Members requested a review into the current equipment used by district officers and to look at additional equipment being supplied such as bodycams

(The meeting ended at 7.11 pm)

**CHAIRMAN**