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Mid Devon District Council

**Economy Policy Development Group**

Thursday, 17 March 2022 at 5.30 pm  
Phoenix Chambers, Phoenix House, Tiverton

Next meeting  
Thursday, 26 May 2022 at 5.30 pm

**PLEASE NOTE:** - this meeting will take place at Phoenix House and members of the Public and Press are encouraged to attend via Zoom wherever possible. The Protocol for Hybrid Meetings explains how this will work. Please do not attend Phoenix House without contacting the committee clerk in advance, in order that numbers of people can be appropriately managed in physical meeting rooms.

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## Membership

Cllr Mrs C Collis  
Cllr N V Davey  
Cllr J M Downes (Chairman)  
Cllr Mrs S Griggs  
Cllr Mrs E J Lloyd  
Cllr B Holdman  
Cllr D F Pugsley  
Cllr R F Radford  
Cllr J Wright

# AGENDA

*Members are reminded of the need to make declarations of interest prior to any discussion which may take place*

- 1      **Apologies and Substitute Members**  
To receive any apologies for absence and notice of appointment of substitutes.
- 2      **Public Question Time**  
To receive any questions relating to items on the Agenda from members of the public and replies thereto.
- 3      **Declaration of Interests under the Code of Conduct**  
Councillors are reminded of the requirement to declare any interest, including the type of interest, and reason for that interest, either at this stage of the meeting or as soon as they become aware of that interest.
- 4      **Minutes** (*Pages 5 - 10*)  
Members to consider whether to approve the minutes as a correct record of the meeting held on 13 January 2022.
- 5      **Chairman's Announcements**  
To receive any announcements that the Chairman may wish to make.
- 6      **Junction 27 and 28 Report** (*Pages 11 - 16*)  
To receive a report from the Director of Place. At the January 2022 Economy PDG meeting, a request was made for an update on work being undertaken to progress opportunities for business growth by development at the motorway junctions. This report therefore seeks to present an update in relation to work underway in relation to Junctions 27 and 28, and opportunities that exist therein.
- 7      **Workshop summary** (*Pages 17 - 26*)  
To receive a summary of the informal workshops that have been held by the Economy Policy Development Group over recent months.
- 8      **Economic Development Team verbal update**  
To receive a verbal update from the Economic Development Team Leader regarding the work of the team.
- 9      **Chairman's Annual Report for 2021 - 2022** (*Pages 27 - 30*)  
To receive a report from the Chairman of the Economy Policy Development Group summarising the work of the PDG for 2021 – 2022.
- 10     **Identification of items for the next meeting**  
Members are asked to note that the following items are already identified in the work programme for the next meeting:
  - Election of Chairman
  - Election of Vice Chairman

- Start time of Meetings
- Economic Recovery Plan
- Covid Economic Response Update Report
- Performance and Risk Outturn Report
- Revenue and Capital Outturn Report
- Skills and training paper (to be confirmed)

Note: This item is limited to 10 minutes. There should be no discussion on the items raised.

**Stephen Walford**  
Chief Executive  
Wednesday, 9 March 2022

### Covid-19 and meetings

From 7 May 2021, the law requires all councils to hold formal meetings in person. However, the Council is also required to follow government guidance about safety during the pandemic. The Council will enable all people to continue to participate in meetings via Zoom.

You are strongly encouraged to participate via Zoom to keep everyone safe - there is limited capacity in meeting rooms if safety requirements are to be met. There are restrictions and conditions which apply to those in the building and the use of the building. You must not attend a meeting at Phoenix House without complying with the requirements in the new protocol for meetings. You must follow any directions you are given.

Please read the new meeting protocol which is available here: [REVISEDMeetingProtocolupdateMarch2022.docx.pdf \(middevon.gov.uk\)](#)

If you want to ask a question or speak, email your full name to [Committee@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:Committee@middevon.gov.uk) by no later than 4pm on the day before the meeting. This will ensure that your name is on the list to speak and will help us ensure that you are not missed – as you can imagine, it is easier to see and manage public speaking when everyone is physically present in the same room. Notification in this way will ensure the meeting runs as smoothly as possible.

If you would like a copy of the Agenda in another format (for example in large print) please contact Sarah Lees on:

E-Mail: [slees@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:slees@middevon.gov.uk)

Public Wi-Fi is available in all meeting rooms.

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## MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

**MINUTES** of a **MEETING** of the **ECONOMY POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP** held on 13 January 2022 at 5.30 pm

### **Present**

#### **Councillors**

J M Downes (Chairman)  
Mrs C Collis, N V Davey, R J Dolley, Mrs S Griggs,  
R F Radford and J Wright

### **Apology**

#### **Councillor**

D F Pugsley

### **Also Present**

#### **Councillors**

R M Deed, R Evans, B A Moore and B G J Warren

### **Present**

#### **Officers**

Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Andrew Jarrett (Deputy Chief Executive (S151)), Richard Marsh (Director of Place), Dean Emery (Corporate Manager for Revenues, Benefits and Recovery), Paul Deal (Corporate Manager for Finance), John Bodley-Scott (Economic Development Team Leader), Jason Berry (Economic Development Project Manager), Fiona Wilkinson (Operations Manager for Revenues Benefits & Recovery), Sally Gabriel (Member Services Manager) and Sarah Lees (Member Services Officer)

## **38 Apologies and Substitute Members**

Apologies were received from Cllr D F Pugsley.

## **39 Public Question Time**

There were no members of the public present and none had registered a question in advance.

## **40 Declaration of Interests under the Code of Conduct**

There were no interests declared under this item.

## **41 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2021 were confirmed as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

## 42 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman reminded the Group that there would be an informal workshop on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2022 to discuss 'Skills and Employment' with representatives from Petroc. This would be held at 5.30pm via Zoom.

## 43 **Meeting Management**

The Chairman informed the Group that he would be taking 'Urban Renewal in Coastal and Market Towns' as the next item of business.

## 44 **Urban renewal in coastal and market towns (00:05:00)**

Mr Gareth Jones from 'Hardisty Jones' attended the meeting via Zoom to present a report prepared for Devon County Council entitled 'Urban Renewal in Devon's Coastal and Market Towns'. This study was about the future role and prosperity of market and coastal towns in Devon. The county was part of the Heart of the South West (HotSW), so original research undertaken for the study on Devon complimented recent work on the future of towns in HotSW.

The following was highlighted within the presentation:

- Policy Objectives for Towns
- Challenges
- Opportunities
- Devon Towns: Future Objectives
- Pilot Towns: High Level Plan
- Potential Projects: Themes
- Recovery from Covid 19
- Places to live
- Places to work
- Places to visit
- Places to shop
- Places to access services
- Healthy and vibrant places
- Inclusive places
- Sustainable places
- Connected places

The following comments and discussion took place following the presentation regarding:

- Managing to achieve affordable housing within towns remained a difficult issue. A number of mechanisms could aid this such as accessing available government funds, investing in the conversion of unused spaces, working with Homes England and developing robust Local Plans and development strategies.
- Evidence for the study had been gathered from businesses, resident groups and district councils. All the towns spoken to had shown great enthusiasm for economic growth.

- Investors needed confidence in the potential success of suggested projects. Taking an initial risk which proved to be successful could lead to further investment and an increase in confidence amongst investors going forwards.
- The Group felt that they agreed with the aspirations and goals of the study but that they had heard a lot of this before and questioned the reality of being able to achieve these objectives given current financial constraints.
- The key was having projects, a strategy and a vision that were 'shovel ready' so that when government funding was available the Council was ready to proceed as quickly as possible.
- 'Business improvement districts' could have a strong role to play in the future but there were challenges since they were largely funded through additional Business Rates.
- The need for examples of projects nationally where initial investment had led to successful outcomes for the economy of regenerated towns.
- The need for reality checks, for example, public transport challenges in the local area, also Mid Devon had a limited amount of land available and that which was available was expensive. Also the lack of adequate Broadband continued to be a key issue of concern in rural areas.
- Applying for funding was an extremely competitive business, however, funding pots were available. Local Councils had been promised 'Levelling Up' funds and Devolution in the future so there was a reason to be optimistic.
- The study had identified Tiverton as being one of the towns which would benefit from further funding. Work was being undertaken to articulate a clear vision and strategy which could be used as a future template for other towns within the district.

The Chairman concluded the discussion by stating that the Economic Development Team needed to thoroughly analyse the report and extract from it the benefits that could be applied to Mid Devon. The key appeared to be having 'shovel ready' projects so that as soon as government funds were available the Council could apply without delay. It was about putting the Council in the best possible position and investing in project plans and business cases as soon as possible.

#### 45 **Budget 2022/2023 update (01:17:00)**

The Group had before it a report \* from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) reviewing the revised draft budget changes identified and seeking discussion on the further changes required in order for the Council to move towards a balanced budget for 2022/23.

The Cabinet Member for Finance stated that there had been a £1.4m budget gap which had now reduced to £947k. He outlined the process the revised budget would take allowing all Members of Council the opportunity to participate in its development before finally needing Council approval at the end of February.

The Deputy Chief Executive (S151) stated that the report attached to the agenda had been written before Christmas and an updated position needed to be relayed. He referred to the budget being 'squeezed' for a number of years and the fact that it may be necessary for Members to consider a reduction in service provision.

In order to address the current budget gap of £947k he outlined the following options to balance:

PDG Saving Target	-500
Release Earmarked Reserves	-200
Further savings / Income required	-247

Having looked at the income and expenditure of each PDG area he had apportioned the savings needing to be identified by this Group as circa £11,500.

Consideration was given to:

- Maximising opportunities of motorway junction development to enable further business growth opportunities. Concern was expressed that there had not been an opportunity to progress this since the adoption of the Local Plan. It was felt that the Group could undertake a proactive role in steering progress in this area. It was **AGREED** that an item be placed on the agenda for the next meeting to discuss this further.
- A possible increase in car parking charges, however, the future effect of the continuing pandemic on shoppers visiting the towns was still unclear and increasing the budget target in this area would present a risk.
- Consideration of the development of underused car parks for housing schemes was supported and might enable a better utilisation of the Councils land assets. This would need a great deal of consideration in the initial stages but could be something the Economy and Homes PDG's could work on jointly.

**RECOMMENDED** to the Cabinet that, as part of the budget for 2022/2023:

- a) Consideration be given to development on car parks and other land assets such as market housing and modular housing in order to better utilise Council assets and maximise income.
- b) The Council maximise the opportunities presented by motorway junctions development to allow for further business growth opportunities.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Reason for decision:

To maximise all possible opportunities for the Council to set a balanced budget for 2022/2023.

Note: \* Report previously circulated; copy attached to the signed minutes.

#### 46 **Covid 19 Economic Recovery Update (01:52:00)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report \* from the Director of Place updating members on recovery activities at county and district level and progress on the preparation of a districtwide COVID 19 Economic Recovery Plan.

It was explained that since the report had been written there was a need to update the Group on a number of the activities referred to within the report. This included the following:



- Currently the unemployed claimant count remained above the pre-pandemic levels but had fallen slightly from 2.8% to 2.7%.
- Since the report was written the Government had announced two more business grants schemes in response to the Omicron variant and its impact in particular on the hospitality and leisure sectors.
- The Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant Scheme, £1.6 million for distribution as grants of £2,667, £4,000 and £6,000 dependant on the business rate value. Both these schemes would need to be fully allocated and processed by the end of February which mean't that the deadline for applications was the 14<sup>th</sup> Feb.
- The Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) Scheme, would be receiving £187k to support business linked to hospitality and leisure that were not eligible for the main scheme. The team were still awaiting further clarification before this could be open for applications.
- It was a great credit to the team that they had been able to open the scheme for applications so quickly and had already received 11 applications.
- The nature of the management of the grants scheme mean't that the Economic Development Team would be fully occupied in grant delivery for the next 6-8 weeks.
- Up to 31<sup>st</sup> December £70,366 of the Household Support Fund had been allocated, with a further £10,000 of applications still in the pipeline out of the original £86,836 allocation. The team had now managed to negotiate a further £44,000 to top up the fund, which would hopefully extend the programme until the end of February.
- The team had been planning to run an event to bring tourist and hospitality businesses together in the middle of February this year, however the venue that had been booked had now decided to close until April 2022, so the event had been postponed until later in the year.
- Work in relation to the Public Realm project had also been affected by the high workload created by the management and distribution of business grants and the team would need to postpone the meeting arranged for next week.

Note: \* Report previously circulated; copy attached to the signed minutes.

#### 47 **Identification of items for the next meeting (02:00:00)**

The Chairman stated that the items listed on the agenda for the future meetings were an indication only. There had been a shift in the workload priorities within the Economic Development team and items would come forward when they were realistically able to. However, it was requested that there be an update to the next meeting on work being undertaken to progress opportunities for business growth by development at the motorway junctions.

(The meeting ended at 7.16 pm)

**CHAIRMAN**

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## **CABINET 5<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2022**

### **JUNCTION 27 AND 28 REPORT**

**Cabinet Member(s):** Cllr Richard Chesterton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration  
**Responsible Officer:** Richard Marsh, Director of Place.

**Reason for Report and Recommendations:** At the January 2022 Economy PDG meeting, a request was made for an update on work being undertaken to progress opportunities for business growth by development at the motorway junctions in Mid Devon. This report therefore seeks to present an update in relation to work underway in relation to Junctions 27 and 28, and opportunities that exist therein.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CABINET:**

To note the current position in relation to Junctions 27 and 28, and the work planned to be undertaken.

### **Financial Implications:**

No financial implications arise from this report.

### **Budget and Policy Framework:**

The Mid Devon Local Plan (2013-2033) establishes planning policy for development within the district. It sets out clear expectations in terms of the type and scale of development anticipated at Junctions 27 and 28:

Junction 27: approximately 71 hectares of land adjoining the southbound carriageway of the M5 is identified within the Local Plan for the provision of a major high quality regional tourism, leisure and retail attraction. It is expected that this will be supported by ancillary roadside services and associated supporting infrastructure. The Local Plan sets out clear expectations in relation to the progression of the site and notably that the site “should be brought forward in accordance with the terms of a detailed development brief, comprehensive masterplanning, including at least two stages of public consultation and adoption of the Masterplan as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) before any planning application for any part of the site is determined”.

Junction 28: the Local Plan establishes Cullompton as the principal focus of development within the district, in accordance with the development strategy as set out in Policy S11. As such, the Local Plan contains various policies relating to Cullompton, and several of these have a relationship with Junction 28. Most notable are Policies CU7 to CU12. Development around Junction 28 is supported and promoted through the Local Plan – such as early phases of development at Culm Garden Village and the development of further commercial floorspace – but the Plan also makes reference to the need to ensure capacity improvements to the Junction

in order to support the continued development of the town in the manner foreseen through the Local Plan.

Further to the Local Plan, 'Culm garden village' has also formally been recognised as a 'garden village' project. Further work is now underway to progress plans for the garden village – which is also pertinent to Junction 28.

The Local Plan also establishes policy relating to employment provision, and this is contained within policy S6 of the Local Plan. The plan seeks to support the delivery of approximately 140,000 sq metres of commercial floorspace during the plan period.

Finally, the new Local Plan, 'Plan Mid Devon', is also now under development and early consultation is now underway in relation to the preparation of this plan through the formal 'regulation 18' consultation. Plan Mid Devon will, when complete, update and/or replace the planning policy contained within the current Local Plan.

### **Legal Implications:**

No legal implications are identified as arising from this report.

### **Risk Assessment:**

The report is focused on providing an update in relation to development of/at Junction 27 and 28. At this stage, 'risks' associated with the projects are relatively limited – but risks do exist at a strategic and corporate level. These risks principally pertain to development not occurring in the manner, or at the speed, envisaged by and through the Local Plan. For example; the Local Plan is predicated on development occurring at, or linked to, Junctions 27 and 28. Should development therefore fail to occur at these junctions, the Council may find that it is unable to unlock strategic growth within the district in the manner foreseen – be that housing delivery, commercial development, or any other form of development. It is therefore important that the Council takes proactive action to seek to ensure that development does occur in these locations in order to ensure that development occurs as expected and forecast through the Local Plan. In this context of this report, that is especially relevant from the perspective of commercial development.

Alternatively, should the form of development envisaged appear unlikely, owing to structural or market changes accruing to covid-19 or other issues, the Council should take action to consider how development might otherwise occur, reflecting this within the new Local Plan, Plan Mid Devon, as appropriate.

### **Equality Impact Assessment:**

No equality issues are deemed to arise from this report.

### **Relationship to Corporate Plan:**

Progression of projects relating to Junctions 27 and 28 have a direct relationship to, and impact on, all strands of the Corporate Plan: economy, homes, community and environment. Progression of these projects is therefore very important.

## **Impact on Climate Change:**

Progression of the Junction 27 and 28 proposals offer scope for both negative and positive impacts on climate change: on the one hand, expanded capacity and increased traffic flows at motorway junctions have the scope for increased vehicle movements and therefore the scope for further pollution. On the other hand, development also has the potential to mitigate the impact of future development by encouraging modal shift to more sustainable modes of transport and by reducing the need to out-commute for employment opportunities. The type of development proposed also has scope to proactively contribute towards our understanding of climate change, and facilitate action to mitigate climate change.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The Council has a stated ambition to see development around Junctions 27 and 28 of the M5. As set out above, the principles of development are contained within the district's Local Plan and supported by other planning policy documents.
- 1.2 Since the adoption of the Local Plan, varying levels of activity have taken place in relation to development in and around Junctions 27 and 28 and, in recent months, there has been a renewed interest in what development activity is occurring, or planned to occur, in these locations.
- 1.3 At the Economy PDG meeting in January 2022, a request was made for a report to be brought to the March PDG to update on "work being undertaken to progress opportunities for business growth by development at the motorway junctions." This report therefore seeks to provide Members with the requested update.

### **Junction 27:**

- 1.4 Expectations for the form and scale of development at Junction 27 are clearly articulated within the Local Plan – along with the anticipated steps required to progress development through the planning process.
- 1.5 Since the adoption of the Local Plan, progress on the scheme has been slower than anticipated. Undoubtedly, this progress has been heavily influenced by the ongoing covid-19 pandemic and by the uncertainties and market changes that have been driven by it. As such, no plans have progressed for the site and landowners/interested parties have not progressed a masterplan or plans which would facilitate delivery of the previously envisaged scheme.
- 1.6 Discussions with some of the landowners and interested parties suggest that interest in development at Junction 27 remains, but that market changes mean that it is necessary to consider and understand whether interest still exists in delivering the scheme as originally envisaged, or whether changes are required to some elements of the scheme in order to support delivery.

- 1.7 Importantly, interest in the scheme does remain from Eden for the 'Eden Grounds' project and £255,000 of funding was recently received by Eden as a result of their successful bid through the UK Community Renewal Fund for the project. This funding will allow Eden to begin to develop proposals for the site. This work has recently begun and is expected to be completed later in 2022. Importantly, owing to wording of the planning policy for the site, any masterplan must cover the whole of the site and be adopted as an SPD prior to the determination of any planning application. It will therefore be necessary for Eden to work with MDDC and landowners in order to develop proposals for the site.
- 1.8 As part of the development of their work, Eden are also expecting to undertake elements of economic analysis related to their proposed development, as well as undertaking their own community engagement work strands.
- 1.9 Discussions with Eden and some of the landowners, and the fact that Eden is now progressing consideration of their plans for the site, have demonstrated that it would now be timely to bring together key parties (all landowners, especially those not yet engaged, and any prospective occupiers) to discuss plans and ambitions for the site with the aim of confirming the deliverability of the currently proposed scheme, and/or any changes or evolution which might be required to the scheme to aid in delivery.
- 1.10 If discussions and any subsequent work demonstrate that changes or amendments to the proposed scheme are required, it will be necessary to consider what these might be, how it might affect the overall concept or vision for the site, how acceptable such change could be, how delivery might be affected in light of these changes and how this is impacted by the existing planning policy relating to the site.
- 1.11 Whilst MDDC does not itself have any direct interest in the land at Junction 27, the strategic importance of the site does clearly mean that it is important that MDDC is involved in discussions about the site both from a planning perspective, but also from a 'Place' perspective, ensuring that a high-quality regional attraction is delivered which will meet the needs and expectations of the district.
- 1.12 With this in mind, officers are currently considering options for MDDC to take on a proactive facilitation role in enabling discussions with and between landowners and prospective occupiers. The intention for such discussions will be, as set out above, to get further clarity on current landowner expectations for the site and consider what action, joint and independent, is necessary by key stakeholders to progress work in relation to the site. It is expected that such discussions will also involve opportunities for member engagement.
- 1.13 The intention is to progress this engagement in the coming weeks and for all parties to then be clearer in relation to future development of the Junction 27 allocation. The outcome of such discussions will clearly be

important and will allow all parties to better understand the timescale of any development.

- 1.14 Clearly, whilst planning policy already exists for the site, there is also a strong relationship between the matters discussed within the report and 'Plan Mid Devon', the new Local Plan. In fact, the current 'regulation 18' consultation exercise (underway now) is actively seeking opinions in relation to development at Junction 27.
- 1.15 Officers will therefore be mindful of discussions underway with landowners and prospective occupiers in the context of existing planning policy, but also mindful of the work of the new Local Plan. Clearly, there is likely to be a relationship between the two which Officers will monitor with the key aspects between the current and new Local Plan likely to focus on the overall form of development and the timetable for delivery.

### **Junction 28:**

- 1.16 In terms of Junction 28, development interest clearly exists within the vicinity of the junction, and some key projects are progressing – such as the Cullompton railway station project. However, for the purpose of this report, a focus will be maintained on opportunities for business growth within the vicinity of the junction.
- 1.17 Junction 28 clearly already performs an important economic function for the district, and is home to several major employers/businesses including Gregory distribution, BAKO and ABN. Further allocated and identified employment sites exist within the vicinity of Junction 28, although development of these sites has, for a variety of reasons, not progressed more recently. However, strong occupier demand exists for accommodation within the district, and within the wider Devon geography. At the same time, commercial accommodation is currently also in short supply – meaning that many businesses are struggling to find the type, size and/or quality of accommodation which they aspire to. This therefore presents a challenge to the district, and to the Council, as without the development of further quality accommodation in the right locations, businesses are likely to be forced to look elsewhere to satisfy their accommodation requirements. Officers are however also aware that other Devon districts are also experiencing high demand for commercial accommodation, and that supply is currently limited. This therefore presents a challenge at a wider County level, as well as at a more local level.
- 1.18 Opportunity does therefore exist for further commercial development to progress – driving economic growth and job creation within the district, especially where it aligns to key growth sectors.
- 1.19 The Council has recently, as part of the Culm Garden Village project, instructed an employment and skills study to consider how the Culm Garden village can support and contribute to further employment

growth and development in and around junction 28 – in a manner which supports the delivery of the garden village, and in adherence to garden village principals (i.e. reduce car ownership and out-commuting.)

- 1.20 Provisional outputs from this work are expected soon (during March), after which the garden village team, and the Council, will be able to consider next steps to continue to support employment provision and growth within the vicinity of junction 28.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

- 2.1 To note the current position in relation to Junctions 27 and 28, and the work planned to be undertaken.

**Contact for more Information:** Richard Marsh, Director of Place

**Circulation of the Report:** Cllr Richard Chesterton, Leadership Team

**Background Papers** – n/a.



# Agenda Item 7

## Summary of informal EPDG Workshops held in October and November 2021 and January 2022

Date	Subject matter / Expert	MDDC intervention	Actions undertaken	Completion date
28 <sup>th</sup> October 2021	Phil Adams, DCC Senior Manager	Main topics of discussion were: Broadband – CDS rollout.  Skills outreach & hardest to reach into employment	By Chance Scrutiny committee met on 8 <sup>th</sup> Nov with a presentation by the CDS team in DCC. A working party was formed to engage cllrs directly with CDS – <b>See appendix one below</b>  Engaged with Petroc College. see below 20 <sup>th</sup> Jan	End of March 2022

25 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2021	Andrew Butler NFU County Advisor	Andrew provided a comprehensive breakdown of the interventions that LA's could undertake to support the NFUs three Net Zero Pillars: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing Emissions through Productivity</li> <li>• Carbon Storage</li> <li>• Renewables and the Bio Economy</li> </ul>	Working with our climate change officer, development team and forward planning to see what interventions/ changes we can make to support the NFUs net zero interventions- <b>See appendix two below</b>	ongoing
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20 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2022	Sean Mackney CEO Petroc College	Sean gave a summary of the Economic and labour needs for the future: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over the next 10 years the HoSW predicts the health and care sector will produce more jobs than any other sector due to an aging population</li> <li>• Integrated care systems</li> <li>• Massive home building</li> <li>• Green technologies</li> </ul>	The college also centred on visibility and outreach within Tiverton town centre  Currently awaiting proposals from Petroc College on how we can achieve this.  Timelines are dictated by the college and their strategic board.	More to follow – estimate late April
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data science</li> </ul> <p><b>New approaches created by AI and automation replace low skill roles and create high skilled ones</b></p>		
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## **Appendix One:**

### **Project Outline for Scrutiny Reviews:**

Review Title	Broadband in the 'very hard to reach' areas of the District.
Members	Cllr Mrs Colthorpe; Cllr R Radford
Officer Support	Clare Robathan, Scrutiny Officer Jason Berry, Project Manager, Economic Recovery
<p><u>Rationale:</u></p> <p>Why is the review important?</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identified by Members as a key issue for the public?</li> <li>Poor performing service?</li> <li>Service considered important by the community?</li> <li>Public interest covered in local media?</li> </ul>	<p>At the November meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, Members heard from Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) that there are some 1,700 premises across the district that fall into the 'very hard to reach' category. Consequently, these areas of the district could find themselves without access to broadband, or without a clear understanding of the options available to them.</p> <p>In Mid Devon, a considerable number of residents live in the 'very hard to reach' places. CDS, however, continues to accept that a percentage of our residents will not be supplied with decent broadband unless they pay for it themselves.</p> <p>It is in the interests of the whole district's economy, particularly in the wake of the pandemic, that everyone should be able to access high quality broadband. Whilst the offer from CDS to assist Newbrooke and Halberton wards in accessing the 'granular data' of the missing premises, is of course helpful, this information should be available to all of Mid Devon's wards. It will in fact be the Members, and the Members of Parish Councils, who will have the detailed information on the premises in their wards that are currently not scheduled for rollout.</p>
<p><u>Review aims, objectives</u></p> <p>What does the review hope to achieve? Identify what will be included and what is achievable.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify what is being done and what the</li> </ul>	<p>Understanding where the hard to reach premises are, and engaging with them, will be important, so that residents can be made aware of their options at an early stage. Doing this work now will help ensure that those very small communities and individuals can make their voices heard at the right moment, and early enough to be factored into surveying or scheduling, if possible.</p> <p>MDDC will work directly with the provider, Airband. In March,</p>

<p>potential barriers are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore existing initiatives and determine if they are appropriately joined up</li> <li>• Review performance indicators</li> <li>• Compare our policies with those of a neighbouring authority</li> <li>• Assess the environmental /social impacts</li> </ul>	<p>Airband was selected by CDS to expand its full fibre coverage into rural areas of Somerset West and Taunton, parts of Sedgemoor, East Devon, as well as Mid Devon, South Hams and Teignbridge.</p> <p>Airband will work directly with Members to understand where the hard to reach areas are in the District. This will involve working closely with all Members and Parish Councils to understand where the ‘not spots’ are in the District. Working Directly with Airband will ensure that this work is actioned immediately, and can be factored into their future surveying work.</p> <p>Airband will hold all Member briefings in January to talk about the challenges currently in the District, before aiming to speak to every Member of the Council about their ward to understand where all the hard to reach areas/properties are.</p> <p>This kind of information gathering exercise would be very beneficial, for both the district and Airband, as Airband could then look to schedule these areas into their plans.</p> <p>Progress and outcomes will be fed back to the Scrutiny Committee .</p>
<p><u>Desired Outcomes</u></p>	<p>The understanding and identification of all premises in the ‘very hard to reach’ areas of the District. Options for rollout and connection are then presented to these residents.</p>
<p><u>Methodology / Approach</u> What type of enquiry will be used to gather evidence? For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk based review of papers</li> <li>• Site visits / observations</li> <li>• Comparisons with other authorities</li> <li>• Process mapping</li> <li>• Public meetings</li> <li>• Interviewing officers</li> <li>• Calling witnesses/experts to give evidence</li> </ul>	<p>This will be an ongoing project, overseen by Scrutiny.</p>
<p><u>Witness / Experts</u></p> <p>An important part of the scoping process includes deciding what people should be asked for interview.</p>	<p>This work will take place by Airband, who will work closely with Members of MDDC and Parish and Town Councils.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Executive Members and officers are required by the Constitution to attend to explain decisions.</li> <li>• Other people may be invited to discuss issues of local concern and / or answer questions but are not required to attend. It may be more beneficial to visit people for an informal chat.</li> </ul>	
<p><u>Timescales</u></p> <p>What will be done and by when. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start date</li> <li>• Meeting frequency</li> <li>• Draft report deadline</li> <li>• Projected completion date</li> </ul>	<p>The All Member Briefing will take place in January, and meetings with Airband will then take place in February and March.</p>
<p><u>Target Body for Findings / Recommendations</u></p>	<p>Scrutiny Committee</p>

### **Work plan**

#### **January**

Terms of reference and work plan drafted and discussed with Cllr Colthorpe and Cllr Radford (zoom).  
All Member email to Members with information on the project.  
Article in WIS.  
Article in Town and Parish Newsletter and further promotion of All Member briefing.

#### **February**

All Member briefing with Airband by zoom on Thursday 3 February. Airband will give an overview of the current situation in the District, and present the aims of the project to Members.

#### **February/March**

Members will be asked to attend individual slots with Airband, possibly with Parish Council representatives, to discuss their Ward in detail. These will be coordinated by Member Services.

#### **April**

Progress reported to Scrutiny.

## **APPENDIX 2:**

## **Net Zero and Agriculture – NFU working together with MDDC to achieve Net Zero**

Farmers and growers are central to a zero carbon economy.

We ask that local authorities work with farmers and growers, to include the measures outlined here in their Climate Change Emergency plans, local plans, economic development strategies, own procurement strategies and how they develop funding bids with LEPs.

National predictions are for the low carbon economy to grow four times faster than the rest of the economy. Farmers and the land they manage can play a part in this clean growth through decarbonising agricultural production, as well as delivering products and services which replace fossil fuels and remove or store carbon.

The NFU is committed to achieving net zero agriculture by 2040. The UK can enhance its status as a world leader in climate-friendly food production, ensuring a sustainable food supply within the UK, and at the same time strengthening the economy. To do this agriculture needs the support of all policymakers to provide an enabling environment in which farms can provide GHG mitigation and other services.

Our aim is for a productive, profitable and sustainable agriculture sector, with skilled, capable and innovative farmers accelerating our national transition to a net zero economy.

### Part of the solution

Agriculture is uniquely placed as both the source of 10% of UK emissions as well as a sink. Farming captures carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) from the air and turns it into a wide range of foods, fibres, and fuels. By capturing and storing carbon, we can generate negative emissions – actively removing CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere to balance the CH<sub>4</sub> and N<sub>2</sub>O emissions from food production. Farmers also manage substantial carbon reserves already present in soils and vegetation.

### Local authorities

Local authorities have an essential role in supporting agriculture with strategic policies for clean growth in the rural economy. An agile planning approach linked to funding opportunities will help farmers and growers plan, innovate and deliver a net zero future.

## **The NFU's net zero aspiration in three pillars:**

### **Pillar one: Boosting productivity to reduce emissions**

Improving farming's productive efficiency will enable farmers to produce the same quantity of food, or more, with less inputs, in smarter ways. This in turn will reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Ways that local authorities can help reduce emissions in the food chain include the following:

1. Reduce emissions in the food chain
2. Increase efficiency with farm building modernisation
3. Digitisation
4. Transport Infrastructure
5. Invest in technologies and best practice
6. Research and development

### **1. Reduce Emissions in the food chain**

Promoting a fair price for quality, locally produced food, encouraging a healthy and balanced diet. Supporting public procurement of local produce; simplifying the process and improving practice would help more local and regional producers supporting climate-friendly food chains, such as more localised processing, packing, distribution and marketing, reduced consumer travel and handling food waste at a district and county level. Continuing involvement in regional and national frameworks and groups such as LEPs, flooding and coastal committees, local food groups and local nature partnerships.

### **2. Farm building modernisation**

Replacement and modernisation of farm buildings can improve thermal and energy efficiency. As the climate changes, keeping livestock and high-value crops in optimum condition could become more important for health and welfare. All farms will benefit from flexible planning approaches to modernise buildings.

### **3. Digitalisation**

The rollout of high-speed broadband and mobile is desperately needed to enable farmers to adopt more efficient technology. According to the [NFU's Digital Technology Survey](#), carried out last autumn, farmers with superfast broadband are more likely to invest and expand their farm businesses and take advantage of wider business opportunities. But the necessary digital infrastructure requires greater planning and investment in rural areas by central government and local authorities. *Note: there is a clear link here to the work of CDS and the other worksteam related to rural broadband connectivity.*

### **4. Transport and infrastructure**

In rural England, 'the choices and opportunities available to a community are limited by a lack of public transport', according to the [Transport deserts report](#) published by charity CPRE last year.

Rural drivers travel, on average, more than 50% further than their urban counterparts, and this increased reliance on cars leaves rural areas vulnerable as petrol and diesel cars are phased out over the coming decade. Government support for electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure needs specifically to be targeted at rural economies to sustain businesses and support tourism. But farmers can provide opportunities to host infrastructure at farm shops or on the edge of villages.

## **5. Invest in technologies and best practice**

Fuel use accounts for around 11% of total agricultural greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, according to DEFRA statistics from 2019. In the longer term, electrification of agricultural machinery will reduce emissions; but in the meantime there is a continued role for biofuel blends such as E10 ethanol and B20 biodiesel.

If farmers are to support this endeavour, they will need help from local authorities with capital investment in technology and infrastructure. Local industrial strategies administered through LEPs must be appropriate for rural areas, giving small and micro businesses access to investment in new technology and new facilities for herd health monitoring, slurry management and nutrient management, as well as mid-career business training.

## **6. Research and development**

Local authorities can also enable the development of science parks, research centres and other knowledge-based jobs in the rural economy. Emerging technology developed through such initiatives could significantly reduce emissions, as well as create jobs. For example, agricultural robots powered by on-site clean energy generation, farm machinery that reduces diesel use, and feed additives that lower methane emissions are all being trialled.

### **Pillar two: Storing of carbon in farmland,**

By conserving what's already there and changing land management and use we can capture more carbon – in soils, bigger hedgerows and trees.

1. Managing and planting trees and hedgerows
2. Carbon trading

#### **1. Managing and planting trees and hedgerows**

There are 565,000ha of tree cover in England outside woodlands, and its value is often overlooked in policy. Trees and hedgerows contribute significantly to carbon sequestration, biodiversity and landscape character, and farmers can plant and manage trees in ways which work for their existing business.

Around 40% of existing woodland is not actively managed at present, so this should be encouraged as a priority by making funding more accessible.

Planting needs specialist advice, though, because the right tree in the right place can benefit water quantity and quality, biodiversity, productivity and carbon storage. Domestic production can be encouraged by sourcing British-grown saplings, while new markets can also be promoted for local timber and wood fuel.

But conversion to woods is currently treated as irreversible land-use change, which presents challenges for farmers in terms of contracts, payments and taxation. It may also be difficult for tenant farmers to make long-term changes, or for others who are unable to tie up their assets when the future is so uncertain.

#### **2. Carbon trading and offset**

Rural businesses could provide carbon offsetting services through a competitive tender process and companies could purchase offsets by funding green projects on farms for example:

- Farms could also set aside and manage less productive areas of land for carbon storage.

- Enable new tourism, business and residential development to cross subsidise woodland creation, peat restoration and other forms of carbon

### **Pillar three: Renewables and the bio-economy**

To displace greenhouse gas emissions from the fossil fuels and to create GHG removal through photosynthesis and carbon capture

1. Clean energy
2. Bio-based products
3. District heating

#### **1. Clean energy:**

Decarbonisation of energy production is crucial in reaching net zero, with the UK needing to triple its solar power generation alone by 2030. A return to low-cost onshore wind power is also expected. Farmers and growers are particularly well placed to help, given they have the land to host or generate renewable energy. About 40% of farmers already have some form of renewable energy production on site, and it is estimated that they own or host more than half the UK's solar power and anaerobic digestion, which generates biofuel or biogas from farm waste and bioenergy crops, as well as most onshore wind power. There's clearly an appetite among farmers to diversify into new income streams from solar and wind, heat and electricity from biomass, anaerobic digestion, and bioenergy crops.

Local authorities can support farms by putting in place policy to promote the necessary infrastructure: planning can be challenging for those wanting to install renewables on their farms, and a transparent system must be accessible to all farmers and growers. Authorities can also help to fast-track grid connection capacity by funding the necessary reinforcement of existing power networks, and supporting knowledge exchange.

#### **2. Production of bio-products**

Another way that local authorities can help is to promote the market for bio-based products; it is growing, but there needs to be significant scale-up to encourage new supply chains and give farmers the confidence to invest. These products – which include hemp fibre, miscanthus, and wood chip and wool for housing insulation and carpet manufacture – can lock up carbon in long-term stores and contribute to the circular economy.

#### **3. District heating**

More could also be made of the potential for farms to contribute to district heating network systems for new residential and business developments in rural areas, as in EU countries such as Austria. Local authorities should offer farmers and landowners opportunities to provide heat network services or fuel feedstocks as a planning condition for new housing development.

#### **In addition:**

#### **Skills and training**

In its 2019 report [Achieving Net Zero: Farming's 2040 Goal](#), the NFU estimated that to reduce agricultural emissions by around 25% farmers need new skills and technology. However, farmers are already busy and may find it difficult to access training and business



change advice; some colleges provide relevant training, but it can be expensive and hard to reach from remote rural locations.

Most farmers tend to develop an understanding of new ideas from their friends, family, peers, trusted advisers and any clusters or groups with which they are involved. They also attend agricultural events to learn about new technology and new opportunities. Some of the ways that local authorities can help them, therefore, include holding and supporting farmer-focused events where they can share knowledge and gain local support for new technologies and ways of working, as well as funding and promoting local demonstration sites and initiatives.

Stuart Roberts says: 'Local authorities and farmers have a shared goal – to tackle climate change. By working together, we can continue to build a more productive, profitable and sustainable agriculture sector and in turn accelerate our national transition to a net-zero economy.'

Local authorities can:

1. Support net zero champions in your local area – farmers and advisors – who can build consensus around low carbon and net zero approaches
2. Work in partnership with existing training providers to create training and educational opportunities for existing rural businesses
3. Hold and support farmer focussed events to share knowledge, understanding and local buy-in for new technologies and new ways of working
4. Fund and promote demonstration sites and initiatives throughout your local authority area

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## Economy Policy Development Group – 2021/2022

### Chairman's Annual Report

#### Overview

- 1.1 The last twelve months have been another difficult year for Mid Devon's businesses. The beginning of this financial year was encouraging and saw the start of easing of restrictions with many more businesses being allowed to reopen in April and by July most restrictions had been lifted. However, the onset of winter and the rapid increase in Covid cases arising from the new Omicron variant led to a combination of increased restrictions, uncertainty and consumer nervousness which hit many of our businesses hard. As a result, 2022 started with the Growth Economy and Delivery team again having to prioritise the distribution of government grants over 'business as usual' activity.
- 1.2 2021/22 has therefore been another year whereby the Policy Development Group has had to continue to focus its attention on the emergency economic response to the COVID 19 pandemic. The group has however, also started the process of considering how the District Council may wish to prioritise its work in contributing towards positive longer term local economic change given its constrained resources and limited role. This latter work has, to date, involved informal meetings with representatives from Devon County Council's Economic Development Team, The National Farmers' Union, Airband and Petroc.
- 1.3 This emerging work has given the Group the opportunity to respond positively to the Programming Panel's recommendations that Policy Development Group's should be developing policy rather than receiving reports for noting. I have also asked that Performance and Risk and Financial Monitoring reports be presented on a much less regular basis, in an attempt to place greater emphasis on policy development at our meetings and to ensure we make more efficient use of officer time.
- 1.4 In summary, during the course of the last year, the Policy Development Group has considered a number of issues including:
  - regular reports providing updates on the covid-19 emergency response measures and the distribution of businesses and community grants;
  - regular updates on the 'Team Devon' economic recovery work;
  - a presentation from the National Farmers' Union;
  - a presentation on Taste Mid Devon;
  - a presentation on Doughnut Economics;
  - reports regarding Peninsula Transport's: Regional Transport Strategy Vision Consultation, and;

- a presentation from 'Hardisty Jones' reviewing the potential for urban renewal in Devon's Coastal and Market Towns

1.5 As referred to above, the Policy Development Group has received regular updates throughout the year with regard to COVID 19 economic response and recovery work. The following paragraphs are far from being an exhaustive list of Economic Development activities and achievements over that last year but highlight just a few of the initiatives that have been considered by the Policy Development Group:

#### Business Grant Assistance

1.6 Throughout the pandemic, the Economic Development team supported businesses through a series of Government-funded grant schemes. Up until 31st July 2021, when the main schemes closed, 2,298 businesses had been supported with the distribution of nearly £40 million in business assistance including small business rate relief.

1.7 The team continues to support businesses hit by the upsurge in Omicron cases over the Christmas period through the Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant Scheme and Additional Restrictions Grants: Omicron Scheme. These two schemes have now closed to new applications and all grants will need to be processed by the end of March.

#### Community Response Work

1.8 Although the practical community support provided during the pandemic ended in July 2021, the Council has continued to provide financial support through the Local Financial Hardship Fund, in partnership with CHAT and Navigate Charity. Up until October 2021 the fund received 914 applications and distributed £136,859 in financial support to those economically impacted by the pandemic. In October 2021, the Government announced further funding through the Household Support Fund to support households through the winter. The Household Support Fund continues to receive a large number of applications. Since October, the fund has received 678 applications and distributed over £128k in emergency relief. This will be the last of the Government funded schemes and will close before the end of March 2022, although we see no reduction in the level of need.

1.9 In January this year the team was also asked to co-ordinate a community response to support the 71 Asylum Seekers, accommodated at Tiverton Hotel, as part of the Government's Initial Asylum Seekers Accommodation. This has involved working with community partners to ensure the Asylum Seekers have the necessary clothes and other necessities, and organising community drop-in sessions with leisure activities and specialist advice.

#### Love Your Town Centre' Scheme

- 1.10 During the last year the District Council launched two rounds of Love Your Town Centre funding. Both rounds received bids from local businesses, town councils or organisations across Crediton, Cullompton and Tiverton, with proposals to generate and support the town centres economic recovery. The scheme has proved vital this year, providing funding for quick-win projects and supporting footfall return to the town centres, which has been welcomed by community groups.

#### Visit Mid Devon

- 1.11 The website has been a useful tool to support our leisure, tourism and hospitality businesses this year. In order to help our businesses through the recovery period we have offered free business listings on the website. It has enabled us to build a good relationship with the sector and identify how we can help them going forward. We have recruited 136 Mid Devon businesses to date, including eateries, attractions and accommodation providers – these sectors been amongst those hit hardest by the pandemic. We have doubled the number of hits to the website this year. One reason for the increase was the Taste Mid Devon campaign we launched, which promotes Mid Devon's rich food and drink offer. You can visit the website at [www.visitmiddevon.co.uk](http://www.visitmiddevon.co.uk)

#### Infrastructure: Re-opening of Cullompton Railway Station

- 1.12 Given the close relationship with enhanced infrastructure provision and economic prosperity the Growth, Economy and Delivery Team continue to be involved in a number of infrastructure projects. Last year the Policy Development Group contributed towards the emerging Regional Transport Strategy Vision. Members look forward to continued involvement with both Peninsular Transport and Devon County Council during the next stages of the Strategy's development.
- 1.13 A notable recent success, with regard to infrastructure delivery, has been progress with regard to the project to re-open railway stations at Cullompton and Wellington. Further to the submission to Government of a Strategic Outline Business Case early last year the project has been successful in securing £5m of 'Restoring Your Railway, Rail Network Enhancements' funding – the funding split between the two station projects. This funding will allow the projects to progress at speed, developing a Final Business Case (FBC) and completing the first stages of the Government's new accelerated process towards rail infrastructure delivery (PACE).
- 1.14 The project is now in the process of transferring the lead role from the two District Councils (MDDC and SWTC) to Network Rail. Developing this project in partnership to a stage that the rail industry can now take it forward is a notable achievement.

### Cullompton High Street Heritage Action Zone

1.15 Over the last year the following has been achieved:

- Higher Bullring Public Realm Enhancement scheme concept design work is underway following the appointment of consultants last autumn, in partnership with Devon County Council and Historic England.
- The Cultural Consortium 'Creative Cullompton' were successful in their bid to Historic England and awarded a grant of £90,000 to support local cultural and historic activities in the town centre as part of the HAZ project.
- The updated Cullompton Conservation Area Appraisal (CAMP) has been completed.
- The Building Grants Scheme is progressing and the HAZ Officer is working with owners of various properties to develop eligible projects for funding. Properties have been identified following a Condition Survey and the preparation of a Building Priority list.

### The Tiverton Pannier Market

1.16 Despite it being another challenging year for retailing as a result of the pandemic, the Tiverton Pannier Market has remained open. The Pannier Market has played a significant part in reacting to the pandemic at a time when many markets outside of the district have not managed to stay open. Throughout the various lockdowns the market has provided a useful base for fruit and vegetable deliveries. Occupancy levels at the market have now returned to pre-pandemic levels. Even though it is a difficult time for retail, with additional restrictions being lifted and a number of events and initiatives planned throughout year, the future looks a little more encouraging for the Pannier Market in 2022.

1.17 With the above in mind, 2021/22 has been a successful year, and I look forward to continuing with the initiatives that we have begun this year and to identifying other opportunities to support growth in the district in the year ahead. Members will be aware that, at the last PDG meeting, I set out a strong desire to move this PDG towards more proactively pursuing opportunities for growth and income generation within the district, and that is something which I will be keen to progress in earnest in the year ahead.

1.18. Finally, I would like to put on to public record my thanks to all officers who have driven forwards such important work over the course of the last year in very challenging circumstances.

**Cllr John Downes**  
**Chairman of the Economy Policy Development Group**