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MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

A MEETING of the **MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL** will be held in the Phoenix Chambers, Phoenix House, Tiverton on Wednesday, 27 April 2022 at 6.00 pm

ALL MEMBERS of the **COUNCIL** are summoned to attend for the purposes of transacting the business specified in the Agenda which is set out below:

[The next meeting is scheduled to be held in Tiverton on Wednesday, 11 May 2022 at 6.00 pm]

STEPHEN WALFORD

Chief Executive

19 April 2022

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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AGENDA

1 **Apologies**

To receive any apologies for absence.

2 **Public Question Time**

To receive any questions relating to items on the agenda from members of the public and replies thereto.

3 **Declarations of Interest under the Code of Conduct**

To record any interests on agenda matters.

4 **Minutes** *(Pages 5 - 16)*

To consider whether to approve the minutes as a correct record of the meeting held on 23 February 2022.

5 **Chairman's Announcements**

To receive any announcements which the Chairman of the Council may wish to make.

6 **Petitions**

To receive any petitions from members of the public.

7 **Notices of Motions**

There have been no Motions to Council received.

8 **Reports** *(Pages 17 - 98)*

To receive and consider the reports, minutes and recommendations of the recent meetings as follows:

1 Cabinet

- 8 March 2022
- 5 April 2022

2 Scrutiny Committee

- 21 March 2022
- 19 April 2022 (to follow)

3 Audit Committee

- 22 March 2022

4 Environment Policy Development Group

- 8 March 2022

5 Homes Policy Development Group

- 15 March 2022

- 6 Economy Policy Development Group
- 17 March 2022
- 7 Community Policy Development Group
- 22 March 2022
- 8 Planning Committee
- 2 March 2022
- 16 March 2022
- 30 March 2022
- 20 April 2022 (to follow)
- 9 **Questions in accordance with Procedure Rule 13**
- To deal with any questions raised pursuant to Procedure Rule 13 not already dealt with during the relevant Committee reports.
- 10 **Appointment to Committees and Other Internal Bodies** *(Pages 99 - 100)*
- To note the Allocations Table for municipal year 2022/23.
- Following the recent by-election and group changes it is practicable to consider a revised allocation. In the absence of any relevant meetings before the AGM, the tabled allocation also reflects the resolved increase in Audit Committee size from 7 to 9 seats for 2022/23.
- 11 **Leader's Six Monthly Update to Council**
- The Leader will address the Council.
- 12 **Special Urgency Decisions**
- To note any decisions taken under Rule 16 (of the Constitution) Special Urgency – no decisions of this kind have been made since the last meeting.
- 13 **Annual Reports of Audit Committee, Scrutiny Committee and the Policy Development Groups** *(Pages 101 - 114)*
- To receive the annual reports from the Chairmen of the Audit Committee, Scrutiny Committee (to follow) and the Policy Development Groups.
- 14 **Questions to Cabinet Members**
- To receive answers from the Cabinet Members to questions on their portfolios from other Members.

15 **Members Business**

To receive any statements made and notice of future questions by Members.

Note: the time allowed for this item is limited to 15 minutes.

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 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 Sally Gabriel on:

E-Mail: sgabriel@middevon.gov.uk

Public Wi-Fi is available in all meeting rooms.

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **COUNCIL** held on 23 February 2022 at 6.00 pm

Present

Councillors

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

Apologies

Councillors

G Barnell, B Holdman, Miss J Norton,
Mrs N Woollatt and J Wright

114 Apologies (00-08-03)

Apologies were received from Councillors: G Barnell, B Holdman, Miss J Norton Mrs N Woollatt and J Wright.

115 Public Question Time (00-08-24)

There were no questions from members of the public present.

116 Declarations of Interest under the Code of Conduct (00-08-42)

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

117 Minutes (00-08-54)

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

118 Chairman's Announcements (00-09-20)

The Chairman had the following announcements to make:

- He had not attended any civic events since the previous meeting.
- He paid tribute to Councillor Mrs Andrews who had recently resigned stating that she was well respected, well liked and would be missed.

119 Petitions (00-10-46)

There were no petitions presented.

120 Notices of Motions

1. MOTION 578 (COUNCILLOR MRS E LLOYD – 9 FEBRUARY 2022)

The Council has before it a **MOTION** submitted for the first time:

Mid Devon District Council:

(i) recognises that the cost of living is going up for many people, including through an increase in the cost of energy, and that the Council has a role to play in supporting the current and future resilience of its communities;

(ii) acknowledges the efforts that this council is making to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote renewable energy;

(iii) recognises that councils can play a central role in creating sustainable communities, particularly through the provision of locally generated renewable electricity;

(iv) further recognises

- that very large financial setup and running costs involved in selling locally generated renewable electricity to local customers result in it being impossible for local renewable electricity generators to do so,
- that making these financial costs proportionate to the scale of a renewable electricity supplier's operation would create significant opportunities for councils to be providers of locally generated renewable electricity directly to local people, businesses and organisations, and
- that revenues received by councils that became local renewable electricity providers could be used to help fund local greenhouse gas emissions reduction measures and to help improve local services and facilities;

(v) accordingly resolves to support the Local Electricity Bill which, if made law, would make the setup and running costs of selling renewable electricity to local customers proportionate by establishing a Right to Local Supply; and

(vi) further resolves to

- inform the local media of this decision,
- write to local MPs, asking them to support the Bill, and
- write to the organisers of the campaign for the Bill, Power for People, (at 8 Delancey Passage, Camden, London NW1 7NN or info@powerforpeople.org.uk) expressing its support.

The **MOTION** was **MOVED** by Councillor Mrs E Lloyd and seconded by Councillor B G J Warren

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

Consideration was given to:

- How the Council could support the community and other Local Authorities to generate and sell energy locally
- A report would be coming to the Environment Policy Development Group in March regarding the electrical distribution network capacity for increased renewable energy

Upon a vote being taken the **MOTION** was declared to have been **CARRIED**.

121 **Cabinet - Report of the meeting held on 4 January 2022 (00-15-42)**

The Leader presented the report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 4 January 2022

1. **The Cullompton Conservation Area Management Plan (Minute 121)**

The Leader **MOVED** seconded by Councillor R J Chesterton:

THAT the recommendations of the Cabinet as set out in Minute 121 be **ADOPTED**.

Upon a vote being taken the **MOTION** was declared to have been **CARRIED**.

Reason for the Decision – there is a need for the Conservation Area Management Plan to be adopted

2. **Tax Base Calculation (Minute 123)**

The Leader **MOVED** seconded by Councillor B A Moore:

THAT the recommendations of the Cabinet as set out in Minute 123 be **ADOPTED**.

Upon a vote being taken the **MOTION** was declared to have been **CARRIED**.

Reason for the Decision – Mid Devon District Council is a Statutory Billing Authority and must set its Council Tax each year

122 **Cabinet - Report of the meeting held on 1 February 2022 (00-18-40)**

The Leader presented the report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 1 February 2022

(1) **National Non-Domestic Rates (Minute 141)**

The Leader **MOVED** seconded by Councillor B A Moore:

THAT the recommendations of the Cabinet as set out in Minute 141 be **ADOPTED**.

Upon a vote being taken the **MOTION** was declared to have been **CARRIED**.

Reason for the Decision – This is a statutory function and is a legal requirement. The Council must set its budget annually on the tax base and the NNDR1 projected values.

(2) Capital Strategy (Minute 143)

The Leader **MOVED**, seconded by Councillor B A Moore:

THAT the recommendation of the Cabinet as set out in Minute 143 be **ADOPTED**.

Upon a vote being taken the **MOTION** was declared to have been **CARRIED**.

Reason for Decision – The strategy sets out the use of capital for priorities within the Corporate Plan

(3) Treasury Management Strategy (Minute 144)

The Leader **MOVED**, seconded by Councillor B A Moore:

THAT the recommendation of the Cabinet as set out in Minute 144 be **ADOPTED**.

Upon a vote being taken the **MOTION** was declared to have been **CARRIED**.

Reason for Decision – Council approves the Treasury Management Strategy in line with CIPFA guidance

(4) Capital Programme (Minute 145)

The Leader **MOVED** seconded by Councillor D J Knowles:

THAT the recommendation of the Cabinet as set out in Minute 145 be **ADOPTED**.

The Chairman **MOVED** in accordance with Procedure Rule 19.7:

“THAT the vote in respect of this **MOTION** shall be by Roll Call”

A roll call of Members present at the meeting was then taken.

Those voting **FOR** the **MOTION**: Councillors: J Bartlett, E J Berry, W Burke, R J Chesterton, Mrs C A Collis, Mrs F J Colthorpe, D R Coren, N V Davey, Mrs C P Daw, R M Deed, C J Eginton, R B Evans, Mrs S Griggs, P J Heal, D J Knowles, B A Moore, S Pugh, D F Pugsley, R F Radford, C R Slade, Mrs E J Slade, Mrs M E Squires and R L Stanley.

Those voting **AGAINST** the **MOTION**: Councillors: L J Cruwys, F W Letch, Mrs E Lloyd, L D Taylor, A Wilce and A Wyer.

Those **ABSTAINING** from voting: Councillors: J Cairney, S J Clist, R J Dolley, J M Downes, S J Penny, B G J Warren and A White.

The **MOTION** was declared to have been **CARRIED**.

Reason for Decision – There is a need for the Council to set the Capital Programme.

(5) Budget (Minute 146)

The Leader **MOVED** seconded by Councillor B A Moore:

THAT the recommendations of the Cabinet as set out in Minute 146 be **ADOPTED**.

The Chairman **MOVED** in accordance with Procedure Rule 19.7:

“THAT the vote in respect of the **MOTION** shall be by Roll Call”

A roll call of Members present at the meeting was then taken.

Those voting **FOR** the **MOTION**: Councillors: J Bartlett, E J Berry, W Burke, R J Chesterton, Mrs C A Collis, Mrs F J Colthorpe, D R Coren, N V Davey, Mrs C P Daw, R M Deed, C J Eginton, R B Evans, Mrs S Griggs, P J Heal, D J Knowles, B A Moore, S J Penny, S Pugh, D F Pugsley, R F Radford, C R Slade, Mrs E J Slade, Mrs M E Squires and R L Stanley.

Those voting **AGAINST** the **MOTION**: Councillors: J Cairney, S J Clist, L J Cruwys, F W Letch, Mrs E Lloyd, L D Taylor and A Wyer.

Those **ABSTAINING** from voting: Councillors: R J Dolley, J M Downes, B G J Warren, A White and A Wilce.

The **MOTION** was declared to have been **CARRIED**.

Reason for Decision – There is a need for the Council to set a balanced budget.

(6) Policy Framework (Minute 147)

The Leader **MOVED**, seconded by Councillor C R Slade:

THAT the recommendation of the Cabinet as set out in Minute 147 be **ADOPTED**.

Upon a vote being taken the **MOTION** was declared to have been **CARRIED**.

Reason for Decision – the Constitution states that the Policy Framework must be approved annually by Council.

(7) Pay Policy (Minute 148)

The Leader **MOVED**, seconded by Councillor Mrs C P Daw:

THAT the recommendation of the Cabinet as set out in Minute 148 be **ADOPTED**.

Upon a vote being taken the **MOTION** was declared to have been **CARRIED**.

Reason for Decision – there is a need for Council to agree the pay policy annually, therefore complying with legislative requirements.

8) Establishment (Minute 149)

The Leader **MOVED**, seconded by Councillor C R Slade:

THAT the recommendation of the Cabinet as set out in Minute 149 be **ADOPTED**.

Upon a vote being taken the **MOTION** was declared to have been **CARRIED**.

Reason for Decision – the Council receive a report on the Establishment on an annual basis.

123 Council Tax Resolution 2022/2023 (00-31-04)

The Council had before it a *report of the Deputy Chief Executive setting the Council Tax for 2022/23.

The Chairman **MOVED**, seconded by Councillor B A Moore:

“THAT the Council Tax for 2022/23 be increased by 2.34% being £218.84 (in accordance with the revised referendum limit ability of 2% or £5 per Band D property)”

With regard to the draft Council Tax resolution in respect of the year 2022/23:

The Chairman then **MOVED** in accordance with Procedure Rule 19.7:

“THAT the vote in respect of this item shall be by Roll Call”

A roll call of Members present at the meeting was then taken:

Those voting **FOR** the **MOTION**: Councillors: J Bartlett, E J Berry, W Burke, J Cairney, R J Chesterton, Mrs C A Collis, Mrs F J Colthorpe, D R Coren, N V Davey, Mrs C P Daw, R M Deed, J M Downes, C J Eginton, R Evans, Mrs S Griggs, P J Heal, D J Knowles, F W Letch, Mrs E Lloyd, B A Moore, S J Penny, S Pugh, D F Pugsley, R F Radford, C R Slade, Mrs E J Slade, Mrs M E Squires, R L Stanley, B G J Warren and A Wilce.

Those **ABSTAINING** from voting: Councillors: S J Clist, L J Cruwys, R J Dolley, L D Taylor, A White and A Wyer

The **MOTION** was declared to have been **CARRIED** and it was accordingly:-

RESOLVED that the recommendations within the report be approved.

Reason for Decision - there is a need for the Council to set the Council Tax for 2022/23

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

124 **Scrutiny Committee - report of the meeting held on 13 December 2021 (00-37-26)**

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee presented the report of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 December 2021.

125 **Scrutiny Committee - Report of the meeting held on 17 January 2022 (00-37-58)**

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee presented the report of the meeting of the Committee held on 17 January 2022.

126 **Scrutiny Committee - Report of the meeting held on 14 February 2022 (00-38-37)**

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee presented the report of the meeting of the Committee held on 14 February 2022.

127 **Audit Committee - Report of the meeting held on 25 January 2022**

The Chairman of the Audit Committee presented the report of the meeting of the Committee held on 25 January 2022.

1. **Arrangements for the Appointment of External Auditors from 2023/2024 (Minute 62)**

The Chairman of the Committee **MOVED** seconded by Councillor B A Moore:

THAT the recommendation of the Audit Committee as set out in Minute 62 be **ADOPTED**.

Upon a vote being taken the **MOTION** was declared to have been **CARRIED**.

Reason for the Decision – to comply with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014

(2) Review and Revision of the Financial Regulations (Minute 63)

The Chairman of the Audit Committee **MOVED** seconded by Councillor B A Moore:

THAT the recommendation of the Audit Committee as set out in Minute 63 be **ADOPTED**.

Upon a vote being taken the **MOTION** was declared to have been **CARRIED**.

Reason for the Decision – There is a need for the Council to approve the Financial Regulations.

128 **Environment Policy Development Group - Report of the meeting held on 11 January 2022 (00-42-45)**

The Vice Chairman of the Environment Policy Development Group presented the report of the meeting of the Group held on 11 January 2022.

129 Homes Policy Development Group - report of the meeting held on 18 January 2022 (00-43-30)

The Chairman of the Homes Policy Development Group presented the report of the meeting held on 18 January 2022.

130 Economy Policy Development Group - Report of the meeting held on 13 January 2022 (00-44-33)

The Chairman of the Economy Policy Development Group presented the report of the meeting of the Group held on 13 January 2022.

131 Community Policy Development Group - Report of the meeting held on 25 January 2022 (00-46-36)

The Chairman of the Community Policy Development Group presented the report of the meeting of the Group held on 25 January 2022.

132 Planning Committee - Report of the meeting held on 5 January 2022 (00-48-19)

The Chairman of the Planning Committee presented the report of the meeting of the Committee held on 5 January 2022.

133 Planning Committee - Report of the meeting held on 19 January 2022 (00-49-00)

The Chairman of the Planning Committee presented the report of the meeting of the Committee held on 19 January 2022.

134 Planning Committee - Report of the meeting held on 2 February 2022 (00-49-30)

The Chairman of the Planning Committee presented the report of the meeting of the Committee held on 2 February 2022.

135 Standards Committee - Report of the meeting held on 9 February 2022 (00-50-18)

The Chairman of the Standards Committee presented the report of the meeting of the Committee held on 9 February 2022.

136 Questions in accordance with Procedure Rule 13 (00-51-10)

There were no questions submitted under Procedure Rule 13.2.

137 Appointment to Committees and other Internal Bodies (00-51-22)

The Council had before it a *table setting out the proposed allocation of seats on Committees.

Arising thereon:-

Appointment of Committees and Policy Development Groups,

The District Solicitor/Monitoring Officer informed the meeting that due to the changes within political groups there had been a need to redistribute the percentage of seats across the Council. Following discussions with Group Leaders, 3 seats were left to be filled, to give one additional seat to the Conservative Group and two additional seats to the Non-Aligned Group.

The Group Leaders were invited to address the meeting.

Consideration was given to the allocation of the seats by percentage

Councillor R B Evans **MOVED**, seconded by Councillor R J Chesterton that:

- (a) The Council approve the allocation of seats on Committees as shown on the schedule, with the seat on the Scrutiny Committee to be taken by the Conservative Group and the two remaining seats on the Homes Policy Development Group and the Community Policy Group be taken by the Non Aligned Group.

Upon a vote being taken, the **MOTION** was declared to have been **CARRIED**.

Notes:

- i) Councillor S J Clist requested that his vote against the decision be recorded;
- ii) Councillors J Cairney, J M Downes and L D Taylor requested that their abstention from voting be recorded.

The Leader **MOVED**, seconded by Councillor R J Dolley that:

- (b) Members be appointed to Committees in accordance with the names notified to the Chief Executive by each of the Political Groups represented on the Council, to give effect to the approved allocation of seats in (a) above.

Upon a vote being taken, the **MOTION** was declared to have been **CARRIED**.

Note: Councillors S J Clist and L J Cruwys requested that their abstention from voting be recorded.

*Table previously circulated, copy attached to minutes.

138 Special Urgency Decisions (1-17-18)

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

139 Questions to Cabinet Members (1-17-28)

Councillor B A Moore informed the meeting that he had received some questions from Councillor G Barnell who was unable to attend the meeting, he would provide a written response to the Member.

Councillor J M Downes addressing the Leader asked that a card and flowers be sent to Mrs Eileen Andrews. The Leader responded stating that he agreed and that it would be progressed.

Councillor A White addressing the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change stated that the residents of Upper Yeo were perplexed to read an article in Devon Live in that the Mid Devon Conservatives had called for the 3 weekly bin collection ideas to be scrapped – did the Cabinet Member agree?

The Cabinet Member responded stating that this was old news, when things were very different in the Council, there had been some Conservatives against the idea, but that was then and this is now. An in-depth trial had taken place and the matter had been discussed by the Environment Policy Development Group and the recommendation ratified by the Cabinet. Therefore he didn't agree and that the project would be moving forward subject to the details of the resolution of the Cabinet.

Councillor A White addressing the Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services stated that the residents of Upper Yeo were perplexed to find a petition to stop MDDC reducing the refuse collection service, this petition called on MDDC to rule out changes to the frequency of refuse collections, did Councillor Evans agree with the petition of the Mid Devon Conservative Group and if not why had he changed his mind?

The Cabinet Member responded asking the Member to look at the date of the petition. The petition had not explained the benefits and finances of the scheme, all that was now understood and the trial had taken place.

Councillor A White addressing the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration highlighted a press release stating that Councillor Chesterton was against the change to waste collection frequency, was the Councillor still seeking support?

The Cabinet Member responded stating that he did vote against the trial and voiced concerns at the Cabinet meeting, but that the information and data was now available, he had made his thoughts known that he would like a weekly recycling collection in the long run.

Councillor A White addressing the Cabinet Member for Finance stated that residents of Upper Yeo were concerned to see potential reports that leisure centres would be closing in Mid Devon and could he rule out closing any leisure centres in the future and if not which one would he be closing?

The Cabinet Member responded stating that this was not within his portfolio, but that he was a regular user of the leisure centres and would encourage all members to attend.

The Cabinet Member for Community Well-Being stated that there had been no indication of this at recent meetings he had held with the Leisure Centre Manager.

Councillor S J Clist addressing the Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services asked whether now was the right time to increase council house rent by CPI plus 1% thus 4.1%?

The Cabinet Member stated that the Council had just voted for this, therefore his answer was yes.

140 Members Business (1-25-06)

Five members separately raised questions or provided statements, between them covering the State of the District Debate and encouraging attendance, the Chairman's Civic Service to be held in Hemyock and requesting that the Chairman return to Cruwys Morchard the following year, whether Mrs Andrews should be given the honour of Honorary Alderman, respect for officers and one his political group matters, the latter of which the Chairman ruled was not within the scope of Members Business.

(The meeting ended at 7.34 pm)

CHAIRMAN

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MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **CABINET** held on 8 March 2022 at 10.00 am

Present

Councillors

R M Deed (Leader)
R J Chesterton, Mrs C P Daw, C J Eginton,
R Evans, D J Knowles, B A Moore and
C R Slade

Also Present

Councillor(s)

B G J Warren

Also Present

Officer(s):

Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Andrew Jarrett (Deputy Chief Executive (S151)), Richard Marsh (Director of Place), Karen Trickey (District Solicitor and Monitoring Officer), Paul Deal (Corporate Manager for Finance), Simon Newcombe (Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing), Fiona Wilkinson (Operations Manager for Revenues Benefits & Recovery), Stephen Bennett (Building Surveyor), Jessica Watts (Member Services Apprentice) and Sally Gabriel (Member Services Manager)

153. APOLOGIES (00-03-12)

There were no apologies for absence.

154. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (00-03-20)

There were no questions from members of the public present in the meeting.

155. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (00-03-32)

Members were reminded of the need to make declarations of interest if and when necessary.

156. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (00-03-43)

Subject to the inclusion of Cllr E J Berry in the attendance list, the minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

157. REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS (00-04-23)

Arising from a *report of the District Solicitor and Monitoring Officer, the Community Policy Development Group had made the following recommendation that: the Council's RIPA Policy be amended as outlined in section 3 of the report.

The Cabinet Member for Community Well-Being outlined the contents of the report stating that the current policy did not accurately reflect the requirements regarding covert surveillance using communications data, this had been updated within the revised policy along with the use of juvenile covert human surveillance

A query was raised with regard to the number of staff that had received training.

RESOLVED that the Council's RIPA Policy be amended as outlined in section 3 of the report.

(Proposed by Cllr D J Knowles and seconded by Cllr C R Slade)

Reason for the decision – there is a need for the RIPA policy to be up to date.

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

158. **REVIEW OF DISCRETIONARY PLANNING FEES IN RELATION TO THE MONITORING OF SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS AND RESPONDING TO ENQUIRIES CONCERNING COMPLIANCE WITH PLANNING OBLIGATIONS (00-08-00)**

The Cabinet had before it a *report of the Corporate Manager for Income, Benefits, Recovery and Planning with regard to discretionary fees.

The Cabinet Member for Finance outlined the contents of the report stating that this dealt with a review of discretionary fees with regard to S106 agreements and was in line with other local council's general practice.

A query was raised as to whether the charges would be applied to Parish Councils and it was explained that this was not the case.

It was therefore:

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the introduction of a £100 fee for basic Section 106 compliance enquiries be approved, with a further charge of £50 per additional clause, applicable from 1st April 2022;
- 2) the reviewing and setting of these fees, with a further review being undertaken after 12 months be approved;
- 3) that monitoring fees contained within Section 106 Agreements be delegated to the Corporate Manager for Income, Benefits, Recovery and Planning in conjunction with the Section 151 Officer and the Cabinet Member for Finance.

(Proposed by Cllr B A Moore and seconded by Cllr R J Chesterton)

Reason for the decision – the charging of relevant fees in line with increasing costs will generate valuable revenue to assist in covering the costs associated with providing the service.

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

159. **CULLOMPTON RAILWAY STATION (00-10-07)**

The Cabinet had before it and noted a *report of the Director of Place presenting an update in relation to the Cullompton Railway Station project.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration outlined the contents of the report stating that the Council had been working with South West and Taunton Council over a number of years and had included the production of a strategic outlined business case seeking to demonstrate the strong business case associated with the proposed reopening of the Cullompton and Wellington stations. The Councils had been successful in securing a further £5m of funding for the project. A change to the governance arrangements was felt to be appropriate and the project lead role would transfer from the District Councils to Network Rail who would now progress the project further with the use of this funding. It was hoped that the first passengers would be able to use the stations by 2025.

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

160. **RESIDENTS SURVEY (00-13-11)**

The Cabinet had before it and noted a *report of the Deputy Chief Executive providing an update of the results of the Mid Devon residents' survey which was undertaken in November 2021 and included questions in relation to statutory consultation on the budget.

The Leader outlined the contents of the report stating that the results of the residents' survey along with feedback from the Peer Review provided valuable tools for the Council to reflect upon.

Consideration was given to:

- The percentage of those who felt safe after dark and whether there was a further breakdown available
- The feedback with regard to tackling climate change and the reported satisfaction with regard to the waste service
- Disappointment in the feedback with regard to street cleaning which would be followed up and whether a further breakdown with regard to areas of concern across the district could be made available.
- The public's views on spending and the importance of continuing to invest in the leisure centres
- Value for money and general satisfaction and whether any further breakdown could be made available

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

161. **FINANCIAL MONITORING (00-25-00)**

The Cabinet had before it and noted a *report of the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) presenting a financial update in respect of the income and expenditure so far in the year.

The Cabinet Member for Finance outlined the contents of the report stating that the current financial status provided a General Fund projected underspend of £30k, with income remaining well below normal levels for leisure and car parking, planning and waste income rising and staff costs under budget but this was offset by higher usage of agency staff. The HRA was showing an underspend, as was the Capital Programme.

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

162. MODERNISATION OF COUNCIL HOMES CONTRACT 2022 - 2026 (00-27-18)

The Cabinet had before it a *report of Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing advising Members on the results for the tendering of the Modernisation of Council Homes Contract 2022–2026 and requesting confirmation of the award of the contract.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services outlined the contents of the report explaining the evaluation process and the investment in the HRA estate.

RESOLVED that:

1. The new four-year (2+1+1) Modernisation of Council Homes Contract is awarded to Contractor 1 with a forecast annual cost £400,000.00.
2. Delegated authority be granted to the S151 Officer (in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services) to complete the associated modernisation contract.

(Proposed by Cllr R B Evans and seconded by Cllr B A Moore)

Reason for the decision – the Council has a legal duty to maintain the stock and meet the Decent Homes Standard.

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

163. GAS AND RENEWABLE SERVICING CONTRACT (00-29-34)

The Cabinet had before it a *report of the Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing advising Members of the procurement of a combined gas and renewables servicing delivery partner (2022-2028) and requesting confirmation of the award of the contract.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services outlined the contents of the report explaining the evaluation process and the investment in the HRA Estate.

RESOLVED that:

1. The new 6-year (4+1+1) Combined Heating Services Contract is awarded to Contractor 2 with a forecast annual cost £385,000.00.
2. Delegated authority be granted to the S151 Officer (in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services) to complete the associated service contract.

(Proposed by Cllr R B Evans and seconded by Cllr C R Slade)

Reason for the decision – the Council has a duty to main safety compliance standards within its homes.

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

164. NOTIFICATION OF KEY DECISIONS (00-30-53)

The Cabinet had before it and noted it's *rolling plan for April 2022 containing future key decisions.

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

165. APPOINTMENT OF FINANCE DIRECTOR TO 3 RIVERS DEVELOPMENTS LIMITED (00-31-34)

The Cabinet had before it a *report with regard to the appointment of a new Finance Director to 3 Rivers Developments Ltd complying with the current governance arrangements under schedule 2 of the Shareholder Reserved Matters, the appointment or removal of a Director was a reserved matter for the Shareholder.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services outlined the contents of the report explaining the process for seeking a new director.

RESOLVED that Mr Paul Neilson be appointed to the post of Finance Director to 3 Rivers Developments Ltd.

(Proposed by Cllr R B Evans and seconded by Cllr B A Moore)

Note: *Report previously circulated.

(The meeting ended at 10.35 am)

CHAIRMAN

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MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **CABINET** held on 5 April 2022 at 10.00 am

Present

Councillors

R M Deed (Leader)
R J Chesterton, Mrs C P Daw, C J Eginton,
R Evans, D J Knowles, B A Moore and
C R Slade

Also Present

Councillor(s)

J Cairney, S J Clist, L J Cruwys, R J Dolley, J M Downes,
B Holdman, F W Letch, L D Taylor and B G J Warren

Also Present

Officer(s):

Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Andrew Jarrett (Deputy Chief Executive (S151)), Richard Marsh (Director of Place), Karen Trickey (District Solicitor and Monitoring Officer), Matthew Page (Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste), Dean Emery (Corporate Manager for Revenues, Benefits and Recovery), Tristan Peat (Forward Planning Team Leader), Nicola Cuskeran (Interim Corporate Performance Manager & Safeguarding Officer), Jessica Watts (Member Services Apprentice) and Sally Gabriel (Member Services Manager)

166. APOLOGIES (00-02-39)

There were no apologies for absence.

167. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (00-02-45)

Mr Morgans referring to Item 8 (Junction 27/28) asked whether the Council had considered development of a different type on the J27 site, for example joint working with the County Council, Parish Councils and the NHS to provide convalescence and care units to reduce bed blocking or even affordable housing units – this would be a useful development for the benefit of the larger community and the NHS, even a triage hub could be developed – he asked whether this was of any interest to the Cabinet?

The Leader stated that both the Cabinet and officers had noted this idea and that this would be considered.

168. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (00-50-10)

Members were reminded of the need to make declarations of interest if and when necessary.

169. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (00-0516)**

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

170. **SINGLE EQUALITIES POLICY AND EQUALITY OBJECTIVES (00-05-52)**

Following a report of the Director of Business Improvement and Operations the Community Policy Development Group had made the following recommendation: that the Single Equality Scheme and the Equality Objectives for 2022-2023 be adopted.

The Cabinet Member for the Working Environment and Support Services outlined the contents of the report highlighting the work that had been completed in the last year.

Consideration was given to the number of officers trained in mental health first aid, the accessibility of Phoenix House and whether Members should be trained in first aid

RESOLVED that the Single Equality Scheme and the Equality Objectives for 2022-2023 be adopted.

(Proposed by Cllr C J Eginton and seconded by Cllr C R Slade)

Reason for the decision - To ensure that the Council was in compliance with the Equality Act 2010

Note: *Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

171. **SAFEGUARDING CHILDRENS AND ADULTS AT RISK POLICY AND PROCEDURES (00-13-13)**

Following a report of the Director of Business Improvement and Operations, the Community Policy Development Group had made the following recommendation: that the Safeguarding Children's and Adults at Risk Policy and Procedures be adopted.

The Cabinet Member for the Working Environment and Support Services outlined the contents of the report stating that over the last year the number of referrals and allegations made by officers totalled 41 incidents, 33 of the referrals had been made by the Housing Service.

Consideration was given to the work of the Housing Officers, their daily dealings with the public and how proactive they had been in recognising issues.

RESOLVED that the Safeguarding Children's and Adults at Risk Policy and Procedures be adopted.

(Proposed by Cllr C J Eginton and seconded by Cllr Mrs C P Daw)

Reason for the decision: To ensure that the Council met its legal obligations in respect to safeguarding and child protection

Note: *Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

172. CORPORATE PLAN 2020-24 - MID POINT REVIEW (00-16-40)

The Cabinet had before it and noted a *report of the Chief Executive considering the progress against delivery for the Corporate Plan 2020-2024 at its midway point.

The Leader outlined the contents of the report stating that it had been two year's since the Council adopted its second Corporate Plan and that now was the time to reflect on the progress of delivery and refresh the plan as necessary. The plan had been adopted just weeks prior to the start of the pandemic which had impacted on some of the delivery strands.

Consideration was given to:

- The designation of the Exe Valley AONB and whether any progress had been made on the proposal, the process for designating an area of outstanding natural beauty and whether the idea should be put on hold until the Government changed its processes
- The Mid Point Review would be considered by the Policy Development Groups and return to Cabinet for further consideration with a view to updating the Corporate Plan with refreshed delivery priorities

Note: *Report previously circulated copy attached to minutes.

173. JUNCTION 27 AND 28 REPORT (00-26-54)

The Cabinet had before it and noted a * report from the Director of Place providing an update on work being undertaken to progress opportunities for business growth by development at the motorway junctions in Mid Devon.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration outlined the contents of the report welcoming the proactive approach of the Economy Policy Development Group to ensure a sustained focus on the promotion of sustainable economic development within the district.

Focussing on Junction 27, he informed the meeting that no plans for the site had been progressed, the Eden Project had secured funding to further refine and develop their proposals, there was a need to revisit some of the original assumptions owing to the passage of time since the original scheme was proposed and that officers were proactively working to engage landowners in a discussion about the future development of the allocated land.

With regard to Junction 28, he advised that an employment and skills study was currently underway which would consider opportunities for further economic growth and development in the area, specifically aligned to the new Garden community. He added that the Plan Mid Devon would be looking at both junctions and that any changes to planning policy would need to be driven through the Local Plan policy route.

Addressing the issues raised in Public Question Time any changes in policy would need to go through the Local Plan process or the landowners could choose to put in an exception to the policy.

Consideration was given to:

- The need to engage with residents and local people
- The involvement of the Economy Policy Development Group, the proximity of the two junctions and that they should be viewed as a whole considering prospects for both junctions together
- The need to consider the economic development of the whole of the district
- How the Policy Development Group could be involved in the Local Plan process considering background documents and evidence as it was made available
- Economic growth at Junctions 25 and 26

Note *Report previously circulated, copy attached to minutes.

174. DEVOLUTION AND THE 'COUNTY DEAL' (00-48-52)

The Cabinet had before it and noted a *report of the Chief Executive updating the Cabinet on the status and progress of the county deal discussions for Devon.

The Leader outlined the contents of the report stating that through the publication of the Levelling Up White Paper, local authority partners within Devon, Plymouth and Torbay had been offered an opportunity to negotiate a new style of devolution deal for the area. To facilitate discussions, local authority partners had identified a number of initial thematic areas on which they wished to focus; this was an opportunity to shape decision making locally without an Elected Mayor

Consideration was given to:

- The need for regular updates when information was available
- Governance arrangements

Note *Report previously circulated, copy attached to minutes.

175. PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY - POST CONSULTATION (1-05-07)

The Cabinet had before it a *report of the Director of Place recommending the approval of the Mid Devon Playing Pitch Strategy.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration outlined the contents of the report stating that the public consultation process had taken place and that 32 responses had been received which had been considered by officers and the consultant. The Playing Pitch Strategy had been updated through three amendments to the site actions plans and comments had been received in relation to the population forecasts which had been considered. The strategy included a vision and 6 key objectives for sports pitch provision in the district and recommended the provision of a full size 3G football turf pitch in each of the three main towns.

RESOLVED that:

- a) The Mid Devon Playing Pitch Strategy be approved.
- b) The status of the Strategy as a technical document and the recommendations therein (including the setting up of a Strategy Delivery Group) be noted.

(Proposed by Cllr R J Chesterton and seconded by Cllr C R Slade)

Reason for the decision – the Playing Pitch Strategy will support the development of sports facilities across the district and be a technical document to aid planning permissions and local planning policy.

Note *Report previously circulated, copy attached to minutes.

176. FINANCIAL MONITORING (1-10-58)

The Deputy Chief Executive provided a verbal update in respect of the income and expenditure so far in the year. He informed the meeting that the HRA and the General Fund were trending close to budget; the outturn would be reported to the Policy Development Groups and the Cabinet; the collection rates for Council Tax, Business Rates and Sundry Debtors had all performed well. He paid tribute to the work of the Council Tax Team who had delivered all of the grant schemes throughout the pandemic and were now working on the Energy Rebate Scheme. He reported that the pay award had been settled and that agency spend had increased due to Covid levels amongst frontline staff.

177. PERFORMANCE AND RISK (1-16-30)

The Cabinet had before it and noted a *report of the Corporate Manager for People, Performance and Waste providing Members with an update on the performance against the Corporate Plan and local service targets.

The following items were raised:

- Car charging usage was well above the target
- The corporate tree planting scheme
- The carbon zero proposals for the Post Hill development
- Whether the risks associated with reduced funding and 3 Rivers Development Limited could be reworded

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

178. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT (1-20-51)

The Cabinet had before it and noted a *report of the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) providing the Cabinet with an update on how the Continuous Improvement process was working after its implementation in March 2021.

The officer outlined the contents of the report highlighting the table within the report which identified the issues raised with the three directors and the specific service

changes/improvements in the following services, planning enforcement, car parking income collection, abandoned vehicles, public health and housing.

The Cabinet Member for Continuous Improvement outlined her work and the improvements made to date.

Note: *Report previously circulated, copy attached to minutes

179. NOTIFICATION OF KEY DECISIONS (1-25-02)

The Cabinet had before it and noted it's *rolling plan for May 2022 containing future key decisions.

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

180. 3 RIVERS DEVELOPMENTS LIMITED - PERFORMANCE UPDATE (1-26-36)

The Cabinet had before it and noted a *report from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) providing an update on current project performance and any key risks.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services informed the meeting of the uplift in the projected income forecast for St Georges Court having taken into consideration increased costs for materials and labour and he reported that the marketing scheme was being progressed.

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

181. 3RDL BUSINESS CASE FOR A NEW SITE AND CONSIDERATION OF CHANGES TO COUNCIL BORROWING ARRANGEMENTS (1-30-35)

The Cabinet had before it a *report from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) reviewing the request for further borrowing to support the business case and to consider the implications of recent changes to Council borrowing arrangements.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services outlined the contents of the report explaining the change in Government guidance with regard to lending issues for projects outside of the district.

The Deputy Chief Executive (S151) outlined the impact on the Council's borrowing ability (via the PWLB) if it were to lend monies to 3 Rivers Development Limited for projects outside of the district

Consideration was given to:

- The impact of the Prudential Code on 3 Rivers Development Limited
- Whether the pan Devon combined authority would change the impact of the borrowing issues
- The need for an interim Business Plan to be considered

RESOLVED that: the Cabinet give its support to the business case, but does not offer to provide finance for this project, or any others outside of the District boundary, based on the recent changes to Government lending.

(Proposed by Cllr R B Evans and second by Cllr B A Moore)

Reason for the Decision – Investing in projects outside of Mid Devon would impact on the Capital Programme and the borrowing already planned

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

182. **DIRECTORS REMUNERATION OF 3 RIVERS DEVELOPMENT LIMITED (1-49-18)**

The Cabinet had before it a *report of the Deputy Chief Executive in order to comply with the current governance arrangements under schedule 2 of the Shareholder Reserved Matters, the level of remuneration of a company Director was a reserved matter for the Shareholder, and that this was currently a Cabinet decision.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services outlined the contents of the report.

RESOLVED that in view of all the current terms and conditions of employment, the Council does not approve the proposed remuneration level.

(Proposed by Cllr R B Evans and seconded by Cllr B A Moore)

Reason for the decision - the level of remuneration of a company Director is a reserved matter for the Shareholder.

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

(The meeting ended at 11.51 am)

CHAIRMAN

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MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on 21 March 2022 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors

B G J Warren (Chairman)
E J Berry, S J Clist, Mrs F J Colthorpe,
L J Cruwys, Mrs S Griggs, F W Letch,
Mrs E J Lloyd, S Pugh and Mrs E J Slade

Apologies

Councillor(s)

P J Heal and R F Radford

Also Present

Councillor(s)

Mrs C P Daw, R M Deed and R Evans

Also Present

Officer(s):

Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Andrew Jarrett (Deputy Chief Executive (S151)), Richard Marsh (Director of Place), Jill May (Director of Business Improvement and Operations), Maria De Leiburne (Operations Manager for Legal and Monitoring), Dean Emery (Corporate Manager for Revenues, Benefits and Recovery), Carole Oliphant (Member Services Officer), Clare Robathan (Policy and Research Officer) and Jessica Watts (Member Services Apprentice)

129 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (0.04.42)

Apologies were received from Cllrs P J Heal and R F Radford.

130 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN (0.06.48)

There were no nominations for Vice Chairman for the remainder of the municipal year.

131 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (0.08.10)

Members were reminded of the need to make declarations where appropriate.

132 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (0.08.20)

A member of the public referring to item 9 on the agenda asked:

1. Can Members, now that the growing season has started, assure those directly affected by Anaerobic Digesters (AD) planning breaches, that the participation or non-participation of neighbouring Council/agencies, will not impede commencement of enforcement proceedings?
2. Appraisal of the recent EA update to SR8 and 9 for on farm AD generic risk assessment, which states the likelihood of nuisance emissions of gasses,

- odour, bio aerosols and particulates escaping from uncovered slurry/digestate storage and spreading activities?
3. Reference to the proposed nutrient neutrality rules which will affect Mid Devon new housing; and how this should be considered within the context of present AD planning breaches and over production? How would allowing this be compatible with Mid Devon's declared climate change and CHG position?
 4. Will legal advice be sought to provide specific agricultural and environmental expertise?

The Chairman advised that answers would be provided when the item was discussed.

133 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (0.12.19)

The minutes of the last meeting were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

134 DECISIONS OF THE CABINET (0.13.06)

The Committee **NOTED** that none of the decisions made by the Cabinet on 8th March 2022 had been called in.

135 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (0.13.34)

The Chairman welcomed Cllrs S J Clist and Mrs E J Slade to the Scrutiny Committee and thanked Cllrs G Barnell and A Wilce for their service to the Committee.

136 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE MOTION 564 SPOTLIGHT REVIEW (0.18.38)

The committee had before it a *report from the Scrutiny and Policy Research Officer providing details of the work carried out for the spotlight review for motion 564.

The Scrutiny and Policy Research Officer explained that in February 2021 councillors Lloyd and Norton brought motion 564 to Full Council to encourage discussion on equality and diversity.

The recommendations of the spotlight review were:

1. That the Council considered ways to better promote the role of a Councillor
2. That all Chairs of Committees and PDGs be required to attend formal training
3. That a Councillor is identified to be the equalities and accessibility champion
4. That the Council develop a mentoring scheme for (new) members of the Council
5. That the Council supports and facilitates the building of councillor networks, in particular between women councillors and councillors with families or caring responsibilities to grow peer to peer support
6. That the Council develops a (password protected) private members area on the Council website, in order to create a bank of shared training materials and documents for reference and ongoing learning
7. That the Council ensures all officer roles are offered flexibly (unless there is a business need) and give consideration to the option and promotion of job shares for officers

8. That further research is carried out into member experience of equality in the Council

Consideration was given to:

- The proposer of the original motion who stated that the review had taken over year and had been very comprehensive
- That the LGA had stated that the report was excellent
- The motion was about how the Council could be opened up to all people from all walks of life
- The views of some Members that recommendation 3 should include specific reference to people with disabilities

On such being moved by the Chairman, it was **RESOLVED**:

Subject to delegated authority being given to Scrutiny Officer and Cllr Mrs Lloyd to be signed off by the Chairman of Committee, to make the amendment necessary to meet the point raised by Cllr Letch so that the reference in recommendation 3 to 'a councillor being identified to be the equalities and accessibility champion' also cover disabled persons: The report be passed to full Council in response to its request of the committee.

Note: *report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

137 **UPDATE FROM THE PLANNING ENFORCEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS (0.31.15)**

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, a *report from the Director of Place giving an update on the recommendations of the Planning Enforcement Working Group.

The Director of Place provided the following responses to public questions asked:

1. There was no link between other authorities and enforcement action
2. If there was a new emerging policy it would be considered
3. The issues had not effected Mid Devon to date but the Council would consider how new developments effected such matters
4. As part of the Council's declared climate change targets, all alternative forms of energy productions would be considered which may include Anaerobic Digesters.

The Committee then discussed the progress against the recommendations.

A question was raised in relation to the recruitment and retention of enforcement officers. The Director of Place explained that there were ongoing issues within the both the sector and region which was making recruitment and retention of enforcement and planning officers more challenging. The Director also referenced work underway at an organisational level relating to recruitment and retention with the aim of considering what measures may assist in addressing the issues across the organisation as a whole.

The Committee requested a further progress report in 6 months.

Note: *report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

138 **FORWARD PLAN (0.53.07)**

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, the *Forward Plan.

Note: *Plan previously circulated and attached to the minutes

139 **SCRUTINY OFFICER UPDATE (0.53.50)**

The Scrutiny and Policy Research Officer informed Members that with regard to the Broadband work, that two employees had left AirBand and that they were waiting for replacements before further meeting could be scheduled.

She stated that she was waiting to hear back from one other Council with regard to joint Scrutiny of Anaerobic Digesters and would bring the findings on this approach back to a future meeting.

140 **WORK PLAN (0.55.33)**

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, the Scrutiny work plan for the remainder of the municipal year.

The Committee had before it a proposal form submitted by Cllr Lloyd on participatory budgeting (PB).

Cllr Lloyd explained that she would defer the proposal form to a future date to give her time for further investigations.

The Committee **AGREED** that all future 3 Rivers Developments Ltd Business Cases for new sites would be brought for pre scrutiny before being presented to the Cabinet.

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

(The meeting ended at 3.27 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Does Local Government Work for Women

March 2022

A Spotlight Review by Members of the Mid Devon District
Council Scrutiny Committee

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Introduction

In July 2017 the results of a year-long study led by the Fawcett Society, in partnership with the Local Government Information Unit, was published which asked 'Does Local Government Work for Women?'. The report found widespread sexist practices, sexual harassment both unchecked and unchallenged and a lack of inclusive practices which, it argued, show that local government is still a male-dominated world.

Additionally, research published in September 2021 by the Fawcett Society showed that just 34% of the 4,980 councillors elected in May 2021 were women. In total, across England women now make up just 35% of the total number of councillors – less than a 1% increase since the 2019 elections. Detail within that report showed that Mid Devon District Council (MDDC) is the 'worst Council in the South West in terms of women's representation following the May 2021 elections'. The elections brought the total number of female members in MDDC to 24%, a decrease on the May 2019 elections after which 26% of members elected were women, and compared to an English average of 35%.

Members of the MDDC Scrutiny Committee established a review group to address the findings and recommendations in the 2017 Fawcett Society report. Ensuring that councils are truly representative of our communities is a key challenge for local government. The aim of this review is to enable the right conditions to be in place to allow a diverse range of candidates to be empowered and supported to stand for election in the District, and to ensure those candidates are supported once elected. Through this review, members have considered the Council's existing policies and practices, good practice elsewhere and made recommendations to support potential and existing councillors who are women, parents and carers.

Rationale

In February 2021, Cllr Elizabeth Lloyd and Cllr Jo Norton brought [Motion 564](#) to Full Council to encourage a discussion on equality and diversity, and to bring forward ideas on how to ensure the Council represents the residents of Mid Devon.

Part of that Motion included a request for the Scrutiny Committee:

"That the Scrutiny Committee be tasked to consider and make any recommendations to the council regarding the findings of the Fawcett Society/LGiU report: 'Does Local Government Work for Women?'"

As such, the Scrutiny Committee established a Spotlight Review to look in depth at the issues and recommendations in the Fawcett Society report. Cllr Elizabeth Lloyd chaired the review, and the other members of the group were Cllr Jo Norton and Cllr Chris Daw. An email was also sent to invite all members of the Council to take part in the review and to share their experiences with the group.

The review aimed to:

- review the recommendations in the 2017 Fawcett Society report and consider recommending, or calling for, actions within MDDC;

- assess the experiences of current Members;
- consider the culture within the Council and whether there is more the authority can do;
- consider how to encourage more women to stand for Local Government;
- review whether there is any further support that can be provided to members;
- review whether there is any further support required for officers within the Council; and
- make recommendations, or to call for action, that will encourage women to stand for Local Government, or will support women within the Council.

Methodology and approach

It was agreed that the Scrutiny Committee would hold a Spotlight Review to take a time limited, in depth look at the recommendations in the 2017 Fawcett Society report.

The Members of the spotlight review met on Thursday 28 October 2021 and at that meeting the group heard input from:

- Director of Corporate Affairs and Business Transformation;
- Corporate Manager for People Governance and Waste;
- Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security;
- Member Services Manager;
- District Solicitor and Monitoring Officer;
- Cllr Clive Eginton, Chair of Standards Committee;
- Cllr Bob Deed, Leader of the Council; and
- Cllr Bob Evans, Leader of Conservative Group.

The Group had a final meeting on Monday 22 November 2021 at which they met with Virginia Ponton, Adviser - Leadership and Localism from the Local Government Association (LGA) to hear how the LGA support councils to increase female candidates in local elections.

In advance of the Spotlight Review session, the group asked all members to send anonymous input on their experience as members of the Council. Statements received were shared anonymously with the members of the review group.

In order to understand how other Local Authorities have approached these issues, the group engaged with Brighton City Council and received a written representation which they reviewed as part of the Spotlight Review.

In addition, the group reviewed a large number of relevant documents including: the LGA toolkit 'Supporting Women to Stand in Local Government'; Fawcett Society research and data on gender equality in Local Government; the IPR report 'Barriers to Women entering Parliament and Local Government'; as well as a number of internal documents and council policies and procedures.

The Group also held a meeting with female members to discuss the proposed recommendations on 22 February 2022. All female members were invited to attend the meeting.

Members are grateful to the officers and members that took time to speak to the group, or to provide anonymous statements and for their honest and informative answers.

National context

Data from the Fawcett Society following the 2019 local government elections found that women make up just 35% of councillors across England. In addition, only 17% of council leaders are women – a figure that has hardly shifted in ten years. Despite women making up 78% of council employees, only 33% of Chief Executives are women – which could be due to the lack of flexibility in senior roles. At the current rate of progress, gender parity will not be reached in local councils until 2077 – over 50 years away. In addition, BAME women, disabled women, and younger women are still underrepresented.

The 2017 Fawcett Society report ‘Does Local Government Work for Women?’ found that sexism is commonplace in local government with almost four in ten female councillors having experienced sexist comments from within their own party. The survey of over 2,300 councillors also found that a third of female councillors have experienced sexist comments in the council chamber and 43% say they are held back by assumptions about what they can do just because they are women. In addition, one in 10 have been sexually harassed and 46% of women, compared to 35% of men, have experienced harassment or abuse from the electorate.

Having women in decision-making positions makes a difference to whether issues that have a disproportionate impact on women get discussed or not. The 2017 Fawcett Society report says, "the services [councils] provide determine the support we receive from our first years to our dying days; and women are more dependent on those services". When women breakthrough in local government, they make a difference and have a big impact in their local community. The LGA toolkit ‘Enabling and Supporting Women, Parents and Carers to Stand and Serve in Local Government’ stresses that the equal participation of women and men in local politics, as our elected councillors and as our leaders, is an important condition for effective democracy and good governance. Representative councils are best able to speak to, and for, their communities and to support the effective business of local government. Once elected, councillors need to be able to fulfil their duties, and be supported, regardless of gender or circumstances.

In the LGA toolkit, the then Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Jake Berry MP, argues that some councils have taken steps to address this issue, but to see a step change in the numbers of women, parents and carers standing for elected office there needs to be a much wider sector response. He stressed that councils have the tools to remove some of the barriers which prevent people from standing and local parties and politicians have an obligation to seek out talent and incentivise a broader range of people to stand for local office. The LGA toolkit has been developed to help councils create the underlying policies, procedures, ethos and environment that encourages and empowers women, parents and carers to become local councillors and take on leadership positions.

More widely, the Covid-19 pandemic has forced some behaviours (for example the need to adapt to remote and hybrid meetings), and got in the way of others (the ability for Councillors to build in-person relationships). This review is a chance to incorporate learning from this period, and to find new ways forward.

Current position within Mid Devon District Council

The 2017 Fawcett Society report makes a number recommendations that are specifically aimed at councils. During this review, members of the group were pleased to see that many of those recommendations have already been actioned, or are being actioned, since the introduction of Motion 564 within MDDC including:

1. In December 2021, Full Council adopted a new Members Allowances Scheme which included the introduction of a parental leave policy for members.
2. The Council has an established formal Standards Committee.
3. The Council has finalised a reasonable adjustments policy, the policy will apply to both members and employees.
4. The Council has invested in technology that enables committee meetings to be held as hybrid meetings. Members who do not need to vote, officers and members of the public can attend by zoom if required.
5. As agreed at Full Council, the Leader has written to the Secretary of State on the legislative inability to hold hybrid meetings which means members have to vote in person.
6. The Council's Code of Conduct has recently been discussed at the Standards Committee and adopted by Full Council, after minor amendments made.
7. All Committees and Policy Development Groups vote to agree meeting times at the start of each municipal year.
8. Members are consulted on the Member Development Programme and can make requests for specific sessions or training.

Recommendations

1. That the Council considers ways to better promote the role of a Councillor.

Rationale: Reflecting the local population is vital in helping councils run efficiently and for communities to thrive. It brings in the knowledge and lived experience of the needs and aspirations of everyone in the local community. Many residents and members of the public, however, often do not clearly understand the role of a Councillor and the impact that role can have in the community. There is also often a lack of knowledge about the expenses available and the time needed to give to the role. A better understanding of the role and its benefits may help encourage more people to stand for election.

The Council should give thought as to how to clearly communicate to a wide range of people in the District. This could be through events or workshops to help demystify the process and the role, and in doing so encourage more women to stand.

Outreach is about looking in different places and in all communities for untapped talent and proactively reaching out – going to where people are and building a meaningful and holistic relationship across the Council with groups, networks and communities. For example, the Council could: work with schools to increase the

pipeline and interest locally; engage with local stakeholders and organisations that may not necessarily work closely with the Council; work with other Local Authorities to create shared materials and knowledge (for example Devon County Council has materials aimed at encouraging a diverse range of people to stand); pull together profiles on members from under-represented groups or from different backgrounds; and work with the LGA on sourcing peer members to speak at events.

2. That all Chairs of Committees and PDGs are required to attend formal training.

Rationale: The group has had first-hand experience, and have heard from colleagues, about issues to do with behaviour and conduct in meetings. One way to tackle these issues is for the Chair of that meeting to address it immediately. Good Chairs of meetings should create a collaborative and respectful space that supports good discussion and decision-making. Chairs should encourage other members to do the same. All Chairs of Committees and PDGs should therefore clearly understand, and receive training on, how to deal with unacceptable behaviour/conduct in a meeting. Political Group Leaders should require members that hold Chair positions to attend, and consideration should be given to whether to enforce this as a requirement through the constitution.

3. That a councillor is identified to be the equalities and accessibility champion.

Rationale: A recommendation in the 2017 Fawcett Society report is that a member should be identified to promote equality within each council. The Fawcett Society report details evidence of a macho, combative culture in council chambers which can silence or appropriate women's voices. The review group has also had similar experiences and therefore felt that identifying an equalities and accessibility champion would be useful to look into these kinds of issues within the Council. This role could cover all aspects of equalities and accessibility, including supporting the needs of groups that are defined by the nine "Protected Characteristics" in the Equality Act 2010 (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation). The champion could also take forward and drive the work of the Equality Forum (including promoting its presence and role within the Council and externally), have a role in organising the gender equality networks as detailed in recommendation 5 and carry out the research as detailed in recommendation 8.

4. That the Council develops a mentoring scheme for (new) members of the Council.

Rationale: Both the Fawcett Society report, and the LGA toolkit 'Enabling and Supporting Women, Parents and Carers to Stand and Serve in Local Government', encourages councils to review their current induction programme to ensure effective support is in place for new members. They recommend including an active sponsorship scheme or mentoring programme for all new councillors, as well as ensuring parents/carers and female councillors in particular feel supported. The Council should introduce a mentoring scheme, and draw up a list of members willing to be mentors and a list of members with necessary skills that new members could use as a knowledge source. There could also be monthly group coaching for members, networking sessions or a women's forum to support female members.

5. That the Council supports and facilitates the building of councillor networks, in particular between women councillors and councillors with families or caring responsibilities to grow peer to peer support.

Rationale: Both the 2017 Fawcett Society report and the LGA toolkit recommend introducing gender equality networks and evidence shows they can enable increased solidarity between women, which can in turn lead to increased confidence and progression. Feedback from the meeting with female members was that, given the impact of covid, members would also welcome the opportunity to engage with other members outside of Committee meetings. Within MDDC, these networks could extend across the whole organisation, offering shared leadership and development opportunities by bringing councillors and officers together, or by focussing networks for parents/carers. These confidential sessions could be organised and driven by the member identified as the equalities champion.

6. That the Council develops a (password protected) private members area on the Council website, in order to create a bank of shared training materials and documents for reference and ongoing learning.

Rationale: The group recognise that members often differ in the amount of time they are able to give to the role, particularly if members have full time employment. As such, some members find it hard to attend informal meetings, briefings and training opportunities. The group wanted to ensure that these members are supported in other ways to access the information given at these meetings. The group therefore recommends that a password protected, private member area be developed on the Council website. This area could be a depository for presentations and material given at briefings; guidance; training materials; and other useful documents. This could also potentially be a place to log attendance at training to encourage members to attend.

7. That the Council ensures all officer roles are offered flexibly (unless there is a business need) and give consideration to the option and promotion of job shares for officers.

Rationale: The 2017 Fawcett Society report recommends that local authorities offer all officer roles, including senior roles, as flexible working and part-time by default, unless there is a clear business case otherwise. This must be backed up by a genuine commitment to viewing flexible working for officers on equal terms with traditional working patterns. Whilst most officer roles within MDDC are now offered on a flexible basis, the Council should also give consideration to the option and promotion of job shares for officers (as long as achievable in line with the needs of the business). Job shares can assist recruitment by attracting qualified employees who do not want to work full-time, and can help improve retention given the flexibility they offer.

8. That further research is carried out into member experience of equality in the Council.

Rationale: The group heard that there is potential for the Equalities Forum to be more ambitious and do more, if members were more engaged. The Equalities Forum should consider how to proactively engage members on their experiences and gather feedback, perhaps working with the LGA on this. Research could also consider the impact that covid has had on member experiences within the Council. The member identified as champion for equalities could lead and drive this research.

Actions we call for

1. Leadership from the top of the political group is important. Group Leaders should be clear on their role regarding member development and conduct and actively encourage members to attend training and briefings.

Rationale: There is a role for Political Group Leaders with regards to member conduct, and the group heard how some Leaders deal with conduct issues. The group would like to see Political Group Leaders actively encouraging members to attend training and briefings, and also requiring their members that are Chairs to attend training on how to chair and deal with conduct in meetings.

2. Political parties should work with the LGA political officers to understand best practice and what actions can be taken to encourage a diverse range of candidates to stand.

Rationale: The LGA have political group officers who can provide various support to Political Group Leaders, including working with political parties to help think through how to encourage a broad range of candidates to stand.

Discussions and evidence given to the Spotlight Review

Meeting with Virginia Ponton, Adviser – Leadership, Local Government Association (LGA)

The group heard from the LGA about how important it is for councils to have meaningful conversations about how to encourage a diverse range of candidates to stand for election. The LGA commended MDDC for carrying out this review and for making it a strategic priority, and stressed that it is the type of discussion all councils should be having.

The group heard about the work that the LGA is doing to raise awareness nationally to broaden the appeal of Local Government, including the 'Be A Councillor' campaign and outreach work with underrepresented groups. The LGA talked about the importance of equality and diversity being seen as business as usual and ensuring that it is included in the induction programme.

Virginia Ponton gave examples of some 'quick' wins (reviewing current policies and processes; gathering information on experiences; mapping out stakeholders) and some longer term investments (thinking through strategic vision; how to reach untapped talent; outreach with all areas of the community). She recommended that MDDC use the LGA regional representatives to link up with other councils who want to use the Be A Councillor campaign, and this could also have the benefit of sharing

resources and knowledge. The group talked about some specific recommendations that could come out of the review, and the themes that had been raised so far, including: communications and engagement; outreach; member development; support for women who have been elected; and internal process reviews.

The LGA offered to provide assistance where possible with these issues, and have subsequently provided the group with a range of resources and research to help progress this work.

Meeting with Director of Corporate Affairs and Business Transformation and Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste

The group heard from the officers how the main challenges with this review will be how to ensure the most impact and to get buy in. Officers suggested that the things to keep in mind are:

- data – ensure you understand the demographics, for example the Council's recent staff survey will help the organisation understand how women are currently feeling in the workplace;
- policy – what the organisation is required to do by law and guidelines on how people should be treated in the work place;
- practical actions – like reasonable adjustments or how the organisation tackles issues like the menopause – and educates the workforce; and
- the importance of learning, development and training – having relevant training and support for different groups, and opportunity for mentoring and coaching is vital.

When asked what helps to get people to buy into this work, officers stressed that being very clear about what you are trying to achieve, and the desired outcome, is important. The importance of articulating the why, as well as the what. Action plans are also important, for example the organisation will be looking at how to tackle the issues coming out of the staff survey. The group discussed the ripple effect of having more women standing and in leadership roles, and how that might reinforce what the organisation is doing in terms of equality and diversity.

Officers informed the group about the sessions for potential candidates that the Council run before elections to help encourage people to stand. It was acknowledged, however, that these are often poorly attended. The group had a conversation on how to break down some of the attitudes that people may have about standing for Local Government, and that there is a connection between the 'brand' of Local Government and whether it's an attractive proposition to stand. The group discussed behaviour and attitude, and the importance of role modelling the changes you want to see.

The issue of job sharing was raised, and officers suggested it was an area that could be explored further within the Council.

Meeting with Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security

The officer presented the MDDC equality policy, and talked about how the policy translates into action in the Council, and gave some examples of equality impact assessments in various areas of work. The officer updated members on the work of the Equality Forum, and talked about some ways to improve the Forum and the need to increase awareness of issues like protected characteristics.

The group talked about how to use the communications team to encourage people to stand, and the possibility of engaging with other council's to share experience and resources in this area. They talked about the importance of retaining members, and how there is a need to start at the ground up to encourage members to stand. Members can help with this work, and the group agreed it would be beneficial to see more members going into schools to talk to students about the work they do.

Meeting with Member Services Manager

The officer talked about how the Council has implemented remote meetings, and that members had approved the recent motion to ask Government for legislation to enable members to vote remotely. The group heard how remote meetings have enabled increased public involvement and flexibility for attendees.

The group talked about the importance of member development, and officers encouraged members to put forward requests and ideas for member training. The ability for development sessions to be held by zoom has increased numbers, but some sessions are still poorly attended. It was acknowledged that political group leaders could do more to push training to members, and perhaps a member survey would help to understand what training members would like. There was also a discussion about the member allowance scheme being extended to include parental leave, which was due to come to Full Council.

The group asked about the training and guidance that chairs of committees and policy development group's receive. Officers confirmed that all chairs are offered training, alongside spending time with officers on procedural rules. Chairs do not always take up the offer of formal training, however.

The group discussed potentially recording zoom training sessions, and putting them somewhere for members to access at a different time. It was suggested that a depository somewhere on the intranet be introduced that could include training sessions and useful presentations and documents. There was also a discussion about whether it would be possible to log which members attend training.

The officer explained the buddy system for new members, which sees officers support members with regards to process issues, and members heard how political groups are encouraged to have a new member shadow one of their long standing members.

Meeting with the Leader of the Council

Members discussed ways in which representation could be increased and how to increase the number of women that stand for Local Government. The time and

commitment needed to be a member of council was also raised, which can sometimes put people off who may bring more diversity into the authority. The group considered how to make the system, structure and procedures work for the full range of people who want to consider standing for election – many of who may also have full time employment. The range of skills needed to be a Councillor is wide, and the need for Local Authorities to tap into those skills is important.

Using Town and Parish Councils was discussed, as well as how to appeal to younger residents to stand, and how to encourage retention of members. Culture was also discussed, and the importance of the Council looking at the challenge of representing the District in the membership so that the public see themselves in the elected representatives.

Meeting with Chair of Standards Committee

The Chair gave an overview of the Standards Committee and stated that there has not been any complaints brought before the Committee in the last two and a half years that have been taken to subcommittee. Any complaint that does come before the Committee has to be of a relatively serious nature for the Committee to look at it.

Members discussed the changes made to the Code of Conduct, and how it is often behaviour that is the issue, and that the language used is important. Group Leaders have a part to play in role-modelling, but so do sanctions when behaviour is unacceptable. The Chair and Monitoring Officer gave information on future training for members on standards, to look at specific examples concerning respect.

Events for potential councillors were discussed, and it was agreed that very often these are attended by people who already want to stand. It is also down to political parties to increase the representation and encourage young people to stand. Using the media may also help to reach those people that otherwise may not stand.

Meeting with the District Solicitor and Monitoring Officer

The group discussed how representation at political level is often not the same as at officer level, and that this may be because there is not enough public understanding about the role of members. Promoting the role with schools is useful, and other community based work can help in the longer term. A Councillor is often seen to be a vocational role, rather than a professional role and that is reflected in the pay/allowances, and it therefore attracts people who can carry out this type of vocational role.

The group heard how, on a practical level, accessibility of meetings is important to enable people to fit the role around their life. As is the timing of meetings, and at MDDC members are asked to agree meeting times at the start of each year, the group heard from the officer how this does not always happen in Local Authorities. Length of meetings is also important, and this can be controlled constitutionally by having time limits to meetings – some councils stop meetings after three or four hours. Allowances for parents was discussed, and it was acknowledged that the Independent Remuneration Panel was working on recommending that the Council

adopt a parental leave policy. This would help give the role the sense that it is a professional role with rights and responsibilities.

With regards to the Code of Conduct, the officer said that the general trend across councils is that complaints regarding respect have generally increased over the last ten years. There was a conversation about the importance of reporting issues, and the importance of dealing with issues as they arise. It was acknowledged that everyone has a role in promoting culture, and there was an understanding that some people may find it difficult to report issues.

The officer confirmed that she hoped that forthcoming member training workshops will help set examples of conduct and help people understand what is appropriate and respectful behaviour. In addition to these sessions, promoting Local Government and the brand, alongside reassuring members that they will be listened to through a robust complaints system that deals with issues promptly, would be useful.

Meeting with the Conservative Group Leader

The group discussed how the different aspects of this work can be categorised as aimed at: the authority; the political groups; and members. The group heard how the Conservative party seeks to encourage anybody to consider standing and aims to be inclusive of all. It also looks to make all reasonable adjustments that any individual may feel they require in-order to be fully included both within the group and the Council as a whole.

The group discussed behaviour, including a specific example of poor behaviour in a public meeting and the Group Leader's process for challenging that behaviour. The need for a parental leave policy was also discussed, and the Group Leader talked about the issues that members will raise with him regarding childcare and attending meetings. There was also a discussion on whether it should be made clear to the public why people are not attending meetings (for example, if currently on parental leave). The group discussed how to attract more people to local politics, and recognised the complexity of this. Ensuring people understand the kind of difference they can make is useful and the influence you can have, and that this does not necessarily have to be political.

Statement from Brighton and Hove City Council

Cllr Norton had received a statement from Cllr Hannah Clare, Deputy Leader of Brighton and Hove City Council, outlining actions the Council had taken to increase representation after bringing the 2017 Fawcett Society report as a Motion to Council.

Agreed actions within Brighton and Hove City Council have included: allowing job shares; adding a reference into the Constitution that 50% of members should be women; working on introducing parental leave; and using gender neutral terms for chairs and for members (the constitution now has no pronouns in it). Brighton and Hove City Council recognise that there are still some areas to work on, like ensuring women contribute in debates and that men do not always dominate. There has also been a lot of proactive hard work by the Council in reaching out to women to encourage them to stand for election.

Input and experiences from members

As part of the enquiry into the culture of the Council, a call was put out to all members for anonymous information on their experiences as members of the Council. The group received four written responses to their request.

Given the lack of response, the group wanted to stress that personally, they had had in depth conversations about (and personally experienced) issues within the Council, many of which did not seem to be represented in the formal responses. The group also acknowledged the recent Fawcett Society report that MDDC was the 'worst in the South West' in terms of female member representation, at 24% compared to an English average of 35%.

The group considered how to engage the membership on the issues discussed, and agreed it might be useful to come up with some recommendations that could then be taken to members to stimulate discussion.

When reviewing the anonymous responses, key points raised were:

- A number of these issues are not confined to women.
- Complaints must be quickly and firmly followed up on.
- The Council has no influence on who stands for local election, it can be hard to encourage people to stand and then it is down to the electorate to vote for them.
- Councillors can sometimes become confrontational in their arguments.
- A number of recommendations in the Fawcett Society report are outside of the Councils' control.
- Remote meetings had made life easier.
- Members had experienced or witnessed harassment from members of the public.
- Members had experienced or witnessed sexist comments from colleagues.

Meeting with female members

The Group met with female members on 22 February to discuss the findings and proposed recommendations. At this meeting, members discussed their experiences within the Council, and in particular the impact that covid has had on member's confidence and the loss of personal relationships with other members. The female members welcomed the proposed recommendations, and particularly welcomed the proposal and opportunity to engage with other members through networks and peer support. Members raised that they also welcome further opportunities to engage outside of meetings, perhaps in an away day or similar setting, as it this would help break down some of the political and cultural barriers and promote effective collaboration. There was also a discussion around the importance of training for chairs, and the need for both a member, and officer, equalities and diversity representative.

Input from the Liberal Democrats

The Group Leader for the Liberal Democrats was unable to attend the Spotlight Review, and therefore provided some written input to the group. That statement detailed how the Group are taking actions to try and help with promoting more women into politics and they hope to have more women standing at the next elections than they have before.

The statement also acknowledged that the current attitude to people with families, or to those that are working, may not help in attracting some women to want to stand. There have been examples of members having their commitment questioned by other members when family has been put before council business.

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MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **AUDIT COMMITTEE** held on 22 March 2022 at 5.30 pm

Present

Councillors E J Berry, W Burke, Mrs C Collis, R F Radford, A Wyer and A Wilce

Apologies

Councillors N V Davey, R L Stanley and A White

Also Present

Councillors Mrs C P Daw, R M Deed, B A Moore and B G J Warren

Present

Officers Andrew Jarrett (Deputy Chief Executive (S151)), Paul Deal (Corporate Manager for Finance), Matthew Page (Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste), Paul Middlemass (Audit Manager), Nicola Cuskeran (Interim Corporate Performance Manager & Safeguarding Officer), Sarah Lees (Member Services Officer) and Carole Oliphant (Member Services Officer)

Also

In attendance Julie Masci (Grant Thornton) and Dan Povey (Grant Thornton)

66. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllr N V Davey (who was substituted by Cllr E J Berry), Cllr R L Stanley (who was substituted by Cllr R F Radford) and Cllr A White.

67. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no members of the public present and none had registered to ask a question.

68. **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

No interests were declared under this item.

69. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2022 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

70. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman informed the Committee that he had attended a Devon Audit Partnership meeting recently on behalf of the Council. He had found it very interesting listening to other local authorities and seeing where this Council 'fitted in'.

71. **PERFORMANCE AND RISK UPDATE (00:05:00)**

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Corporate Manager for People, Performance & Waste providing it with an update on performance against

the Corporate Plan and local service targets for 2021-22 as well as providing an update on the key business risks.

The format and structure of the report were outlined and it was stated that risks scoring over 10 or more were highlighted.

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

72. **RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY (00:06:00)**

The Committee had before it a report * from the Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste presenting the Committee with the updated Risk Management Policy for approval.

It was explained that the policy was last updated in March 2021 and that since then only minor changes to the policy had taken place. These were highlighted within the report.

RESOLVED that the updated Risk Management Policy be approved.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Reason for the decision:

- i. Failure to take advantage of opportunities and mitigate business risks could impact on the Council's ability to deliver its strategic objectives.
- ii. Assessment of the effectiveness of the framework for identifying and managing risks and for performance and demonstrating clear accountability is a key element of the Council's governance arrangements.

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

73. **ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT ACTION PLAN UPDATE (00:07:00)**

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Corporate Manager for Financial Services providing it with an update on progress made against the Annual Governance Statement / Action Plan.

It was explained that of the 6 outstanding actions, 4 were now complete, 1 was not quite due for completion and the remaining action was being looked at by a working group.

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

74. **DAP INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT (00:08:00)**

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, a report from the Devon Audit Partnership presenting its progress report for the year to date.

Key highlights within the report were as follows:

- There continued to be an overall opinion of 'reasonable assurance' on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's internal control framework.
- Assurance levels were broadly the same for Mid Devon as they were for other authorities monitored by DAP.
- A summary of the audits undertaken was provided.
- Assurance mapping was referred to.
- Overdue audit recommendations were shown in red. There had been a slight increase in these over the past two years. Several related to the Procurement area but attempts to resolve these were taking place with Devon County Council. The Leadership Team were aware and were working to bring these numbers down.

Discussion took place with regard to:

- The position with regard to debtors. An internal audit was due to commence and more information could be provided to the next meeting. The Deputy Chief Executive (\$151) confirmed that he received regular monthly updates regarding this area and that it was very well controlled.
- What 'reasonable' meant? It was explained that this indicated the level of confidence Members could have. 'Reasonable' was good but also provided for some improvement.
- Council Tax collection rates were estimated to be around 98%. A 1% drop in the total collection figure for Mid Devon would equate to approximately £60k. It was expected that this collection rate would be affected by the rise in the cost of living.

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

75. **DAP INTERNAL AUDIT CHARTER AND STRATEGY (00:23:00)**

The Committee had before it a report * from the Devon Audit Partnership presenting the Internal Audit Charter and Strategy for approval.

These documents detailed the purpose, responsibility, roles etc. involved in the internal audit function. It was explained that only minor changes had taken place since the Charter and Strategy were last approved. These mainly related to people's qualifications.

RESOLVED that the Internal Audit Charter and Strategy for 2022/2023 be approved.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Reason for the decision

Mid Devon District Council is required by the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) to approve and have in place an up to date internal Audit Charter and Strategy.

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

76. **DAP PROPOSED INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN FOR 2022 - 2023 (00:25:00)**

The Committee had before it a report * from the Devon Audit Partnership presenting the Audit Plan for 2022/2023.

Details were provided as to how the plan was created based upon the risks that the Council faced. The high risk areas were highlighted as were the number of days provided for each audit. The draft plan had been agreed with management and now needed approval from the Audit Committee.

A brief discussion took place regarding whether the Forward Planning Infrastructure Delivery audit needed to be brought forward from 2024/25. The Deputy Chief Executive (S151) stated that he would discuss this with Leadership Team colleagues.

RESOLVED that the Internal Audit Plan for 2022/2023 be approved.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Reason for the decision

The Audit Committee, under its Terms of Reference contained within the Council's Constitution, is required to review, and approve the Internal Audit Plan to provide assurance to support the governance framework.

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

77. **GRANT THORNTON AUDITORS ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21 (00:30:00)**

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, the external auditors Annual Report * on Mid Devon District Council. Mr Dan Povey from Grant Thornton was introduced to the Committee. He would be taking over from Julie Masci as the Engagement Lead for the 2021/2022 audit.

The following was highlighted within the report:

There was a new format to the report with external audit having a wider area of responsibility under the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice. As a result there had been changes to the Value for Money assessment. An 'opinion' was no longer issued but recommendations were made falling within three tiers:

A Statutory Recommendation (which was the most severe)

Key Recommendations (in areas where there was evidence of serious weakness)

Improvement Recommendations (suggesting opportunities to enhance the existing arrangements)

- There had been no instances of 'Statutory' or 'Key Recommendations' within the external audit, however, some areas had been identified where there was some scope for improvement. These were laid out within the report.
- The audit had not identified any areas of significant weakness within the 3RDL accounts and acknowledgement was given to the significant amount of work which had been undertaken to improve governance in this area.

- Overall, having undertaken a lot more detailed work as part of the external audit this time, this was a positive report.

Consideration was given to the difficulties involved in estimating financial information during the pandemic when so much was unknown.

The Committee wished to pass on their thanks to the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) and the Finance Team for their hard work and diligence which had led to such a positive external audit report.

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

78. **GRANT THORNTON PROGRESS REPORT AND SECTOR UPDATE (00:45:00)**

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from Grant Thornton providing an update on their responsibilities as the Councils' external auditors.

The report set out where the external auditors were in terms of signing off the audit for 2020/2021. Until they received guidance from HM Treasury they were unable to provide the final certificate. It was anticipated this would be received by the summer.

It was confirmed that the planning phase of the 2021/2022 audit was now underway.

Brief discussion took place with regard to how the liaison process worked between the external audit team and senior officers of the Council and how soon areas of concern were dealt with? It was explained that liaison happened at different levels from informal emails to face to face meetings. Early discussion was welcomed by the external auditors if there were complex issues. Likewise the external auditors would discuss with senior officers if enhanced testing in particular areas was needed. It was not the case that the audit had to wait until it was completed for issues of concern to be brought to light and dealt with. The new Value for Money approach very much supported an early intervention if there were issues of concern.

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

79. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2021/2022 (00:53:00)**

The Committee had before it the Chairman's annual report * for 2021/2022. There being no suggested changes, this would be presented to full Council on 27 April 2022.

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

80. **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (00:54:00)**

No further items were requested for the next meeting other than those already listed in the work programme.

(The meeting ended at 6.25 pm)

CHAIRMAN

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MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP**
held on 8 March 2022 at 5.30 pm

Present

Councillors

J Wright (Chairman)
W Burke, D R Coren, Miss J Norton,
R F Radford, R L Stanley and L D Taylor

Also Present

Councillor(s)

E J Berry, Mrs C P Daw, R M Deed, R Evans,
Mrs E J Lloyd, C R Slade and B G J Warren

Also Present

Officer(s):

Andrew Jarrett (Deputy Chief Executive (S151)), Andrew Busby (Corporate Manager for Property, Leisure and Climate Change), Matthew Page (Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste), Jason Ball (Climate and Sustainability Specialist), Clare Robathan (Policy and Research Officer) and Carole Oliphant (Member Services Officer)

53 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (0.02.45)

There were no apologies for absence.

Cllr E J Berry attended via ZOOM.

54 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (0.03.00)

Members were reminded of the need to make declarations where appropriate.

55 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (0.03.18)

There were no members of the public present.

56 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (0.03.30)

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 11th January 2022 were agreed as a true record and duly signed by the Chairman.

57 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (0.04.07)

The Chairman had no announcements to make.

58 CABINET MEMBER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE (0.04.17)

The Cabinet Member for the Environment and Climate Change gave an overview of his portfolio and stated the three weekly waste collections were due to start in September and that a project board and team had been established and that the

Environment and Enforcement Manager had taken up his post. All waste collections had been sustained and there had been some positive feedback to actions taken due to the recent storms.

In relation to a recent residents survey he advised that 90% were supportive of the Council's Climate Change agenda, 81% were supportive of the waste service. Disappointingly only 47% of residents were happy with the street cleaning service and this would be investigated further to establish the reasons for this.

Answering a question about whether the 3 weekly bin collections would come back to the PDG, the Cabinet Member explained that the decision had been made to go to 3 weekly and that there would be a Member briefing in June which would set out the full implementation plan. He confirmed that communications would be ongoing to inform residents of the change.

In response to Members concerns about escalating fuel prices and the need to bring the 3 weekly collections forward to save fuel, the Cabinet Member explained that the Council needed to look into resident's special circumstances before implementation so that these could be accommodated when the service went live and that this would take some time. The Member briefing in June would explore all possibilities.

The Chairman asked if the exact questions asked in the resident's survey could be provided to the PDG.

Answering a question about the consequences of rising fuel costs the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) explained that the position was being monitored but there was little the Council could do in the short term, longer term there were some electric vehicles on order. He offered to do some modelling of the effects of rising fuel prices and provide these to the Group.

59 CLIMATE AND SUSTAINABILITY UPDATE (0.24.12)

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, the *Climate and Sustainability update presented by the Climate and Sustainability Specialist which documented progress against the Climate Action Plan.

The Officer gave an overview of his report and highlighted:

- The energy saving measures at the leisure centres had been completed
- Decisions on funding bids were due shortly
- 650 trees had been planted throughout the district
- Work with the Devon Climate Emergency continued
- The upcoming State of the District Debate was themed around Climate Change and the debate included costs and who was going to have to pay for them

In response to a question asked how the Council was progressing against its 2030 Carbon target and examples of habitat work completed the Climate and Sustainability Specialist explained that no habitat work had been completed yet but it was something the Council could invest in. The current net Carbon position was on the Council's website for Climate and Sustainability <https://sustainablemiddevon.org.uk/>.

Members then had a general discussion about farming and how they had been effected by increasing prices and how the Council could assist farmers to become more sustainable. It was confirmed that a report on sustainable farming would be presented to the next meeting of the PDG.

The Chairman advised that the equality impacts in the report should be stated in future to reflect the impact on people and how the costs of tackling climate change effected them.

Note: *update previously circulated and attached to the minutes

60 **ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION NETWORK CAPACITY FOR INCREASED RENEWABLE ENERGY (0.48.09)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a *report from the Climate and Sustainability Specialist providing an overview of the local electricity supply networks and their role in supporting community and the Council's actions to address climate change.

The Officer gave an overview of his report and highlighted that it provided links to a lot of information regarding the electricity network and its future resilience. He had attend various workshops and looked at the business plan for Western Power Distribution (WPD) and that it appeared to be very well prepared for the changes ahead and was very positive.

The Chairman requested that a list of activities which were already happening with regard to the Councils role as Local Planning Authority should be provided to Members and that an updates on officers managing data and engagement with WPD should be reported back to the PDG.

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

61 **SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT - NET ZERO ADVISORY GROUP (0.54.56)**

The Climate and Sustainability Specialist gave an update on the work that the Net Zero Advisory Group (NZAG) had undertaken with regard to sustainable procurement. He advised that the NZAG had looked at what Devon County Council (DCC) were doing and that the Council was working to align its practices with them. They were currently reviewing what the Council did at officer level and training was being rolled out. They were also currently raising awareness, reviewing the Council's financial regulations and engaging with suppliers.

The Chairman requested details of examples where the Council's procurement strategy had changed due to the work completed so far by NZAG.

62 **CHAIRMANS ANNUAL REPORT (0.59.06)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, the * Chairman's Annual report.

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

63 **WORK PLAN (1.00.30)**

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 6.32 pm)

CHAIRMAN

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **HOMES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP** held on 15 March 2022 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors

R J Dolley (Chairman)
G Barnell, J Bartlett, J Cairney, S J Clist,
D R Coren and S Pugh

Apology

Councillor

R F Radford

Also Present

Councillors

Mrs C P Daw, R M Deed, R Evans and B G J Warren

Also Present

Officers

Jill May (Director of Business Improvement and Operations), Simon Newcombe (Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing), Andrew Busby (Corporate Manager for Property, Leisure and Climate Change), Claire Fry (Housing Services Operations Manager), Sally Gabriel (Member Services Manager) and Sarah Lees (Member Services Officer)

49 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Cllr R F Radford.

Cllr Cairney was not able to attend the meeting in person but attended via Zoom.

50 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

51 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Cllr S E Pugh declared a personal interest in that he had received correspondence regarding the 70 proposed homes at the Post Hill site in Tiverton.

No other interests were declared under this item.

52 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2022 were approved as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

53 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman formally thanked Cllr Mrs Eileen Andrews for the service she had given to the Homes PDG between May 2011 and February 2022. She had always been keen, helpful and provided useful comment. This was endorsed by the Vice Chairman and the Group as a whole.

54 PROGRESS REPORT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF PLANS FOR 70 HOMES AT POST HILL, TIVERTON (00:07:00)

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a briefing paper * from the Corporate Manager for Property, Leisure and Climate Change providing an update on the progress with the development of land at Post Hill, Tiverton.

The following key points of information were provided:

- The site was on the eastern edge of Post Hill just south of the A361.
- The proposal was for 70 dwellings, 8 for social rent, 62 for affordable rent.
- The land was now in Council ownership.
- The ambition was for Passivhaus House Accreditation providing very low energy homes for years to come.
- The map showed various points of note including the underground water mains, surface water attenuation areas, access roads, footpath links and and Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP).
- Talks were underway with Devon County Council regarding the purchase of additional land to improve highway safety and visibility splays.
- Public engagement events would be held towards the end of April at Tiverton Golf Club to which all Members would also be invited.
- The site did not lend itself to external funding and was the subject of a S106 agreement.
- The 70 homes would be retained as part of the Council's HRA stock.

Consideration was given to:

- Whether there was any scope to re-examine the 8/62 split between social and rented housing? However, it was explained that it had been an exceptionally expensive site to bring forward and decisions had had to be made about what was sustainable for the HRA.
- A desire to complete the project to predicted timescales if not before.
- The size of gardens provided was applauded.
- The opportunity this and other projects provided the Council to re-balance the under provision of Council houses in recent decades.
- Recent national figures for a 3 bedroom house showed that affordable rent per month was in the region of £630 compared to market rent which was approximately £983.
- The vital need for a joined up approach with other agencies such as Devon County Council and our own Planning Authority when it came to matters such as road safety.

Note: * Briefing paper previously circulated; copy attached to the signed minutes.

55 HOUSING STRATEGY 2021-2025 DELIVERY (00:42:00)

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing providing an update on how delivery of the strategy will be monitored and provided for going forward.

The following was highlighted within the report:

- The 40 objectives and targets within the strategy.
- An officer delivery group had been reconvened which would include input from the Director for Corporate Affairs and Business Transformation as well as the Cabinet Member for Housing and property Services.
- The PDG would be updated twice a year on progress with delivering the housing strategy, in May and November.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The Group needed to see the phasing proposals for the schemes coming forward. It was confirmed that when that detail was available it would be shared with the Group.
- The need for the Council to engage with all manner of other agencies to bring schemes forward such as the NHS, Homes England, neighbouring authorities and Town and Parish Councils. All matters needed to be given sufficient consideration.

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

56 MODULAR HOUSING SCHEME UPDATE (00:55:00)

The Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing provided the Group with a verbal update on several recent and future modular housing schemes.

This included the following key points:

- The St Andrews scheme application had been approved last month and had passed through the legal stage. The Council was now in a position to award a contract later this week.
- The Shapland Place application would be determined by the Planning Committee the following day. Both schemes were for social rent.

Consideration was given to:

- Contractors would be appointed on a 'scheme by scheme' basis, The Council was not bound to use one contractor for all schemes.
- The Group could be informed about future potential projects but due to having to be careful about naming sites, these discussions might need to be held in Part II.
- A request that 'Homes' targets and 'Planning' targets be amalgamated and shown as an overall figure presented to Members as art of performance information so that Members could see information regarding an integrated

delivery. It was confirmed that this integrated information would be presented in 2021/2022 performance data provided to the Group.

Note: Cllr R J Dolley declared a personal interest in that the Shapland application was in his Ward and he would be speaking to it as Ward Member at the Planning Committee the following day.

57 MID DEVON HOUSING DELIVERY REPORT AND UPDATE (01:05:00)

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report from the Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing providing an update to Members on tenancy and building services performance and activity within Mid Devon Housing.

The following was highlighted within the report:

- This was the first combined report covering the tenancy function as well as building repairs and maintenance now coming under the umbrella of Mid Devon Housing.
- The format of future reports may need to change as a result of tenancy satisfaction measures which were now out for public consultation.

The Group discussed the fact that performance data in Annexe 1 showed very good results especially in the area of debt collection. Officers now engaged with tenants at a much earlier stage, providing advice and support wherever they could as early as possible. As a result there were far fewer fraud cases and far fewer evictions. Officers were congratulated for the approach taken and the effort it involved.

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

58 WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2022 - 2023 (01:13:00)

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, the work programme * for 2022/23.

The following issues were raised as areas that the Group also needed to discuss in the short and medium term:

- MEES which stood for 'Minimum Energy Efficiencies Standard'.
- The Ukrainian Refugee crisis and the extent to which the Council would need to become involved in providing accommodation and support to displaced individuals and families. It was recognised that new information regarding the resettlement scheme was being released by the Government on a daily basis and very little detail had been provided to local authorities at the current time. Officers would do all they could but there was serious concern regarding the extent and capacity of current available resources within the Council without some additional help from Government. It was hoped more information would be available at the May meeting.
- Community Housing schemes in rural locations and the need for a report from Principal Housing Enabling and Forward Planning Officer as part of the work programme for the coming year.

Note: * Work programme previously circulated; copy attached to the signed minutes.

59 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2021 - 2022 (01:27:00)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, the draft report * from the Chairman summarising the work of the Homes Policy Development Group for 2021/22. A final copy of the report would be submitted to full Council on 27 April 2022.

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

60 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (01:28:00)**

In addition to the items already listed in the work programme for the next meeting the Group requested that they receive an update with regard to the Ukrainian Refugee crisis and the role of the local authority within this.

It was stated that the latest ONS figures (Office for National Statistics) showed that between 42% and 56% of pre-tax incomes were being used on rental and associated rental properties. A request was made by Cllr Clist that this be born in mind by officers when writing future reports given that inflation was also rapidly rising.

(The meeting ended at 3.45 pm)

CHAIRMAN

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MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **ECONOMY POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP** held on 17 March 2022 at 5.30 pm

Present

Councillors

J M Downes (Chairman)
Mrs C Collis, Mrs S Griggs, B Holdman,
D F Pugsley and R F Radford

Apologies

Councillor(s)

N V Davey, Mrs E J Lloyd and J Wright

Also Present

Councillor(s)

R J Chesterton, Mrs C P Daw, R M Deed and
B G J Warren

Also Present

Officer(s):

Richard Marsh (Director of Place), John Bodley-Scott
(Economic Development Team Leader), Sarah Lees
(Member Services Officer) and Jessica Watts (Member
Services Apprentice)

48 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Cllrs N V Davey, E Lloyd and J Wright.

49 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

50 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT

No interests were declared under this item.

51 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2022 were confirmed as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

52 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman stated that whilst the J27 / J28 report being presented today was useful in terms of confirming the current position, for the next meeting he wanted the PDG to discuss the potential economic benefits of junction development and for this to be a focus for the Group going forwards. He referred to 'blue sky thinking' and Members of the PDG giving officers a steer as to what the Council could achieve. It was accepted that this discussion may need to be held in Part II due to the commercially sensitive nature of the topics discussed.

53 JUNCTION 27 AND 28 REPORT (00:08:00)

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Director of Place. At the January 2022 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 presented an update in relation to work underway in relation to Junctions 27 and 28 and opportunities that existed therein.

The following was highlighted within the report:

- The Council had a stated ambition to see development around Junctions 27 and 28 of the M5. The Policy guiding development of the allocated sites is contained within the Local Plan and were supported by other planning documents.
- Progress on the scheme had been slower than anticipated being heavily influenced by the pandemic.
- Discussions with some landowners had shown that there was still some development interest but also some doubt as to whether this was as originally envisaged.
- Interest remains from Eden for the 'Eden Grounds' project but any masterplan would need to cover the whole of the site and be adopted as an SPD prior to determination of any planning application. It would therefore be necessary for Eden to work with MDDC and landowners in order to develop proposals for the site.
- The Council was taking a proactive role in trying to achieve the development aspiration. In due course engagement with relevant parties would widen. Engagement with the new Local Plan would also take into account any new aspirations.
- Regarding J28, key projects were progressing such as the Cullompton railway station project and the Culm Garden Village project. As part of this the Council had commissioned an employment and skills study to consider how the Culm Garden Village could support and contribute to further employment.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The need for consideration towards the likely salaries of potential employees and house prices locally.
- How new businesses would be attracted? It was explained that the Council was in a strong position to engage with businesses more widely.
- The Local Plan set out a mix of development on the site, it could not be amended to switch from 'retail' to 'housing' for example.
- The precise location of the areas being referred to which were set out in the Local Plan.
- Concerns regarding the need to improve connectivity and transport connections.
- A reminder not to focus purely on development at the junctions but for any development there to also provide visitor signposting to local towns and other local attractions.
- The need for a co-ordinated and integrated approach at J28 so as not to create a 'hodge podge' of projects with no overarching vision.

- The need to remember that J27 also fed Willand and parts of Halberton whose business interests needed to be protected.
- The need to ensure that businesses within local town centres were not detrimentally affected by development at the junctions.
-

It was **AGREED** that a report would be brought back to the next meeting providing an update and allowing an opportunity for the Group to discuss ideas further.

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

54 **WORKSHOP SUMMARY (00:45:00)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a summary of the work * which had been undertaken at recent workshops.

The Chairman stated that the workshops had been very useful and had provided an opportunity for Members to direct officers as to their thoughts, concerns and aspiration but they had also presented a challenge for the Economic Development team who were experiencing resource problems. He hoped that there would be less presentations going forward and more policy and development work so that available resource could be focussed where it was needed.

Note: * Workshop summary previously circulated; copy attached to the signed minutes.

55 **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TEAM VERBAL UPDATE :00:16:00)**

The Group received a verbal update from the Economic Development Team Leader regarding work undertaken by the team. This included the following information:

The workload of the team had been dominated by a series of unforeseen challenges. At the beginning of January there had been a fire at the Tiverton Business Park and a need to respond and find accommodation for three Mid Devon businesses at short notice.

The period had also been dominated by:

Business Grants

Over the last couple of months, the team had been asked to prioritise the administration and management of the latest Covid 19 related Business Grants.

- Omicron Scheme
- Additional Restrictions Grants, Omicron
- Additional Restrictions Grants, Covid Recovery

All three grants schemes were now coming to an end, but they had generated a huge amount of administrative and work

	OMI	ARG2 (Covid Recovery)	ARG3 (OMI)
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	£1.6 million	£160k +	£187k
Received:	340 (1 to be assessed)	32	103
Processed:	339 (25 awaiting pre-payment checks or further info)	25 (1 to be paid)	103
Approved:	302	15	97
Declined:	12	9	0
Distributed	£904k	£140k	£158k

Visit Mid Devon – This was a partnership with the TIC / Museum for 2 years managing the website and social media channels.

This Committee received a report in September last year about the work of the team on the Taste Mid Devon campaign in support of local food producers and hospitality businesses. The team had hoped to bring an update report to this committee, but due to the unexpected demands on the teams time this had not been possible.

The website had been a useful tool to support the leisure, tourism and hospitality businesses this year. In order to help businesses through the recovery period the Council had offered free business listings on the website. It had enabled the team to build a good relationship with the sector and identify how the team could help them going forward. The team had recruited 136 Mid Devon businesses to date, including eateries, attractions and accommodation providers, which was the sector hit hardest by the pandemic.

The team had secured funding from the 'Welcome Back' grant to create, design and install four visitor boards across the district. One unique board for each of the main towns sits in the long-stay car park and provides information about the local area, promoting the facilities and town centre businesses e.g retail and eateries (town centre focused).

The team were planning a business event for our leisure, tourism and hospitality businesses in May, with a number of guest speakers promoting support services and tips for the future (trends following the pandemic).

Community Support Activities

Over this period the team had continued to co-ordinate various strands of support for residents impacted by Covid19 or by the increasing squeeze on household incomes. This had included co-ordinating the Government funded Household Support Fund, Self-Isolation Support and Monday and Debt Advice

Asylum Seekers Initial Accommodation

In January, and at extremely short notice, the team were informed that Mid Devon would be hosting an Asylum Seekers Initial Accommodation Facility at Tiverton Best Western Hotel. Initially 72 asylum seekers including two families were housed at the hotel. This had involved working with local and regional community groups to co-ordinate various areas of support.

Throughout this period the team had worked flexibly, tirelessly and professionally, to meet the demands of the new pieces of work, often working over and above contracted hours to meet the challenges as they appeared. With the majority of the schemes coming to an end at the end of March, and with hopefully the Group Manager for Economy Growth and Delivery returning, the team was expected to be back to some sort of normality by the middle of April, albeit the team had not been able to recruit to the post of Economic Development Officer yet.

The Group wished to thank the entire team for their hard work and perseverance during a difficult two year period.

56 CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2021 - 2022 (00:58:00)

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a draft report * from the Chairman summarising the work of the Group and the Economic Development Team over the past 12 months. A copy of the final report would be submitted to full Council at their meeting on 27 April 2022.

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

57 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (00:59:00)

The items identified for the next meeting were noted, however, the Chairman reiterated a request for future meetings to be more focussed and proactive in terms of policy development particularly in relation to J27 and J28 development.

(The meeting ended at 6.30 pm)

CHAIRMAN

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MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **COMMUNITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP**
held on 22 March 2022 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors

Mrs M E Squires (Chairman)
W Burke, Mrs C Collis, L J Cruwys,
R J Dolley, B Holdman, S Pugh and
Mrs E J Slade

Apologies

Councillor(s)

G Barnell

Also Present

Councillor(s)

Mrs C P Daw, R M Deed, C J Eginton, D J Knowles and
B G J Warren

Also Present

Officer(s):

Jill May (Director of Business Improvement and Operations), Simon Newcombe (Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing), Matthew Page (Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste), Nicola Cuskeran (Interim Corporate Performance Manager & Safeguarding Officer), Julia Ryder (Community Safety & Emergency Planning Officer), Clare Robathan (Policy and Research Officer), Carole Oliphant (Member Services Officer) and Jessica Watts (Member Services Apprentice)

53 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (0.03.19)

Apologies were received from Cllr G Barnell

54 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (0.03.31)

Members were reminded of the need to make declarations where appropriate.

55 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (0.04.00)

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 25th January were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

56 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (0.04.21)

There were no members of the public present.

57 CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS (0.04.34)

The Chairman had no announcements to make.

58 **SAFEGUARDING CHILDRENS AND ADULTS AT RISK POLICY AND PROCEDURES (0.13.49)**

The Group had before it a *report from the Director of Business Transformation & Operations providing an update on Safeguarding Children's and Adults at Risk Policy and procedures and a review of best practice.

The Corporate Safeguarding Officer provided an overview of the report and stated that there had been no amendments this year and that the audit findings had demonstrated 'reasonable assurance'.

Consideration was given to:

- That the process was outlined in the Policy and Guidance
- There were specific processes when housing known sex offenders which included robust risk assessments for each individual case

It was therefore **RECOMMENDED** to the Cabinet that the Safeguarding Children's and Adults at Risk Policy and Procedures be adopted.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Reason for the decision: To ensure that the Council met its legal obligations in respect to safeguarding and child protection

Note: *report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

59 **SINGLE EQUALITIES POLICY AND EQUALITY OBJECTIVES (0.13.49)**

The Group had before it a *report from the Director of Business Improvement and Operations providing the Single Equality Scheme and the Equality Objectives for 2022-2023.

The Interim Corporate Performance Manager outlined the contents of the report and stated that there were no significant changes but that two additional objectives had been included.

Consideration was given to:

- Age was not a barrier to employment with the Council and recruiters were not provided with an applicant's age during the recruitment process
- Wellbeing Ambassadors were staff members trained to assist colleagues with issues and was closely linked with the Menopause policy
- The Council was doing all that it could to raise diversity issues

It was therefore **RECOMMENDED** to the Cabinet that the Single Equality Scheme and the Equality Objectives for 2022-2023 be adopted.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Reason for the decision: To ensure that the Council was in compliance with the Equality Act 2010

Note: *report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

60 **COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP (0.24.44)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a *report from the Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing providing an update on the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) priorities and the planned activities of the partnership over the coming year.

The Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing outlined the contents of the report and stated that the review included recent and pending changes including funding options.

He explained that the CSP would no longer receive direct funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to distribute to partner agencies but that these agencies would now have to apply directly to the PCC for funding. The CSP would now shift to assisting its partner agencies to access this direct funding.

The officer explained that due to the Domestic Abuse Act there was a pending new duty regarding serious violence and that the PCC had provided funding directly to the CSP for 12 months.

The CSP had agreed two new themes which were:

1. Violent Crime
2. Youth Risk and Vulnerability

In response to questions asked the Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing stated:

- That he would provide an update on the Tiverton Police desk at the next meeting
- That the CSP would need to bid for funding in the future as it would not be provided directly from the PCC
- The CSP had a different duty than the Police who would look at criminal acts. The CSP would look at the circumstances leading up to the act to establish if any lessons could be learned by a multi-agency review

Note: *report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

61 **TRAUMA INFORMED REVIEW (0.39.20)**

The Group had before it a *report from the Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing providing an outline to becoming a Trauma Informed Council.

The Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing provided an overview of his report and explained that the Community Safety Partnership Working Group had recommended that the Council explore becoming Trauma Informed.

He recognised that to become Trauma Informed would require a significant amount of work and he requested that the PDG agreed to the principle that it be investigated in more depth and a further report be brought back in August with specific recommendations.

In response to a question asked he confirmed that Mid Devon District Council (MDDC) were at the forefront of the work and that no other local District Councils had yet adopted a Trauma Informed approach but that others were looking at what MDDC were doing.

The Group therefore **AGEED** that:

1. The Council explore further potential benefits, challenges and implications of Mid Devon District Council becoming a Trauma Informed Council
2. That a further report was received by August 2022 in respect of specific considerations.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Note: *report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

62 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT (0.51.57)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, *the Chairman's Annual Report.

Note: *report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

63 **WORK PLAN AND WORK PROGRAMMING SESSION (0.52.22)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, the Community PDG work plan

The Policy and Research Officer explained that the Scrutiny Committee had agreed the recommendations of the Motion 564 review. The PDG requested that the report be presented to them so that it could investigate the communication aspect of the review.

Note: *work plan previously circulated and attached to the minutes

(The meeting ended at 3.11 pm)

CHAIRMAN

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **PLANNING COMMITTEE** held on 2 March 2022 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors

P J Heal (Chairman)
S J Clist, Mrs F J Colthorpe, L J Cruwys,
Mrs C P Daw, C J Eginton, B Holdman,
D J Knowles, F W Letch, B G J Warren and
R F Radford

Apologies

Councillor(s)

E J Berry

Present

Officers:

Richard Marsh (Director of Place), Maria De
Leiburne (Operations Manager for Legal and
Monitoring), Angharad Williams (Interim
Development Management Manager), Oliver
Gibbins (Planning Officer), Helen Govier
(Principal Planning Officer), Carole Oliphant
(Member Services Officer) and Sally Gabriel
(Member Services Manager)

157 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (00-03-28)

Apologies were received from Cllr E J Berry who was substituted by Cllr R F Radford.

158 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (00-04-08)

Mr Rowe referring to Item 1 (Westcott Park) on the Plans List outlined his application, the various officers he had dealt with and the advice received. He highlighted a successful appeal on the site and the views of the inspector and asked: why have Mid Devon planning changed their stance on fully supporting my application to now recommending it for refusal?

The Chairman indicated that an answer would be provided when the application was considered.

159 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (00-07-00)

The following declarations were made:

Cllrs: S J Clist, Mrs F J Colthorpe, L J Cruwys, Mrs C P Daw, C J Eginton, P J Heal, B Holdman, D J Knowles, F W Letch, R F Radford and B G J Warren made declarations in accordance with the Protocol of Good Practice for Councillors dealing with planning matters as they had received correspondence with regard to application 21/02137/MFUL (Westcott Park).

160 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (00-08-13)**

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 February were agreed as a true record and duly signed by the Chairman.

161 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (00-09-15)**

The Chairman had the following announcements to make:

- He welcomed Cllrs B Holdman and D J Knowles back to the committee
- He reminded Members that a special meeting of the committee would be held on Wednesday 16 March.

162 **DEFERRALS FROM THE PLANS LIST (00-09-44)**

There were no deferrals from the Plans List.

163 **THE PLANS LIST (00-10-00)**

The Committee considered the applications on the *Plans List

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

a) Application 21/02137/FULL – Erection of 21 dwellings with associated open space, landscaping and infrastructure – land and buildings at NGR 302094 104175 (Westcott Park) Westcott.

The Planning Officer outlined the application by way of a presentation highlighting the location of the site and an aerial view which provided context of the location of the site with the town of Cullompton; he explained that Westcott was not highlighted as a settlement within the Local Plan.

He then set out the complex planning history of the site stating that a series of conversions had been permitted in 2019 and that two further applications for 'Permission in Principle' had been proposed which included 5 dwellings as a rural exception site which had been refused but granted at appeal and in 2021, 6 self-build properties that had been granted on the site.

Members were able to view the spatial site plan which identified the permissions granted and the fall-back position was explained. The site was not within the settlement limit but in open countryside, the scheme was not providing an exception level of affordable housing and the site was deemed to be unsustainable given that it fell outside the settlement boundary of the Local Plan.

In response to the question posed in public question time, the officer stated that he had tried to work with the applicant and suggestions had been made so that the fall-back position could be used.

Members also considered plans for the proposed 21 dwellings (12 market houses and 9 affordable dwellings), the proposed house type and the proposals for open space and viewed photographs from various aspects of the site.

Consideration was given to: The views of the agent for the application who outlined the merits of the proposal, the pre-application advice received, the series of applications and confirmation that the proposed 21 dwellings would override the previous applications which in their opinion would limit 21 dwellings on the site. He highlighted the areas of open space, the residential garden, the design of the low carbon dwellings and stated that in his view the development was not unsustainable and within a settlement.

Discussion took place with regard to:

- Access to the site
- The history of the site and the applications that had been considered
- The number of dwellings proposed which may include revocation of the previous 21 dwellings
- The number of dwellings in Westcott

It was therefore:

RESOLVED that planning permission be refused as recommended by the Interim Development Management Manager.

(Proposed by Cllr L J Cruwys and seconded by Cllr Mrs F J Colthorpe)

Notes:

- i) Cllr S J Clist requested that his abstention from voting be recorded;
- ii) Mr Rogers spoke as agent to the application;
- iii) The following late information was provided: Officers are aware that the applicant has provided Members of the Planning Committee with a position statement. Officers will respond to this during the verbal presentation to the committee.

b) Application 21/02113/FULL – Conversion of former doctors surgery to 4 new dwellings with associated landscaping and parking – Newcombes Surgery, Clifford Gardens, Crediton.

The Principal Planning Officer outlined the application by way of a presentation highlighting the site location, the proposed site plan, the existing and proposed design of the building, the proposed floor plans and photographs from various aspects of the site. She explained that this was one of two applications submitted for the site and that the proposal before Members needed to be considered on its own merits.

Consideration was given to:

- The views of the objector who outlined the concerns of local residents and referred to both applications for the site and requested that they be considered side by side and that a site visit take place. There was no objection to the

proposal for four dwellings but he questioned the design of the proposals and that if approved then unregulated supported living could take place on the site.

- The views of the representative from the Town Council who questioned the layout of the proposal; the lack of private and amenity space and the lack of interior storage, play space and renewable energy in the proposals.
- The views of one of the Ward Members (via a statement read by the Chairman) which highlighted the impact of the proposal on the amenity of local residents.

Discussion took place with regard to:

- The number of conditions to be approved post decision
- Waste storage issues
- Whether a change of use was required for supported living
- Whether Conditions 5, 6, 7 and 8 could be amended (with the approval of the applicant) to state prior to work commencing rather than prior to occupation

It was therefore:

RESOLVED that planning permission be granted subject to conditions as recommended by the Interim Development Management Manager and subject to:

- i) A legal agreement with DCC to secure the education contribution of £17,097 towards primary education infrastructure;
- ii) Delegated authority being given to the Interim Development Management Manager to request of the applicant amendments to Conditions 5, 6, 7 and 8 to remove the wording 'prior to first occupation' and replace with the wording 'prior to work commencing'. Should such a proposal not be agreed by the applicant, then the application return to the next available committee meeting for further consideration.

(Proposed by Mrs F J Colthorpe and seconded by Cllr Mrs C P Daw)

Notes:

- i) Mr Howells spoke in objection to the application;
- ii) Cllr Mrs Brookes-Hocking spoke on behalf of Crediton Town Council;
- iii) The Chairman read a statement on behalf of Cllr A Wyer (Ward Member);
- iv) Cllr F W Letch requested that his vote against the decision be recorded;
- v) The following late information was provided:

Since the time of writing the officer report two further representations have been received, they key concerns are summarised below;

- Works have already been undertaken on site
- Concern that the applicant's intention is to use the C3 dwellings proposed to provide supported living accommodation.

In light of the concern raised above regarding the intended use the developer has provided the following response (email 24th February);

My understanding is that Supported Living is also C2 Use Class and that the C3 applications allow conversion to open market residential only. Duplicate applications with different use classes have been made for development flexibility moving forwards. Central and Southern have only operated under consented C2 use class approvals from Exeter City Council, Cornwall Council and Mid Devon District Council (in the case of the existing annexe bungalow).

Central and Southern Homes recently gained permission for a supported living project in Exeter and in that case the permission specifically identifies the use class and operator :

Variation of conditions 12 and 13 of 18/1604/FUL to permit the approved special needs housing (C2 use) to be used by Central and Southern Homes.

Similarly, Blockworks worked alongside the YMCA to provide Move-On Accommodation in Exeter and the application specifies the use and end user :

Variation of condition two of application 20/0843/FUL (Additional storey and change of use to YMCA move-on accommodation), to approve amended materials and elevation details.

In each case information was provided regarding the building operator and proposed use and the planning permissions are particularly prescriptive.

In the case of Bodmin , Fairview House was a former NHS training facility and benefitted from an existing C2 use class. This was confirmed to us in a letter from Cornwall Council, the contents of which are below :

I refer to the above application and the current use of Fairview House. Planning records show that in 2008 consent was granted to change the use of the former hospital buildings into a training centre for healthcare staff and on the balance of probability this change of use did occur. Therefore Fairview House has a lawful planning use for a training centre (C2).

I can confirm that within the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 it states that class C2 (residential institutions) allows the following uses; Use for the provision of residential accommodation and care to people in need of care (other than a use within class C3 (dwelling houses)).

Use as a hospital or nursing home.

Use as a residential school, college or training centre.

On this basis I would confirm that the use of Fairview House as a children's home would fall within the permitted C2 use.

As previously advised no prospective Children's Home will be considered by Ofsted without the correct planning permission in place and rigorous inspections ensure that only proficient companies are able to provide this type of residential use.

We trust the above is informative and allays any concerns but please do not hesitate to contact me again if you have further queries.

OFFICER COMMENT:

Class C3 of the Town and Country (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) is defined as;

Use as a dwellinghouse (whether or not as a sole or main residence) by—

- (a) a single person or by people to be regarded as forming a single household;
- (b) not more than six residents living together as a single household where care is provided for residents; or
- (c) not more than six residents living together as a single household where no care is provided to residents (other than a use within Class C4).

Therefore in some circumstances a supported living arrangement may fall within C3(b) use class.

164 MAJOR APPLICATIONS WITH NO DECISION (1-25-55)

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, a *list of major applications with no decision.

It was agreed that:

- Application 22/00338/MOUT – 43 Dwellings, Cummings Nursery, Culm Lea, Cullompton be determined by the Planning Committee and that a site visit take place.
- Application 22/00067/MFUL – 18 dwellings and 4 commercial buildings – Wellparks, Exeter Road, Crediton be determined by the Planning Committee and that a site visit take place.

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

165 APPEAL DECISIONS (1-30-47)

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, a *list of appeal decisions

Noted: *List previously circulated and attached to the minutes.

(The meeting ended at 3.47 pm)

CHAIRMAN

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **PLANNING COMMITTEE** held on 16 March 2022 at 2.15 pm

Present Councillors

E J Berry, S J Clist, Mrs F J Colthorpe,
L J Cruwys, Mrs C P Daw, C J Eginton,
B Holdman, F W Letch and B G J Warren

Apologies Councillor(s)

D J Knowles

Also Present Councillor(s)

P J Heal, R J Dolley and R Evans

Present Officers:

Richard Marsh (Director of Place), Maria De
Leiburne (Operations Manager for Legal and
Monitoring), Angharad Williams (Interim
Development Management Manager),
Adrian Devereaux (Area Team Leader),
Christie McCombe (Area Planning Officer),
Sally Gabriel (Member Services Manager)
and Carole Oliphant (Member Services
Officer)

166 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (0.05.39)

Apologies were received from Cllr D J Knowles.

Cllr P J Heal attended via ZOOM and the Vice Chairman took the Chair.

167 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (0.06.43)

Hannah Kearnes, a local resident, referring to no1 on the plans list provided the following questions which were read out by the Vice Chairman.

QUESTION 1

Why does the application submitted by MDDC fail to comply with Building Regulations 2021 Part O – Overheating? This is a regulation that is intended to provide protection to both young children and the medically vulnerable and which recognises both the impacts and subsequent risk of global warming.

QUESTION 2

Why does the application submitted by MDDC fail to comply with Building Regulations 2021 Part L - Thermal Efficiency? Specifically why does the application not provide the required full range of thermal efficiency calculations or detailed information on thermal bridging reduction?

QUESTION 3

Why is there a requirement for ALL widows on the rear and side elevations overlooking existing properties, gardens and green spaces, to be frosted or the views obliterated with 1.7 meter high frosted screens? Is it not agreed that this requirement seriously impact the new modular home's residents living conditions and well-being?

QUESTION 4

Are Planning Officers and Members aware that there is an increasing concern about the fire and safety risk of modular homes, in particular multi-story constructions? Are they aware of the fact that in 2020, a 2 story high modular built accommodation unit burnt down very rapidly? The full circumstances are still being investigated with the potential of legal action being taken. Fire experts amongst others are now even suggesting that modular built multi accommodation units are the next Grenfell Tower waiting to happen.

QUESTION 5

Have MDDC as the "Responsible Entity" undertaken checks on the fire safety design with independent experts including the Devon and Somerset Fire Service, rather than just relying on ZED PODS providing a materials statement etc?

It is understood that the Somerset Fire Service may already have concerns about modular build fire safety.

QUESTION 6

Having regard to my previous question on fire safety, this question is asked given that the proposed modular development will have 20 car parking spaces beneath it.

Are Planning Officers and Members aware of the reported findings of the very serious multi-story car park fire that occurred in Liverpool in 2018 in which 1400 cars were destroyed? Are they aware of the cause of the fire and the fire spread pattern and the speed of the fire spread?

Mr Paul Elstone, a local resident, referring to No 2 on the plans list provided the following question which were read out by the Vice Chairman:

QUESTION 1

Can the Planning Officers please explain why the locations of the Self Build Home Sewage and Drainage Lines are NOW being determined This despite the Self Build Homes themselves being and as stated the subject of a future Reserved Matters Planning Application.

QUESTION 2

Why are the Planning Officers justifying recommending this application for approval yet effectively saying that the drainage and sewage lines are solely being installed by Redrow Homes as part of a contractual agreement with the Landowner i.e. the Chettiscombe Estate and in respect of the Landowners future plans.

QUESTION 3

Why are the Planning Officers apparently justifying the location of the Sewage and Drainage Lines based the Self Build Homes having driveway access onto Blundells Road?

QUESTION 4

Are the Committee Members aware that should Redrow Homes be permitted to use all the road access points to their building development as they have applied for there will be a total of 6 separate points yes 6 access points and all within 400 meters of each other.

Each access point would be joining an increasingly busy arterial road with bad safety records.

QUESTION 5

Given serious road safety concerns will the MDDC Area Planning Officer confirm that Redrow Homes will not use the access point opposite Long Meadow on Blundells Road for construction traffic access for the Attenuation Pond and to install the various drainage and sewer pipelines.

This in full recognition that there is a totally suitable and far safer access point already available off the new Linking Road to the north of Blundells Road.

Very importantly an access point which would run across the field owned by the Landowner i.e., the Chettiscombe Estate and therefore easily get approval given they want the work done. Surely this cannot be permitted and for very sound, justifiable and well proven road safety reasons?

QUESTION 6

Will the MDDC Planning Officers confirm that they will not give permission and as requested in Redrow's Condition 14 Application for the entrance opposite Long Meadow on Blundells Road or be permitted to use West Manley Lane solely to create to a building development storage areas, workers car parking or for site office buildings.

This in full consideration that there is already a safer and more suitable access point available from the newly constructed Linking Road to the north of Blundells Road. And the spur road to the South.

This in full consideration that there is already a far more suitable and safe access point from the newly constructed Spur Road to the south of Blundells Road available and already in use.

Also, in full recognition that Redrow Homes have acquired more land from the Chettiscombe Estate allowing the far safer location of the storage areas etc.

The Vice Chairman indicated that the answers would be provided when the application was considered.

168 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (0.15.52)**

The following declarations were made:

Cllrs C Daw and C Eginton made declarations in accordance with the Protocol of Good Practice for Councillors dealing with planning matters as they had received correspondence with regard to application 21/01957/FULL Shapland Place, Tiverton

Cllrs S J Clist, L J Cruwys, C Daw, B Holdman and B G J Warren made declarations in accordance with the Protocol of Good Practice for Councillors dealing with planning matters as they had received correspondence with regard to application 21/0214/MARM Land at NGR 297844 113446, Blundells Road, Tiverton

Cllrs S J Clist and B G J Warren made declarations in accordance with the Protocol of Good Practice for Councillors dealing with planning matters as they had received correspondence with regard to application 21/02113/FULL Newcombes Surgery, Crediton

Cllr F W Letch made a personal declaration with regard to application 21/02113/FULL Newcombes Surgery, Crediton as he was the ward member.

169 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (0.15.55)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd March 2022 were agreed as a true record and duly **SIGNED** by the Vice Chairman.

170 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (0.16.33)

The Vice Chairman reminded Members that the next scheduled meeting was on 30th March 2022

171 DEFERRALS FROM THE PLANS LIST (0.16.49)

There were no deferrals from the Plans List

172 THE PLANS LIST (0.17.11)

The Committee considered the applications on the *Plans List

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

- a) ***Application 21/01957/FULL - Demolition of garages, erection of a two-storey block of 8 dwellings, raised above a podium structure atop car parking level with associated soft and hard landscaping works at Garages and Forecourt, Shapland Place, Tiverton.***

The Area Team Leader provided responses to public questions and explained that the fire safety concerns raised were a building regulations issue and were not a material planning consideration. The building would be alongside adopted roads for access and that the applicant had provided further details of the fire strategy. He confirmed that only the east elevation had obscure windows and privacy screens.

In response to questions raised by Members on a site visit he confirmed that Tiverton was not in an air quality management area and there had been no concerns from Public health in relation to air pollution in the car parking area. Any development must meet fire safety standard though building regulations and that the scheme provided 3 electric vehicle charging points which was in excess of the required standard.

The Area Team Leader then outlined the application by way of a presentation which highlighted the location plan, site plan, ground and first floor plans, second floor plans, elevations, section plans, landscaping plan, 3D views of the west elevation and photographs of the site.

Consideration was given to:

- The application site was in flood plain 3 but there had been no objections from the Environment Agency
- The views of the Town Council who highlighted the impact on existing residents, impact on new residents, potential overheating and mechanical ventilation and a potential modular fire risk
- The views of the Ward Member who stated that he supported the scheme but he noted concerns of neighbours with regard to overlooking and potential flood issues
- Members concerns that the design of the scheme made it inaccessible to wheelchair users
- That the scheme was accessible for other disabilities and included disabled parking but that as it was a modular scheme it would be difficult to adapt for wheelchair access as the ground floor was designated for car parking
- Members concerns that condition 10 should remove the option of an alternative timeframe for the installation of the 3 electric charging points

It was therefore:

RESOLVED that planning permission be granted subject to conditions and the signing of a S106 agreement as recommended by the Interim Development Management Manager subject to an amendment to condition 10 to remove the option of an alternative timeframe for the installation of the 3 electric charging points

(Proposed by Cllr F W Letch and seconded by Cllr Mrs C P Daw)

Reason for the decision: As set out in the report

Notes:

- i. Cllr P Elstone provided a statement on behalf of the Town Council
- ii. Cllr R J Dolley spoke as ward member

b) Application 21/02014/MARM - Reserved Matters in respect of (appearance, landscaping, layout and scale) for the area associated with the attenuation pond, drainage infrastructure and related details including level changes required for the initial phases of development, following Outline approval 14/00881/MOUT at Land at NGR 297844 113446 (North of Putson Cottages), Blundells Road, Tiverton.

Consideration was given to:

- The views of the objector who stated he had objections to the routing and drainage of the self-build homes and that no access should be granted from the attenuation pond site from Blundells Road

- The views of the agent who stated that the application had been approved at outline and that as developers they were obliged to provide services to the self-build plots

The Area Planning Officer then gave an overview of the application by way of a presentation which highlighted the site location plan, illustrative framework plan, an aerial view, the infrastructure planning layout, general arrangements, cross sections, landscape details and photographs of the site.

The Area Planning Officer then responded to public questions and stated that the location of the attenuation pond would not determine the location or layout of the self-build plots or their driveway access. The application in front of Members was for one access point into the site and that no construction traffic would access the site directly from Blundell's Road as confirmed when the agent spoke at Committee.

Further consideration was given to:

- The frequency of visits by South West Water to the attenuation pond would be set out in the S104 agreement and was not determined by the Planning Authority
- The application provided a detailed landscape plan including the provision of young sapling trees
- The entrance to the site on Blundells road would cease once the land had been approved and constructed for employment use

It was therefore:

RESOLVED that planning permission be granted subject to conditions as recommended by the Interim Development Management Manager

(Proposed by Cllr C J Eginton and seconded by Cllr F W Letch)

Reason for the decision: As set out in the report

Notes:

- Mr Elstone provided a statement as the objector which was read out by the Vice Chairman
- Mr Cattermole spoke as the agent

173 **21/02113/FULL - NEWCOMBES SURGERY, CLIFFORD GARDENS, CREDITON (1.47.28)**

The Committee had before it a *report of the Interim Development Management Manager presenting further information for application 21/02113/FULL - NEWCOMBES SURGERY, CLIFFORD GARDENS, CREDITON.

The Interim Development Management Manager explained that the application had been approved by the Committee at its meeting on 2nd March 2022 and she was bringing it back to clarify the legislation and some further information received.

The Officer clarified that in some instances domestic dwellings could revert to C3 use without a further change of use permission required. She also confirmed that the applicant had provided a landscaping plan which included refuse storage and cycle provision. These additions were provided to Members by way of a presentation.

Consideration was given to:

- The views of the objector who stated that there was a concern with residents that the site could be used for unregulated supported housing without the need to apply for a change of use
- The objectors request to condition a restriction on use not to allow supported living would be unreasonable in planning terms

It was therefore:

RESOLVED that planning permission be granted subject to conditions as recommended by the Interim Development Management Manager and subject to:

- a) A legal agreement with DCC to secure the education contribution of £17,097 towards primary education infrastructure;

The conditions would be as set out on the update sheet and the works prior to commencing were not required now, as the plans had been received.

(Proposed by Cllr Mrs F J Colthorpe and seconded by Cllr C J Eginton)

Reason for the decision: As set out in the report

Notes:

- i. Mr Howells spoke in objection to the application;
- ii. Cllr F W Letch requested that his vote against the decision be recorded;
- iii. *Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes
- iv. The following late information was provided:

In light of the concerns raised by members regarding the level of information required by conditions 5-8, additional details have been received (10th March 2022) providing further details in respect of the landscaping proposals, cycle stores, refuse and recycling store and car parking. The additional plans are;

NV SK27 A proposed landscape layout

NV SK28 A proposed cycle stores

NV SK27 A propose recycling store

The additional plans are available on the file and will be added to the presentation should members wish to view these items at the meeting.

The landscape layout demonstrates that the existing trees on the site would be retained, with two new specimen trees provided in the garden to the east of the building (1 x Cherry Blossom and 1 x Silver Birch). The gardens would be separated

by 1.8m high timber close board fencing. The new hedgerow is proposed to be a mix of beech, purple beech and hazel. It is your officer's view that the landscaping details are considered to be acceptable, providing a positive contribution to the character and biodiversity of the site. Condition 5 is proposed to be amended (as below) to reflect that suitable details have now been received and to secure the implementation within an appropriate time frame.

Four separate cycle stores (accommodating 4 cycles each) are proposed, the stores for units 1-3 are located at the edge of the parking area as previously indicated. The store for unit 4 is provided within its garden area. The stores are a Dancover Proshed, made of zinc coated steel in Anthracite grey colour. The submitted details confirm that these have double door with a cylinder lock providing each dwelling with a private, secure cycle store area. The details are considered to be acceptable and would not adversely impact the character and appearance of the area. Condition 6 is proposed to be amended (as below) to ensure the facilities are provided in a timely manner.

The proposed bin store is a communal facility providing sufficient space for storage of 2 24 litre wheelie bins per dwelling and two 55 litre recycling boxes above. The store is proposed to be constructed from sawn timber walls and with a grey profiled metal sheet roof, maximum height 2.5m. The submitted details are considered to be acceptable and condition 7 is proposed to be amended accordingly (as below) to ensure the approved facility is provided in a timely manner.

Condition 8 requires details of the allocation of parking spaces to be provided for approval. In light of the increased area given over to cycle storage, 13 parking spaces are now proposed (compared to 14 previously proposed). The submitted landscaping plan demonstrates that 2 spaces would be given over to each dwelling with 5 spaces for use by visitors. The parking provision is still considered to be in excess of the minimum requirements established by DM5 and this proposed layout is considered to be acceptable. Condition 8 is proposed to be amended accordingly.

The conditions as proposed to be amended are set out below, the reasons for these conditions as previously set out in the officer report and are not proposed to be amended.

5. All planting, seeding, turfing or earth reprofiling comprised in the approved details of landscaping (as shown on drawing number NV SK27 A proposed landscape layout received by the Local Planning Authority on 10th March 2022) shall be carried out within 9 months of the substantial completion of the development, (or phase thereof), and any trees or plants which, within a period of five years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased, shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species. Once provided, the landscaping scheme shall be so retained. The proposed boundary treatments shall be provided in accordance with the approved details prior to occupation of the proposed dwellings and shall be so retained.

6. The cycle stores shall be provided in accordance with the approved details as shown on drawing number NV SK28 A proposed cycle stores (received by the Local Planning Authority on 10th March 2022) and made available for use by residents prior to first occupation of the dwellings hereby approved and retained as such thereafter.

7. Prior to first occupation of any of the dwellings hereby approved the proposed refuse and recycling arrangements shall be provided in accordance with the approved details, as shown on drawing number NVSK27 A and retained as such thereafter.

8. Prior to occupation of any of the dwellings hereby approved the proposed parking shall be laid out in accordance with the approved details and shall be maintained in accordance with the approved plan for the lifetime of the development.

(The meeting ended at 4.32 pm)

CHAIRMAN

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MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **PLANNING COMMITTEE** held on 30 March 2022 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors

P J Heal (Chairman)
J Cairney, S J Clist, Mrs C Collis,
Mrs F J Colthorpe, L J Cruwys,
Mrs C P Daw, B Holdman, D J Knowles and
B G J Warren

Apologies

Councillor(s)

E J Berry, C J Eginton and F W Letch

Also Present

Councillor(s)

L D Taylor

Present

Officers:

Richard Marsh (Director of Place), Maria De Leburne (Operations Manager for Legal and Monitoring), Dean Emery (Corporate Manager for Revenues, Benefits and Recovery), Angharad Williams (Development Management Manager), Jake Choules (Planning Officer), Jessica Watts (Member Services Apprentice) and Sally Gabriel (Member Services Manager)

Also in

attendance:

Michelle Woodgates (DCC Highway Authority)

174 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (00-03-05)

Apologies were received from Cllrs C Eginton and F W Letch who were substituted by Cllrs Mrs C Collis and J Cairney respectively.

The meeting also received apologies from Cllr E J Berry.

175 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (00-04-00)

Bev Moore, referring to item 1 on the Plans List highlighted the 2007 and 2010 applications on the site and the conditions that were placed on the approval and asked why the applicants who had widened the drive were requesting to put back the structure to narrow the access track and why were the same conditions not being added to the proposal. She also asked if the Planning Officer had visited the site.

Jan Jones referring to Item 10 on the agenda asked if the item related to the appeal at Langford and wondered why the public were being excluded from the discussion. The Planning Committee had made its decision and she felt that the Council had a

strong case and the appellant a weak case. The Rule 6 party were preparing their case, so why was the Council not getting on with writing its statement of case?

The Chairman read a statement provided by Janine Dennis also referring to item 1 on the Plans List which drew attention to the 67 objections to the application from family, friends and local people who drove to The Old School House and regularly had to navigate the existing difficult exit. She had outlined the lack of support for the application which she believed were grounds for refusal and asked whether the committee agreed.

The Chairman read a representation from Roger Bill referring to Item 1 on the Plans list and stating that the Local Planning Authority had acknowledged that the access was difficult for larger vehicles to and from the Old School House and Low Down House, if the extension to the rear of the Guildhall was built it would restrict the access even further. He asked whether it was possible to re-design the proposed toilet block so that the current access was at least maintained as it stands?

The Chairman read a representation from Clive Pedwell referring to Item 1 on the Plans list which stated that he frequently visited the Old School House with a large motability vehicle and currently accessed the property with caution but feared that if the driveway was narrowed, this would cause problems. He asked
Whilst you have correctly considered the rights of disabled visitors into the Guildhall in your planning, be it access, lifts, toilet facilities etc, why have you failed to offer the same consideration and regard to disabled visitors who currently enjoy and benefit from visiting their friends at The Old School House?

The Chairman indicated that answers to questions would be provided when the applications were discussed.

176 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (00-11-51)

Cllr S J Clist made a declaration in accordance with the Protocol of Good Practice for Councillors dealing with planning matters as he had received emails with regard to the Guildhall, Bradninch application.

177 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (00-12-29)

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th March 2022 were agreed as a true record and duly **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

178 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (00-13-09)

The Chairman had the following announcements to make:

- At the informal meeting of the Planning Committee held on Monday 7 March, the receipt of late information was discussed and it was agreed by both members and officers that a deadline should be set for updates to the published agenda – that being 12 noon on the Friday before the committee meeting (the following Wednesday).

Planning Officers had been made aware that any information received following this deadline will not be able to be considered by the committee.

Letters sent to applicants, agents, objectors and town and parish councils would be amended and the Planning Committee webpage and guidance would also be updated all in time for the April Committee.

- He congratulated Angharad Williams on her permanent position as Development Management Manager.

179 DEFERRALS FROM THE PLANS LIST (00-16-40)

There were no deferrals from the Plans List.

180 THE PLANS LIST (00-16-54)

The Committee considered the applications on the *Plans List

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

a) Application 21/01998/FULL - Erection of two storey rear extension to replace existing flat roof section and alterations to improve accessibility including reinstating existing central door on front elevation at The Guildhall, Fore Street, Bradninch

The Planning Officer outlined the application by way of a presentation highlighting the site location plan, the proposed elevations, the existing and proposed ground floor and access, the existing and proposed access and egress of the track and photographs from various aspects of the site. He informed the meeting that the Conservation Officer had been consulted and had agreed with the proposals; and the access was still wider than other parts of the track.

Referring to questions posed in Public Question Time, the officer stated that the new application if permitted would override the previous applications. With regard to the access, the Highway Authority had no concerns. The number of objections had been noted and the material considerations had been considered on the planning merits. He understood that the access was difficult but it had not been made worse by the current application. With regard to re-designing the extension, the committee could only consider the application before it. The impact of larger vehicles had been considered, but the access situation had not been worsened by the current application.

Consideration was given to:

- The views of the objector who voiced concern that access to her property was under consideration, the sale of the property had come with a right of way, she highlighted the conditions that had been placed on previous applications and the narrowness of the access track. She asked how the access could not be disregarded, the application would restrict access to disabled visitors. She hoped that the design could be adjusted and informed the meeting that further negotiations were taking place. She raised concerns with regard to service vehicles accessing the site.

- The views of the applicant with regard to the daily use of the building, the need to improve the access to the hall for disabled users with the provision of a lift to the first floor. The removal of the single story extension did involve increasing the footprint for the new extension but that this did not impede the legal right of access and that discussions were still ongoing with the neighbours.
- The view of the Town Council with regard to concerns of means of access to the Old School House and the service vehicles which maintained the house. The 2009 application had removed the single story block so that there was safe access to the site and the impact of the application generally on the neighbouring properties.
- The views of the Ward Member with regard to the impact of the proposal on the neighbouring properties, the demolition of the public toilets which had allowed a wider access route to the properties; the neighbours would no longer be able to access their property with their campervan, which may have to be parked on the heavily congested streets of Bradninch, emergency vehicles would not be able to access the site. He suggested that a site visit take place so that members could fully understand the impact of the proposal on the neighbouring properties.

Members then considered the proposal and highlighted the fact that negotiations were still ongoing between the applicant and the owners of the neighbouring property and that maybe a compromise could be found with regard to the easement line and whether the application should be deferred to allow further discussions to take place and in the meantime maybe a site visit could take place.

The views of the Highway Authority were received with regard to the smaller sweep path, access of vehicles and the track width.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that the application be deferred to allow for further discussions to take place between the two parties to consider a compromise and that in the interim period a site visit be arranged.

(Proposed by Cllr B G J Warren and seconded by Cllr S J Clist)

Notes:

- i) Sue Eakers spoke as the objector;
- ii) Phil Chambers spoke on behalf of the applicant (Trustees of Bradninch Town Trust);
- iii) Cllr Jim Porteous spoke on behalf of Bradninch Town Council;
- iv) Cllr L D Taylor spoke as Ward Member;
- v) The following late information was provided: An additional swept path analysis plan has been received as the plan currently on file only showed the access into the private lane. This plan shows the egress.

b) Application 21/02001/LBC - Listed Building Consent for erection of two storey rear extension to replace existing flat roof section and alterations to improve accessibility including reinstating existing central door on front elevation at The Guildhall, Fore Street, Bradninch

This item was not considered as the previous application had been deferred.

181 MAJOR APPLICATIONS WITH NO DECISION (00-58-00)

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, a *list of major applications with no decision.

Application 22/00398/MFUL – Blundells School be determined by the Committee and that a site visit take place.

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

182 ACCESS TO INFORMATION PRESS AND PUBLIC (1-03-09)

The Legal Advisor in response to the public question referring to Item 10 stated that legal advice was being considered and that this should be discussed in closed session.

The Chairman indicated that during discussion of the following item it may be necessary for the Planning Committee to pass the following resolution to exclude the press and public having reflected on Article 12 12.02(d) (a presumption in favour of openness) of the Constitution. This decision may be required because consideration of this matter in public may disclose information falling within one of the descriptions of exempt information in Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

RECOMMENDED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the next item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 5 respectively of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, namely information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Notes:

- i) Cllrs S J Clist and B G J Warren requested that their vote against the decision be recorded;
- ii) Cllr J Cairney requested that his abstention from voting be recorded;
- iii) Cllr B G J Warren left the meeting at this point.

183 APPEAL UPDATE

The Committee had before it a *report of the Development Management Manager.

Consideration was given to the report before Members and it was:

RESOLVED that Option 4 as outlined in the report be pursued.

(Proposed by Cllr Mrs C P Daw and seconded by Cllr L J Cruwys)

Notes: *Report previously circulated.

(The meeting ended at 3.55 pm)

CHAIRMAN

2022/23	CONSERVATIVE 19 Members	LIBERAL DEMOCRATS 11 Members	NEW INDEPENDENTS 3 Members	GREENS 2 Members	NON-ALIGNED GROUP 6 Members	TOTAL
Total number of seats to which each political group are entitled:	52	30	8	6	17	113
Audit (9)	4	2	1	0	1	8
Electoral Review (12)	5	3	1	1	2	12
Licensing (12)	5	3	1	1	2	12
Planning (11)	5	3	1	0	2	11
Regulatory (12)	5	3	1	1	2	12
Scrutiny (12)	5	3	1	1	2	12
Standards (9)	4	2	1	0	1	8
Community PDG (9)	4	2	1	0	1	8
Economy PDG (9)	4	2	1	0	1	8
Environment PDG (9)	4	2	1	0	1	8
Homes PDG (9)	4	2	1	0	1	8
Total of allocated seats to each group:	49	27	11	4	16	107
Adjustments to be negotiated between groups:	3 seats to gain	3 seats to gain	3 seats to lose	2 seats to gain	1 seat to gain	6 seats spare
Other Member meetings where membership is allocated as per group proportions:						
Planning Policy Advisory Group (9)	4	2	1	1	1	9
Planning Working Group (8)	4	2	1	0	1	8
Development Delivery Advisory Group (7)	3	2	1	0	1	7

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Chairman's Report – Audit Committee 2021 – 2022

At the start of the civic year I had not envisaged writing the Chairman's annual report for the Audit Committee, our existing Chairman Cllr Stuart Penny and Vice Chairman Cllr Alex White were re-appointed to these positions. In December both resigned these positions due to other commitments and at our January meeting I was appointed chairman and Cllr Andy Wyer Vice Chairman. On behalf of the Audit Committee, I should like to thank Cllrs Penny and White for their work in these positions over the previous two and a half years. Thanks also to Cllr Wyer who on a couple of times found himself unexpectedly chairing the committee in the absence of the Chairman and Vice Chairman. Cllr Wyer will also chair the March meeting when I am away on a pre-arranged holiday.

During the course of the year the Audit Committee has continued its usual pattern of work considering performance and risk reports, annual governance statement and accounts. We receive regular reports from both our external auditors Grant Thornton and internal auditors the Devon Audit Partnership. My thanks to both for the support and advice they give. In particular we have considered lessons that can be learnt from the Council's sale of land at Park Nursery and reviewed the Council's development company 3 Rivers Development business plan. At our most recent meeting in January, we agreed updated financial regulations, which have subsequently been approved by full council.

Our current external auditors Grant Thornton's contract is due to expire after the 2022/23 financial year and an auditor appointed for a period from the start of 2023/24. We agreed we should opt into the Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) scheme rather than go it alone appointing our own auditor. The PSAA scheme will appoint auditors for all councils opting into the scheme this will save the council both monetarily as well as officer time. Our decision has been ratified by full council.

It has been good to return to holding meetings at Phoenix House, albeit that non committee members together with some officers and external partners are able to join the meetings remotely via zoom.

I thank members of the Audit Committee for their work over the past year. Finally, but by no means least, may I thank our officers for all the work they do and support they provide, both to our committee and the Council. May I make specific mention to Catherine Yandle, Corporate Manager for Performance & Risk who has been providing reports and support to the committee over a good number of years and has left for pastures new, we wish her every success for the future. Thanks also to Paul Deal, Corporate Manager for Finance and his team, Andrew Jarrett, Deputy CEO & S151 officer, plus Sarah Lees and Member Services for their very efficient and helpful support.

Cllr Neal Davey

Audit Committee Chairman

March 2022

Environment PDG Annual Report

Chairman – Cllr Josh Wright

This has been my first year as Chair of the Environment PDG and what a steep learning curve it was. Cllr Barry Warren handed over the chairship in good order with a committee ready to be open and willing to debate the challenging issues for our community. Making sure it stayed that way was more challenging than I thought it would be. Following all the agenda items and making sure everyone had their say and kept on track took a great deal of concentration and is not as easy as some of our more experienced councillors make it look. I have now developed a few processes to help and would like to thank everyone for their patience and support as I took over the helm.

Our Environment PDG is clearly an important committee for Mid Devon and this is reflected in the wide range of policies discussed this year. The challenging times we have all experienced due to Covid restrictions over the last few years have been eased for many of us because of where we live. When out in the community many people mentioned how grateful they were for supportive communities, access to our beautiful countryside and the amenities we have in our villages and towns. I hope our residents have felt the work of the Environment PDG has reflected this appreciation for where we live.

Looking at the policies we have discussed this year has highlighted the challenge facing local authorities when striking a balance between sound finance and supporting key policies initiatives. I hope residents have felt that the wide ranging discussions we had during the committees reflected the full range of views of all our residents. The foundations we lay now over the next few years will have a big impact on our environment in Mid Devon for the foreseeable future. Ensuring that short term operational issues can be met as well as enabling the wider and more strategic issues to be delivered is the challenge facing the committee over the next few years. I really look forward to ensuring this committee faces this challenge head on and does not shy away from those difficult conversations and represents the views of all Mid Devon residents.

As we look forward, I hope the Group will consider an ambitious programme for the following year that continues to promote actions around climate change, sustainability and improvement to services that impact on our local environment.

I would like to thank all Members for their contributions this year and I look forward to working with you next year to further serve our local communities.

Importantly I would like to thank the Members and Officers for their contributions over the past year, as well as our Clerk, Carole Oliphant, thanks for keep everything organised and your kind support.

Action on Climate Change

Throughout the year the PDG received regular updates on climate change and net zero activity within the Council, and reviewed the progress of the Climate Action Plan (CAP).

Discussions within the PDG have considered a range of issues in relation to climate change, including: the number of electric charging points in the District; sustainable farming practices; increasing collection of pots and pans; grants that the Council has applied for with relation to climate change activity; decarbonisation of the council's housing stock; and green alternatives for the councils transport fleet.

At the start of the year members of the Net Zero Advisory Group (NZAG) brought a Motion recognising the action taken on climate change within the council. That Motion was deferred to the PDG to consider. Notably the Motion welcomed the ongoing work within the council, and recognised the need for a ring fenced budget to develop work on climate change. The PDG approved that Motion and requested that a future budget for climate change be created.

In January the PDG reviewed budget proposals that might be prioritised to help move ahead with the CAP. Members heard a number of proposals which identified ways to reduce the Council's carbon footprint and support the wider Climate and Sustainability Programme. As a result the PDG recommended that the potential additional budget requirements linked to the climate investment opportunities be considered.

The PDG will continue to monitor progress on the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, and receive regular updates on the activity of the NZAG (a summary of NZAG activity is attached the end of this report).

Presentation from Mary Quicke MBE

In March 2021 Members received an insightful overview of farming and climate change from local farmer Mary Quicke MBE. Mary Quicke MBE explained working practices on her farm and the importance of understanding the complex systems of sustainability. She talked about how the world had worked together to overcome the challenge of the pandemic, and that similar cooperation was going to be required to tackle climate change. The PDG agreed that it is time to challenge the normal systems of food production and for people to become conscientious consumers who are knowledgeable about how their food is produced and where it comes from.

Approval of the Public Spaces Protection (Dog Control) Order

The PDG has continued to review the revised Public Spaces Protection (Dog Control) Order (PSPO) after the PSPO expired in October 2020. The PDG last year recommended that the PSPO be redrafted to take account of public consultation responses and a revised version be brought in front of the PDG. In April the Group recommended that the fixed penalty for breach of the PSPO be set at the maximum permitted of £100 and in July we heard the responses to the consultation.

It became apparent that a couple of areas had been missed in the consultation, and it was agreed that the PSPO would be brought into force and that a variation adding the two areas would be brought back to the Environment PDG at a later date. In November we considered the proposed variation, and recommended that the Cabinet authorise the variation to include the two areas in the PSPO.

Approval of the Tree Policy

The PDG received the five yearly review of the Tree Policy. After discussion about which trees are subject to the policy, and when pruning of trees is allowed, Members requested an addition to the Policy so that it would be possible for some stock to be removed to allow the growth of new trees which would keep woodlands sustainable. Members subsequently approved the policy.

Moving to a three weekly waste collection

The November 2020 Environment PDG gave authorisation for a Recycling and Waste trial covering approximately 1000 properties to be carried out in Mid Devon. The Council carried out the trial between July and October 2021 to measure the effect of residual waste being collected at three weekly intervals. The trial was piloted over a three month period in both a rural and urban area to assess the impact of such a change being introduced in the district. The findings from the trial were presented to the PDG in January.

During the trial the percentage of residual waste reduced and the percentage of wet recycling (food) increased. Having wheeled bins in the trial areas improved the street scene and reduced the amount of residual waste. After discussion around the use of enforcement, whether houses would need additional bins, and concerns whether residents would have to drag wheelie bins up farm tracks and driveways, the PDG recommended that the council move to a three weekly waste collection, with food collected every week and recycling collected every two weeks, with bins provided by the Council.

Finalisation of the Litter Strategy

The PDG formed a Working Group to look at the creation and detail of the Litter Strategy and how the council would enforce and educate on the issue. The aim of the strategy is to engage with partners, the community and the public to reduce littering in the District. Following involvement by the Working Group, and discussion in the PDG about how to ensure the strategy is measurable and achievable, the PDG recommended that the Mid Devon District Council Litter Strategy be adopted.

Engagement with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change

Throughout the year the PDG has heard regular updates from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change and considered ways to improve services. In discussion with the Cabinet Member, Members heard and considered the impact of staffing on the waste service, and how the workforce was facing pressure on the front line services due to vacancies, especially for HGV drivers. Members also raised the unacceptable wait for bulky waste collections in some areas of the district, and asked that rapid car charging opportunities were relayed to the Town and Parishes.

Budget – identifying potential savings

Discussions on the budget throughout the year looked at how to close the current deficit within the council, and to identify any potential savings. The PDG discussed a range of options being considered by officers for budget savings, as well as the potential savings from the three weekly bin trial.

Net Zero Advisory Group 2021-2022 Annual Summary

The Net Zero Advisory Group (NZAG) is an advisory group under the Environment PDG and it group continues to consider topics including, but not limited to, climate

and biodiversity. Chaired by Cllr Elizabeth Lloyd, NZAG meetings take place on alternate months to the Environment PDG to enable a regular feedback cycle. The group provides a valuable informal forum to look into topic detail, support and adopt work elements of the PDG, and help disseminate information between Members.

During 2021-2022 NZAG activity and discussion included:

- The Council's Climate Action Plan.
- Monitoring the Council's Carbon Footprint, and our trajectory of actual emissions versus annual target emissions.
- The need to move forward with a selection of opportunities to invest budget in addressing climate change. For example, the proposal for a 'Community Climate & Biodiversity Support Fund'.
- The Sustainable Procurement Review – the Corporate Manager for Finance and Procurement briefed and updated the NZAG in December.
- Ways to increase climate knowledge, literacy and capacity at Mid Devon District Council.
- How to further develop organisational culture, policies and procedures to support local sustainability and prosperity through decision making, for example aligned to Doughnut Economics.
- Policy to support communities and individuals to reduce their climate impact, and to reduce areas of the Council's carbon footprint, such as: policies to maximise the environmental and social benefits of home/blended working; and policies to accelerate the improvement of energy performance in buildings.
- Planning policies and practice in relation to heritage, and policies to promote sustainable construction and retrofit.
- Examples of sustainability work by other authorities.
- How to promote and celebrate sustainable farming practices in Mid Devon.
- Community/parish wildlife projects, tree aftercare, citizen science etc.
- Council practice for Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and the potential for 'amenity' (in relation to legislation and best practice) to include the contribution of trees to benefits such as biodiversity support and carbon capture.

Report from the Chairman of the Homes PDG for 2021 – 2022

This has been another year where Covid restrictions have stymied and affected our aims and progress. Our first meeting of the year being a casualty of this and cancelled.

July 20th 2021 saw us back at Phoenix House for a hybrid meeting, PDG Members there in person and others joining us by Zoom. After the meeting Councillors visited the St George's Court site sitting beside the River Exe. We have watched its progress since then with interest as a MDDC investment project which hopefully will be heading toward fruition in the near future.

The PDG has kept a weather eye as always on the financial situation of rental and other income as well as the day to day delivery of Housing Services. All reports during the year have been presented with efficiency and clarity.

We have been kept up to date on important issues such as the Afghanistan Refugee Resettlement Scheme, the HRA budget and future house building.

One long overdue initiative, the better use of MDDC garages (many no longer fit for purpose) was addressed and real progress made.

Sites at Cullompton and Tiverton, earmarked for social housing pods, have not been welcomed by all but will be built for the greater good in order to house homeless people or those in sub-standard accommodation.

Thanks to all members of the PDG for their contributions.

It is wrong to single out individual people or departments as all have worked through difficult times but extra credit should go to the Building Services Team, led by Mr Mike Lowman, who have been on the front line throughout.

Cllr Ron Dolley
Chairman, Homes PDG

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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

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

Community PDG Annual Report

Chairman's words

This year has been a busy year for the Community PDG. I would like to thank Members Services who have done a fantastic job during COVID, they have kept us going with technology during online meetings, in particular Carole Oliphant and Clare Robathan for their help. My thanks also to Cllr Elizabeth Slade, the Vice Chairman who has stepped in for me on occasions. The members of the PDG have done a sterling job especially with the working groups that we have had throughout the year. I also thank the officers across the council who have reported to the PDG.

Working Groups on CSP, strategic grants and ASB

The PDG has held three Working Groups this year. The first considered the priorities and activities of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) in detail. Members had concerns about violence against women and also wanted to investigate the effect the pandemic had and how priorities of the CSP may have changed. The group saw how during the pandemic support agencies and police have seen a significant rise in the number of victims coming forward to report sexual and domestic abuse and seek support. The group discussed and acknowledged how mental health has been impacted by the pandemic and that it is a thread through many of the priority areas of the CSP work. The group recommended that members have the opportunity to complete Mental Health First Aid Training in order to enhance and support their community liaison role within communities, and that officers review the Council becoming a 'Trauma Informed Council' and potentially adopt a trauma informed approach to future service delivery. Members are due to review this approach at our March meeting.

The second working group reviewed the strategic grant funding for the financial year 2022-2023. There is continuing pressure on local government finances, and the PDG asked the Cabinet to set the level of strategic grants funding as part of the budget setting process. The Working Group received presentations from all Strategic Partners and recommended that the total Strategic Grants budget remain at £138,500 for a period of two years, and that individual awards to Strategic Partners remain at the 2020-2021 levels for this period. We also recommended the level of grant awards to individual partners for 2022-23 and 2023-24.

The third Working Group of the PDG this year is ongoing, and is on anti-social behaviour in the District. Members are reviewing the current policies and enforcement, and how to ensure the Council has a targeted and effective response to anti-social behaviour in the District. This is a prevalent and important issue that has a big impact on communities, and it needs a comprehensive and coherent review and response. The Working Group is looking at the local context, where ASB occurs and any key areas across the District, as well as how the council interacts with partners to develop a cohesive response.

Action on Air Quality

Throughout the year the PDG has reviewed progress on the Air Quality Action Plan. The action plan had stalled during 2020 as Public Health officers had been redeployed to assist with services dealing with the pandemic. In November, the PDG reviewed the updated measures proposed for the plan, including traffic management

and electric vehicle charging. There had been a public consultation, although response had been quite low. Following discussion, the PDG recommended adopting the updated Air Quality Action Plan.

Leisure Centres

Throughout the year the Group has heard updates from the Leisure Manager, outlining the health and wellbeing activities in the council's leisure facilities. We heard the impact that Covid 19 continues to have on the Leisure Centres, and the activities the Leisure team had been involved in, including in shielding hubs by supporting the telephones lines and visits to the vulnerable. We heard how the leisure recovery plan will review the critical phases, inducing reviewing the staffing structure and introducing enhanced training and development for staff. Future deliverables include an improved leisure app and online offerings and booking system. In November, we discussed the leisure pricing review for 2022-23, and resolved to delegate the decision on fees and charges for Leisure Services to the Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing.

Budget – identifying potential savings

Discussions on the budget throughout the year looked at how to close the current deficit within the council, and to identify any potential savings. We held a dedicated meeting on the Medium Term Financial Plan - General Fund, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Capital Programme in December to look at not just identifying cuts, but also how to improve revenue income. The PDG considered the car parking and leisure revenue and how it had been impacted by the pandemic, and discussed that commercial ventures which provided economic growth for the District should be investigated and long terms plans to realise these should be considered.

In January we reviewed the revised draft budget changes identified and discussed further changes required in order for the Council to move towards a balanced budget for 2022/23. We agreed that retention and growth in the leisure service was a priority and that it would be difficult to reduce Grants to strategic partners in future years. The PDG considered the options for savings and discussed the savings measures which had been suggested by officers.

Regular reports and reviews

An important part of the yearly activity is to review routine reports, policy reviews and receive regular financial updates. The PDG received a number of standing items including the annual review of the Council's Regulation of Investigatory Powers Policy, the three yearly review of the Customer Care Policy, and the Performance and Risk Outturn. We also considered the DCC Strategy for Domestic Abuse Support in Safe Accommodation and heard a presentation from the Crediton Area History & Museum Society on an exhibition that they intended to run in 2023.

Cllr Margaret Squires