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MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP**
held on 11 January 2022 at 5.30 pm

Present

Councillors

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

Also Present

Councillor(s)

Miss J Norton, R Evans, B Holdman, Mrs E J Lloyd,
B A Moore and C R Slade

Also Present

Officer(s):

Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Andrew Busby (Corporate Manager for Property, Leisure and Climate Change), Andrew Jarrett (Deputy Chief Executive (S151)), Paul Deal (Corporate Manager for Finance), Matthew Page (Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste), Darren Beer (Operations Manager for Street Scene), Jason Ball (Climate and Sustainability Specialist), Clare Robathan (Policy and Research Officer) and Carole Oliphant (Member Services Officer)

38 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (0.03.12)**

There were no apologies for absence. Cllr J Norton attended via ZOOM.

39 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (0.03.21)**

Members were reminded of the need to declare interests where appropriate.

40 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (0.03.41)**

There were no questions from members of the public present.

41 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (0.03.45)**

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd November 2021 were agreed as a true record and duly **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

42 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (0.04.55)**

The Chairman announced that he would move item 9 on the agenda to item 13

43 **CABINET MEMBER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT (0.05.17)**

The Group received an update from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change who stated that the Christmas and New Year period had been busy for the Waste Service but that all waste had been collected in a timely manner.

He directed Members to the Council website and explained that it provided details of all recycling requirements and also recycling points within the District.

With regard to the recycling of pots and pans he explained that there was limited capacity on the waste lorries to introduce this kerbside collection but that they could be donated to charity or taken to the recycling centre.

44 **CLIMATE AND SUSTAINABILITY UPDATE (0.10.26)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a *report from the Climate and Sustainability Specialist which documented progress against the Climate Action Plan.

The Climate and Sustainability Specialist gave an overview of his report and highlighted:

- Upgrades to Social and Affordable Housing
- Research and costings were ongoing for changing the Council's transport fleet to electric
- Update on Devon Climate Emergency Response Group
- New content on website which included an interactive map and would be used for future Climate related press releases
- Update on a recent tree planting day
- Funding had been allocated for an additional 10 electric vehicle charging points which would be installed in 2022
- The Net Zero Advisory Group were working on Climate policy development

In response to questions asked he confirmed:

- The 10 additional electric vehicle charging points were to be funded by the Government and the Operator at no cost to the Council
- Changes to the transport fleet would occur when they required a change with small vans to be the first to go electric. Officers would look at the viability of greener alternatives when each set of vehicles come up for replacement
- The Council were not looking at offering free car parking for electric vehicles at this point
- The decarbonisation grants had been applied for and the Council should know if it had been successful by the end of January
- The recent conversion of houses at Lapford showed the type of decarbonisation that could be achieved with the Council's older housing stock
- The technical design of Post Hill was due to start shortly with the aim to make all social and affordable housing zero carbon
- That there were routes for individuals and Parish Councils to get electric vehicle charging points installed

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

45 **BUDGET OPTIONS FOR CLIMATE INVESTMENT (1.00.30)**

The Group had before it a *report from the Climate and Sustainability Specialist which outlined selected budget item proposals which could be prioritised to help move ahead with the Council's Climate Action Plan.

The Climate and Sustainability Specialist explained that Annex 1 of the report presented potential investment spending and Annex 2 presented potential preparation spending. He explained that Officers had put forward numerous proposals which had arisen as part of the ongoing Climate Action Plan which identified ways to reduce the Council's carbon footprint and support the wider Climate and Sustainability Programme.

Consideration was given to:

- Working with Parishes with regard to the planting of trees
- Officers to investigate the true savings of any upgrade to the vehicle live monitoring system
- Concerns from Members of where the funds would come from to support many of the initiatives
- The need for feasibility studies before undertaking large projects

It was therefore **RECOMENDED** to the Cabinet that the potential additional budget requirements linked to the climate investment opportunities set out in Annex 1 and 2 of this report be considered

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Note: *Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

46 **BEREAVEMENT SERVICES FEES AND CHARGES (1.38.06)**

The Group had before it the *report from the Corporate Manager for Property, Leisure and Climate Change presenting a review of the Bereavement Services Fees and Charges for 2022-2023.

The Officer explained that the Council's focus was on the best possible service and support to bereaved residents. The proposal was to increase fees by 2%.

It was therefore **RECOMMENDED** to the Cabinet that the proposed charges for 2022-2023 as set out in Table A be approved.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Notes:

- i. *Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes
- ii. Cllr L Taylor requested that his abstention from voting be recorded

47 **WASTE AND RECYCLING OPTIONS (1.43.58)**

The Group had before it a *report from the Operations Manager Street Scene & Open Spaces which presented the finding from the waste trial which was carried out between July and October 2021.

The Officer explained that the trial had been completed to see if residual waste could be reduced and recycling increased. A survey of residents had been completed at the end of the trial. During the trial staff had been made available to resolve issues and educate residents and this helped residents to comply with the scheme.

Members were informed that Officers would need a long lead in time to address residents' concerns if the scheme were to go live and this would include engagement with landlords and tenants of houses of multiple occupancy.

During the trial the percentage of residual waste reduced and the percentage of wet recycling (food) had increased. Having the wheeled bins in the trial areas improved the street scene and reduced the amount of residual waste.

Consideration was given to:

- The use of soft enforcement in the first instance to educate residents on the correct recycling requirements
- Records were kept of repeated breaches and this could be used for hard enforcement (fines) if required
- The number of houses of multiple occupancy in Cullompton which would require engagement with landlords and tenants
- No increased instances of fly tipping had occurred during the trial
- Large households could be offered an additional residual bin but it would be done on a case by case basis and after engagement with Officers
- Concerns of Members that lived in rural areas that they could not drag wheelie bins up farm tracks and driveways and wanted an alternative solution for residual waste

It was therefore **RECOMMENDED** to the Cabinet that Option 2 be approved subject to Cabinet considering alternative solutions for residual waste for properties where wheeled bins might not be an option.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Note: *report previously circulated and attached to the minutes.

48 **MDDC DRAFT LITTER STRATEGY (2.39.22)**

The Group had before it the draft *Mid Devon District Council Litter Strategy presented by the Operations Manager Street Scene and Open Spaces.

The Officer explained many Members had been involved in the creation of the Strategy and that it detailed how the Council would educate and enforce. The aim was to engage with partners, the community and the public to reduce littering in the District.

Consideration was given to:

- Members concerns that you could not engage with some members of the public
- Members views that the Strategy needed to be measurable and achievable

It was therefore **RECOMMENDED** to the Cabinet that the Mid Devon District Council Litter Strategy in Appendix 1 be adopted.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Note: *Strategy previously circulated and attached to the minutes

49 **CONTRACTED OUT ENFORCEMENT DUTIES (3.00.58)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a *report from the Operations Manager Street Scene and Open Spaces which contained a review of private/external enforcement.

The Officer explained that Members had requested in 2020 that the Council looked into external enforcement as the perception was that the Council did not actively enforce breaches.

He explained that Officers had actively engaged with a number of companies to provide quotations for both cost neutral and chargeable services.

It was therefore **AGREED** that Officers did not pursue further investigations on external enforcement at this time.

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

50 **MEETING MANAGEMENT**

The Chairman moved the following item from no 9 on the agenda.

51 **BUDGET UPDATE 2022/2023 (3.04.22)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, the revised draft budget for 2022-2023.

The Cabinet Member for Finance explained that there was a £1.4m gap to close and that the budget was the Council's budget and not the Cabinets and he encouraged Members to contribute to the debate.

The Deputy Chief Executive (S151) explained that this was the second round of budget discussions and since the initial presentation of the draft budget that further savings had been identified along with the Governments Funding Settlement.

Consideration was given to:

- If the 3 weekly bin collections were adopted that the payback would take some time and additional financial modelling and monitoring would be required
- Corporate buildings maintenance was funded by ear marked reserves
- Members request of ongoing review of management and services

- Members discussed a range of options that were already being considered by Officers for budget savings
- No additional budget options were identified by Members of the PDG

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

BUDGET UPDATE SHEET

Councillors were provided with a budget update sheet at the meeting.

52 **WORK PLAN (3.36.12)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, the *Environment PDG Work Plan.

Note: *Work Plan previously circulated and attached to the minutes

(The meeting ended at 9.08 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Minute Annex

Policy Development Group / Scrutiny – Updating Sheet – January 2022

Further progress has been made on the 2022/23 draft budget as we move closer towards a balanced budget position for approval in February. This includes some minor alterations to staffing budgets and a thorough review of the Capital Financing implications now that the Capital Programme is largely finalised, which has enable greater use of internal balances to fund the planned capital expenditure. This position is summarised as follows:

	£
January Cabinet	1,427
Further revision to Pay Award Adjustment and staffing Establishment	- 60
Adjustment to Capital Financing estimates following finalisation of Capital Programme	- 420
Current Balance	947
Options to Balance	
PDG Saving Target	- 500
Release Earmarked Reserves	- 200
<i>Further Savings / Income required OR Balancing Contribution from NHB</i>	<i>- 247</i>
	0
Still unknown - Business Rates due next week (£40k growth currently included)	????

Members of the various Policy Development Groups have been tasked with reviewing and identifying additional savings / income generation proposals broadly in line with the following:

	2021/22 Budget	% Share	Share of £500k Requirement
Cabinet	5,070,767	37%	185,600
Community	4,330,771	32%	158,400
Environment	4,163,771	30%	152,300
Economy¹	(314,682)	-2%	(11,500)
Homes	416,787	3%	15,200
	13,667,414		500,000

In addition to Members own ideas and suggestions, to aid the Policy Development Groups with their considerations, Members might find the following topics useful.

Cabinet:

- Increase use of shared services
- Outsource back office services
- Create new company for back office service delivery
- Ensure Procurement delivers VfM
- Reduce Training Budget

- Sell services to other organisations (i.e. to Town/Parish Councils)
- Sell services to other Councils – Arrears (Business Rates / Rent)
- Consider adding back Vacancy Factor budget
- Utilise existing new burdens funding (one-off)

Community:

- Ensure all discretionary services are charged for at maximum allowable charge
- Sell services to business – (i.e. Pre App Advice for licensing)
- Promote channel shift for council services – reduce customer first
- Outsources services (enforcement?)
- Close or further devolve services/asset maintenance and running costs to Town / Parish Councils (i.e. CCTV)
- How to deliver leisure recovery to pre-covid-19 levels and beyond
- Leisure – reconsider closing a site, outsourcing, service levels (un-maned)
- Reduce grants to 3rd parties

Economy:

- Develop on Car Parks and other land assets (i.e. market housing, modular housing)
- Further commercial investment (Maximise opportunities of motorway junctions development for further business growth opportunities)
- Increase commercial rents
- Insource commercial agency agreements

Environment

- Review of waste collection service
- Revisit Waste share saving agreement with Devon CC
- Outsource / share service for Waste
- Close or further devolve services/asset maintenance and running costs to Town / Parish Councils (i.e. Parks, Public Toilets)
- Reduce service provision – reduce grass cutting etc, street cleansing
- Delay Asset investment / maintenance
- Phoenix House – create Hub style set up, rent space to new tenants, more effective use of public estate

Housing:

- Increase subscriptions to Piper Alarms and/or grow the customer base
- Outsource Homelessness DARS - reduced admin costs
- Invest in further housing to reduce B&B costs