

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **COUNCIL** held on 28 April 2021 at 6.00 pm

Present

Councillors

L J Cruwys (Chairman)
G Barnell, E J Berry, W Burke, J Cairney,
R J Chesterton, S J Clist, Mrs C Collis,
Mrs F J Colthorpe, N V Davey,
Mrs C P Daw, R M Deed, R J Dolley,
J M Downes, C J Eginton, R Evans,
Mrs S Griggs, B Holdman, D J Knowles,
F W Letch, B A Moore, Miss J Norton,
S J Penny, D F Pugsley, R F Radford,
C R Slade, Mrs M E Squires, R L Stanley,
L D Taylor, Ms E J Wainwright,
B G J Warren, A White, A Wilce,
Mrs N Woollatt, J Wright and A Wyer

Apologies

Councillors

Mrs E M Andrews and D R Coren

166 **Councillor Glanmor Hughes and Honorary Alderman A.V.M Don Attlee (00-07-41)**

Those in attendance observed a minute's silence in memory of Councillor Glanmor Hughes and Honorary Alderman A.V.M Don Attlee who had both recently passed away.

167 **Apologies (00-13-56)**

Apologies were received from Councillors: Mrs E M Andrews and D R Coren.

168 **Protocol for Remote Meetings (00-14-24)**

The protocol for remote meetings was **NOTED**.

169 **Public Question Time (00-14-46)**

There were no questions from members of the public present.

170 **Declarations of Interest under the Code of Conduct (00-14-55)**

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

171 **Minutes (00-15-30)**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

The minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 17 March 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

172 **Chairman's Announcements (00-16-00)**

The Chairman had the following announcements to make:

- He informed the Council of the arrival of travellers on council land in Tiverton, action had been taken and the travellers had been moved on. He recorded his thanks to officers for their quick response.
- Following the recent death of The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, he had attended a service at St Peters Church, Tiverton and the Leader had represented the council at a service at Exeter Cathedral.

173 **Petitions (00-19-05)**

There were no petitions presented.

174 **Notices of Motions (00-19-18)**

(1) Motion 567 – (Councillors: J Wright and Miss E Wainwright, R Dolley and Mrs C P Daw – 18 December 2020)

The following motion had been referred to the Environment Policy Development Group for consideration and report:

This Council:

- Welcomes and appreciates the work that has gone in to developing our climate action plan so far, especially in the context of the Covid pandemic, which stretched capacity and resources.
- Welcomes the recruitment of a Climate and Sustainability Officer, to develop our work.
- Requests that once in place, the new Climate and Sustainability Specialist focuses on further development to our climate action plan, so that it shows the priority actions for the short, mid and longer term, covering the entire period to 2030 and beyond. Plans should outline the strategic actions we need to take to be on track to meet this target.
- Requests that officers explore opportunities to develop the Net Zero Advisory Group, so that it has more authority and responsibility for our climate strategy, and so that the public can access it (e.g. via agendas published online, and being able to attend meetings).
- Requests that budget be created and ring-fenced for developing our climate work -- through a mixture of funding bids; income generation; prioritisation; partnerships; and 'spend to save' schemes.

The Environment Policy Development Group at its meeting on 9 March 2021 considered the Motion and following discussion **RECOMMENDED** to Council that the Motion should be supported with the following amendment to the final bullet point to state:

- Requests that future budgets be created and ring-fenced for developing our climate work - through a mixture of funding bids; income generation; prioritisation; partnerships; and 'spend to save' schemes.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 16.5, Councillor J Wright sought consent of the Council (which was agreed) to amend the motion to include the word 'future' as recommended by the Environment Policy Development Group

Following discussion and upon a vote being taken, the **MOTION** (as amended) was declared to have been **CARRIED**.

(2) MOTION 571 (COUNCILLOR A WILCE – 5 MARCH 2021)

That the Meeting Protocol is updated to specifically state that:

- 1) The primary objective of the Protocol shall be, so far as is practicable

'to ensure that the rights of members (and members of the public) shall not be diminished simply because the meeting is being held online and not face-to-face'.

and

- 2) The host of any meeting is the Chairman and the Officer's role as 'host' is solely administrative.

The **MOTION** was **MOVED** by Councillor A Wilce and seconded by Councillor Mrs N Woollatt.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 14.4, the Chairman of the Council had ruled that the matter be discussed at this meeting.

Following discussion and upon a vote being taken the **MOTION** was declared to have been **CARRIED**.

175 Cabinet - Report of the meeting held on 4 March 2021 (00-33-46)

The Leader presented the report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 4 March 2021.

176 Cabinet - Report of the meeting held on 8 April 2021 (00-34-28)

The Leader presented the report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 8 April 2021.

1. Revised Schedule of Meetings (Minute 362)

The Leader **MOVED**

THAT the recommendations of the Cabinet as set out in Minute 362 be **NOTED**, this was **AGREED**.

177 Scrutiny Committee - Report of the meeting held on 1 March 2021 (00-37-05)

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee presented the report of the meeting of the Committee held on 1 March 2021.

178 Scrutiny Committee - Report of the meeting held on 15 March 2021 (00-38-04)

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee presented the report of the meeting of the Committee held on 15 March 2021.

179 Scrutiny Committee - Report of the Meeting held on 19 April 2021 (00-38-54)

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee presented the report of the meeting of the Committee held on 19 April 2021.

180 Audit Committee - Report of the Meeting held on 23 March 2021 (00-39-46)

The Chairman of the Audit Committee presented the report of the meeting of the Committee held on 23 March 2021.

181 Environment Policy Development Group - Report of the Meeting held on 9 March 2021 (00-46-36)

The Chairman of the Environment Policy Development Group presented the report of the meeting of the Group held on 9 March 2021.

182 Environment Policy Development Group - Report of the meeting held on 13 April 2021 (00-41-16)

The Chairman of the Environment Policy Development Group presented the report of the special meeting of the Group held on 13 April 2021.

183 Homes Policy Development Group - Report of the Meeting held on 16 March 2021 (00-41-55)

The Chairman of the Homes Policy Development Group presented the report of the meeting of the Group held on 16 March 2021.

184 Economy Policy Development Group - Report of the Meeting held on 11 March 2021 (00-42-38)

The Chairman of the Economy Policy Development Group presented the report of the meeting of the Group held on 11 March 2021.

185 Community Policy Development Group - Report of the Meeting held on 23 March 2021 (00-43-56)

The Vice Chairman of the Community Policy Development Group presented the report of the meeting of the Group held on 23 March 2021.

186 Planning Committee - Report of the Meeting held on 10 March 2021 (00-45-05)

The Chairman of the Planning Committee presented the report of the meeting of the Committee held on 10 March 2021.

187 Planning Committee - Report of the Meeting held on 31 March 2021 (00-45-51)

The Chairman of the Planning Committee presented the report of the special meeting of the Committee held on 31 March 2021.

188 Planning Committee - Report of the Meeting held on 14 April 2021 ((00-46-22)

The Chairman of the Planning Committee presented the report of the meeting of the Committee held on 14 April 2021.

189 Questions in accordance with Procedure Rule 13 (00-47-24)

The Chairman had agreed for the following urgent question to be considered under Procedure Rule 13.3.

Question to the Leader and Chief Executive

Recently Members have received communications from both the Leader and Chief Executive telling us of a major restructuring within the Senior Management Team, Cabinet and possibly also within Departments, together with new posts and responsibilities. These changes are being described by the Leader as heralding a "sea change" both in dealing with a backlog of work and in improving the responsiveness of Council services to service users. We are told that these changes have been planned by members of the Executive over the past four months. However Members have not been given any significant information either about the nature and purpose of the changes or about their cost.

We are, therefore, asking:-

"Will the Leader and Chief Executive arrange, as a matter of urgency, a full briefing for Members on the proposed changes including their cost?"

The Leader responded stating that a meeting would be arranged for the following week.

190 Special Urgency Decisions (00-52-30)

With regard to any decisions taken under Rule 16 (of the Constitution) Special Urgency taken since the last meeting. The Chairman informed the meeting that no such decisions had been taken in that period

191 Annual Reports of Audit Committee, Scrutiny Committee and the Policy Development Groups (00-52-42)

The Chairmen of the Audit Committee and the Scrutiny Committee and the Chairmen of the Environment, Homes and Economy Policy Development Groups presented their Annual Reports* to the Council.

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

192 **Questions to Cabinet Members (00-53-08)**

Councillor F W Letch addressing the Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services stated that he had been in Tiverton recently and had walked to the St Georges site to see how the construction of the site was taking place, he was amazed at the amount of 'macarno' and metal on the site with just 2 men walking around and not a lot of building going on, was it possible for an update to be given on the work taking place on the site and how many workmen were available to work.

The Cabinet Member stated that a written response would be provided.

Councillor G Barnell addressing the Leader stated that he had written to him on 6 March requesting an investigation into the possible fraudulent activities involving 3 Rivers. The Leader had responded stating that he had commenced an investigation into the matter. He had asked again at the Scrutiny Committee on 15 March when he could expect the outcome of this investigation and the Leader had not replied. On 25 March the Leader had written to Councillor Letch stating that he had not undertaken any investigation and gave no explanation for this other than to describe the different purposes and processes which the company had submitted the development costs for. On 4 April he had written to the Leader again asking about the investigation and had not received a reply. He asked whether the Leader could give an answer now as to whether he would carry out an investigation into these issues.

The Leader responded stating – No.

Councillor B Holdman addressing the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration asked about the lack of a Tree Officer and whether a Tree Officer would be appointed?

The Cabinet Member stated that Councillor Holdman had asked the Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration the previous week and had been supplied with an answer, but that he would try to find out more information and provide Councillor Holdman with a written response.

Councillor Barnell again addressing the Leader asked whether he could tell the Council why he had agreed to an investigation and now he was saying he would not progress this.

The Leader stated that the original request for an investigation had come from Councillor Barnell and in the course of many meetings there was a response to the question that he had asked. Councillor Barnell had alluded to Councillor Letch as the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee where I said effectively because the question had been asked that I could only answer further if I had an answer that would satisfy Councillor Barnell and I am not sure that I will ever be in that position.

Councillor Holdman added to his question with regard to the Tree Officer stating that because of the public concern around the lack of a Tree Officer, could we please

have a public update on that. The Cabinet Member stated that an update would be provided.

Councillor B G J Warren addressing the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration stated that he understood that there had been difficulty recruiting and retaining a Tree Officer, because it was not a full-time job, had the Cabinet Member considered sharing an officer with an adjoining authority?

The Cabinet Member stated that this situation had occurred in the past and conversations had been had with other local authorities, no one was available at the current time, but it was being considered.

The Chairman addressing the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration stated that there had been a number of rumours in Tiverton regarding concern that a meeting of 4 Cabinet Members and the Leader had taken place with a representative from LVA who were the applicants for the Tidcombe Hall Development, he asked whether such a meeting had taken place and what was the reason for the meeting and whether it took place with the agreement of the Monitoring Officer and the Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration.

The Cabinet Member responded stating that a briefing did take place, but that he didn't organise it and he did not know of any involvement of the Monitoring Officer and the Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration.

The Leader stated that a meeting had taken place with people who were talking about carbon neutral housing and he would check the dates.

Councillor Miss E Wainwright stated that a zero carbon education meeting had taken place in July 2020 and the meeting had been offered by one of the partners looking at the Tidcombe Hall property, she had not attended as she had taken advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration.

The Leader stated that the Cabinet were interested in carbon zero property development and that it was an education exercise and that it came via a party interested in the Tidcombe Hall development. The meeting had been a remote meeting and had not taken place at Tidcombe Hall.

Councillor B A Moore stated that he had the details of the meeting, it had been called 'a journey towards sustainable development' and had taken place on 9 September 2020 with a representative from LVA and other stakeholders. Tidcombe Hall had been mentioned but it was an educational and informative meeting with regard to carbon neutral developments.

Further discussion took place with regard to a proposed meeting in July and the meeting in September where some members of the new Cabinet did attend.

193 Members Business (1-16-34)

Councillor B A Moore informed the meeting that he was taking part in the 'Coast to Coast Challenge' later in the year in aid of 3 charities, MacMillan, the Blue Cross and INVOLVE and requested sponsorship for the event.

The Chairman was thanked by various members for his time as Chairman of the Council.

Councillor S J Clist wished to identify two local residents in his ward for ongoing community work, that of Stefan Laner and Dr Craig Newman.

Councillor F W Letch highlighted the vaccination programme that had taken place in the Crediton area and the work of the voluntary groups and the Town Council that had helped with this.

(The meeting ended at 7.25 pm)

CHAIRMAN