

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP**
held on 8 September 2020 at 5.30 pm

Present

Councillors

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

Also Present

Councillor(s)

R J Dolley, F W Letch, C R Slade and Ms E J Wainwright

Also Present

Officer(s):

Andrew Jarrett (Deputy Chief Executive (S151)), Catherine Yandle (Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security), Darren Beer (Operations Manager), John Bodley-Scott (Economic Development Team Leader), Andrew Busby (Group Manager for Corporate Property and Commercial Assets), Vicky Lowman (Environment and Enforcement Manager), Tristan Peat (Forward Planning Team Leader), Clare Robathan (Scrutiny Officer) and Sally Gabriel (Member Services Manager)

15 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (00-02-05)

There were no apologies.

16 REMOTE MEETINGS PROTOCOL (00-02-24)

The protocol for remote meetings was noted.

17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (00-02-40)

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

18 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (00-02-52)

There were no members of the public present.

19 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (00-03-09)

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 July 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

20 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (00-03-52)

The Chairman had the following announcements to make:

- He welcomed Cllr L D Taylor to the meeting.
- He welcomed Cllr C R Slade to the meeting as the new Cabinet Member for the Environment.
- He thanked Cllr B Holdman for his contribution to the work of the Group.
- He informed the meeting that the Public Spaces Protection Order had been out to consultation and that the outcome of the consultation process would be reported directly to the Cabinet on 1 October without returning to the PDG due to time constraints.
- He informed the meeting that the PDG had been due to discuss grass cutting on DCC land which would be paid for by the HRA, however this report would now go to the Homes PDG the following week. It had been suggested that a Working Group be formed and that members of this Group would be invited to take part.

It was therefore **AGREED** that Cllrs R F Radford, R L Stanley and B G J Warren form part of the working group which was being organised by the Homes PDG.

21 **CONNECTING THE CULM PROJECT (00-10-00)**

The Chairman invited Mr Steven Johnson from the Blackdown Hills ANOB to give a presentation on 'Connecting the Culm Project'.

Mr Johnson addressed the Group highlighting by way of presentation the area of the project and the collaboration taking place with other partners that of the Blackdown Hills AONB, Devon County Council, the Environment Agency, the National Trust, Westcountry River Trust and the Devon Wildlife Trust along with our own authority. The project was being funded by local partners and the EU Interreg.

He explained the main themes of the project:

- A co-creation approach which empowered communities to take ownership and identify local issues and develop solutions
- Nature based solutions could provide a cost effective solution to tackle catchment wide issues by restoring the natural catchment functions
- Climate Change adaptation
- Strategic planning on a catchment scale allowing for greater cooperation between landowners and managers to implement well-aligned strategies.

He identified the climate change tracker which highlighted global warming and that the project would explore changes to weather and the impact of it on the river. The project would look at how resilient the area was to changes in the climate and set out a blueprint for the Culm. He requested that members and their local residents get involved in the project

Consideration was given to:

- Involving schools in the project
- The amount of rain falling on agricultural land and woodland and run off issues and the work that was taking place with the Environment Agency
- Working with partner agencies

- The beaver project taking place on the River Otter and whether the project could become involved and share best practice.
- The need to communicate with the parishes within the Blackdown Hills as rainfall there had an immediate impact on the Culm
- Soil structures in local areas, the lack of dredging that was taking place and flooding issues on low ground

The Chairman thanked Mr Johnson for a very interesting presentation.

22 CLIMATE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN (00-48-00)

The Group had before it a *report of the Group Manager for Corporate Property and Commercial Assets setting out the 4 yearly review of the Climate Strategy and Action Plan.

The officer outlined the contents of the report stating that the revised strategy built on actions taken within the 2016-2020 action plan. Engagement had taken place across all services in the authority linking policies and procedures, district wide community engagement had taken place led by the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and there had been the creation of the Net Zero Advisory Group.

He highlighted the achievements of the past 4 years and identified the handbook that had been created (and would be a living document) which set out the UK regulations and legislation, the national indicators and the reporting criteria for green house emissions which had been split into various scopes identified within the document as well as the baseline emission figures. The document also set out the links to the Council's Corporate Plan and Local Plan, how the climate crisis would be addressed and what MDDC were already doing to tackle this issue. He spoke of the collaboration that was taking place Devon wide and how the work of the Council overlapped with the Devon Carbon Plan. 'Community Conversations' were already taking place engaging with local residents and community groups with a view to increasing opportunities for sharing knowledge, resources and capacity to address local issues. Internal meetings were also taking place and the Net Zero Advisory Group (of Members) had been created. He identified the issues addressed within the action plan and the key climate priorities for 2020-24, also how performance would be tracked and the possibility of grant funding to progress projects.

Consideration was given to:

- Whether the use of electric charging points were being monitored
- Largescale tree planting schemes
- How the authority could promote sustainable farming
- The use of the car in rural areas due to poor public transport
- The new developments proposed in the area possibly being built on good productive agricultural land
- The use of the website to signpost and encourage large scale tree planting
- External lighting at the Exe Valley Sports Centre and whether this could be made more efficient
- The need to encourage taxi drivers to drive hybrid cars
- Funds available from the solar panel rent a roof scheme on council housing to assist with the replacement of solid fuel appliances

- The need to increase the number of electric charging points
- The need to focus on the young people and provide an education scheme and the possibility of a youth council to address climate issues
- The need to communicate with the farming community and the importance of communication with the provision of a dedicated climate website and the provision of training
- The time it took to charge electric cars
- Encouraging different methods of transport
- The need to include the availability of the charging points in the multi-storey car park
- Collaborative working to reduce air quality issues
- The need for an active travel plan

It was therefore:

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan be approved.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

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

23 **PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE UPDATED LOCAL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR DEVON (1-42-21)**

The Group had before it a *report of the Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration informing members of the publication of the updated Local Flood Risk Management Strategy for Devon for consultation.

The Forward Planning Team Leader outlined the contents of the report stating that an updated draft Local Flood Risk Management Strategy for Devon had been produced by Devon County Council and partner authorities which outlined how the risk of flooding to property and infrastructure would be managed and reduced over the six years of the plan from 2021 – 2027. The strategy also looked at how plans for flood alleviation scheme could be developed and how communities could increase their resilience against flooding and the impact of climate change. Members views were being sought so that their comments could be incorporated into the consultation response submitted on behalf of the Council.

The officer identified that the recently adopted Local Plan Review had been informed by a strategic flood risk assessment in 2014 and later flood risk assessment for the area around Cullompton in 2018. 2 towns in Mid Devon (Tiverton and Crediton) had been prioritised with regard to surface water flooding issues but there was no mention of Cullompton although it had been identified by the Environment Agency as being within a Critical Drainage Area

It was suggested that the following comments form part of the consultation response:

- The need for the strategy to explain why Cullompton and the Culm Valley area had not been identified areas of flood risk
- Bampton had been excluded and it did flood
- Possible inappropriate developments on floodplains in the district

- The strategy had been written for planners and flood specialist but not everyday people and some of the terminology was not helpful
- The 8 questions for consultation were overlapping
- Water overflow onto farmers land and then the landowner being responsible if flooding occurred on local highways

Members were requested to inform the officer of any further comments on the consultation document by the end of September so that a collective response could be collated.

Notes

- i) Cllr R L Stanley left the meeting at this point;
- ii) *Report previously circulated, copy attached to minutes.

24 FINANCIAL MONITORING

The Deputy Chief Executive (S151) provided the meeting with a verbal report with regard to income and expenditure to date. He stated that the forecasted deficit for the year had now been reduced to £1,218m an improvement of £285k. The forecast recognised the 3 tranches of Covid grant from the Government and the furlough monies, but it did not make any allowance for the amounts that would be received under the Income Compensation Scheme which could address the lack of income from the leisure service, car parking remittances and planning applications etc. Officers were working on the fine details and an emergency budget would be brought before the Cabinet on 1 October. Further reports would be presented to the PDG's.

With regard to the Environment portfolio, both grounds maintenance and waste were operating below budget due to salary savings and the fact that recycling prices had improved.

25 PERFORMANCE AND RISK

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a *report of the Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security providing updated information on the performance against the Corporate Plan and local service targets for 2020-21.

The officer outlined the contents of the report stating that this was the second report for the current financial year; the current performance indicators remained unchanged and she still invited suggestions for further measures to be monitored. She referred to the Climate Change Action Plan discussed earlier in the meeting and informed the meeting that there had been a 5.4% increase per household on the amount of waste created due to the Covid pandemic

Consideration was given to:

- Fixed penalty fees and whether prosecutions would be shown in the statistics
- The verification process conducted on waste data by Devon County Council
- The new fleet of vehicles that had been delivered in one year and whether there would be additional maintenance costs in the latter years of the contract

- Consideration of the risks and the work that was taking pace to address climate change.

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

26 **WASTE AND RECYCLING AND STREET SCENE DISTRICT OFFICER UPDATE (2-18-38)**

The Operations Manager and the Environment and Enforcement Manager provided the meeting with a verbal update with regard to:

- Private enforcement – contact had been made with the provider with discussions taking place with regard to a cost neutral agreement, a date would be organised for a trial and further information would be provided
- Protective equipment to used by the District Officers and the possible use of body cams; a report would be going to the Community PDG the following week with regard to the Corporate CCTV Policy following this further work would take place

Consideration was given to the introduction of recycling of small electrical items and whether the recycling scheme could include further objects such as non reusable coffee pods and saucepans and frying pans.

27 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

In addition to the items already mentioned within the agenda pack, the following items were identified:

- An update on private enforcement providers
- An update on protection for the District officers following consideration of the CCTV report
- An update on whether additional small items such as non reusable coffee pods and saucepans/frying pans could be added to the recycling scheme

(The meeting ended at 8.04 pm)

CHAIRMAN