

Public Document Pack

Mid Devon District Council

Community Policy Development Group

Tuesday, 28 March 2023 at 2.15 pm
Phoenix Chambers, Phoenix House, Tiverton

Next ordinary meeting
Date Not Specified

Please Note: This meeting will take place at Phoenix House and members of the Public and Press are able to attend via Zoom. If you are intending to attend in person please contact the committee clerk in advance, in order that numbers of people can be appropriately managed in physical meeting rooms.

[Join the Zoom Meeting Here](#)

Meeting ID: 820 5934 9893
Passcode: 357330

Join by Skype for Business
<https://us06web.zoom.us/skype/82059349893>

Membership

Cllr Mrs M E Squires
Cllr Mrs C Collis
Cllr W Burke
Cllr L J Cruwys
Cllr R J Dolley
Cllr B Holdman
Cllr S Pugh
Cllr D F Pugsley
Cllr Mrs E J Slade

A G E N D A

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

- 1 **Apologies and Substitute Members**
To receive any apologies for absence and notices of appointment of substitute Members (if any).
- 2 **Declarations of Interest under the Code of Conduct**
To record any interests on agenda matters.
- 3 **Public Question Time**
To receive any questions relating to items on the agenda from members of the public and replies thereto.

Note: A maximum of 30 minutes is allowed for this item.
- 4 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting** (*Pages 5 - 8*)
To consider whether to approve the minutes as a correct record of the meeting held on 24 January 2023.
- 5 **Chairmans Announcements**
To receive any announcements that the Chairman may wish to make.
- 6 **Communication and Engagement Strategy** (*Pages 9 - 38*)
To receive a report from the Corporate Manager for Digital Transformation and Customer Engagement.
- 7 **Single Equalities Policy and Equality Objective** (*Pages 39 - 60*)
To receive a report from the Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste.
- 8 **Regulation of Investigatory Powers**
To receive a verbal update from the District Solicitor & Monitoring Officer.
- 9 **Chairman's Annual Report** (*Pages 61 - 62*)
To receive the Chairman's annual report.
- 10 **Work Programme** (*Pages 63 - 64*)
To receive the current work plan for the Community PDG.

Stephen Walford
Chief Executive
Monday, 20 March 2023

Meeting Information

From 7 May 2021, the law requires all councils to hold formal meetings in person. The Council will enable all people to continue to participate in meetings via Zoom.

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. Notification in this way will ensure the meeting runs as smoothly as possible.

Please note that a reasonable amount of hardcopies at the meeting will be available, however this is a limited number. If you are attending the meeting and would like a hardcopy of the agenda we encourage that you notify Member Services in advance of the meeting to ensure that a hardcopy is available. Otherwise, copies of the agenda can be found on our website.

If you would like a copy of the Agenda in another format (for example in large print) please contact Andrew Seaman on: aseaman@middevon.gov.uk

Public Wi-Fi is available in all meeting rooms.

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MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **COMMUNITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP**
held on 24 January 2023 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors

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

Also Present

Councillor(s)

Mrs C Collis, S J Clist and Mrs C P Daw

Also Present

Officer(s):

Paul Deal (Corporate Manager for Finance), Simon Newcombe (Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing), Fiona Keyes (Operations Manager for Revenues Benefits & Recovery), Carole Oliphant (Member Services Officer) and Sarah Lees (Member Services Officer)

40 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (0.02.48)**

There were no apologies or substitute Members.

Cllr Mrs C Collis attended via ZOOM.

41 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (0.02.56)**

Members were reminded of the need to make declarations where appropriate

42 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (0.03.05)**

There were no members of the public present.

43 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (0.03.14)**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 22nd November 2022 were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

44 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (0.03.51)**

The Chairman had no announcements to make

45 **THE COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME & EXCEPTIONAL HARDSHIP POLICY (0.04.10)**

The Group had before it a *report from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) providing a review into the Council Tax Reduction Scheme & Exceptional Hardship Policy.

The Operations Manager for Revenues and Benefits explained that there were changes to the policy required and that officers were looking to review and amend the current scheme in order to expand the assistance for our customers from 85% to 100% relief.

A customer survey had been conducted with over 1000 responses in favour of amending the scheme.

Consideration was given to:

- MDDC would only bear 11% of the costs circa £56K
- The cost to DCC would be circa £356K
- Pensioners were protected by schemes set by Government
- North and East Devon had proposed similar schemes

It was therefore **RESOLVED** to recommend to the Cabinet:

- 1) TO INCREASE THE MAXIMUM REDUCTION FROM 85% TO 100%
- 2) TO DISREGARD THE HOUSING ELEMENT OF UNIVERSAL CREDIT IN THE CALCULATION
- 3) TO INCREASE THE INCOME BANDS BY INFLATION EACH YEAR
- 4) THAT ANY INCOME FROM WELFARE PROVISION TO BE DISREGARDED
- 5) THAT THIS POLICY IS ADOPTED

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Note: *report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

46 **DRAFT BUDGET (0.12.58)**

The Group had before it a *report from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) providing the Medium Term Financial Plan.

The Corporate Manager for Finance explained the current position by way of a presentation and advised Members that he was looking for a steer on which service areas should be considered high priority and therefore protected as far as possible and those services the committee considered to be a lower priority and would accept savings being made.

Consideration was given to:

- The largest driver was inflation specifically pay awards, energy costs and fuel
- Service pressures included pension contributions, climate change commitments, infrastructure and less reliance on New Homes Bonus
- Options included vacancy management in lower priority services

After discussion the PDG **AGREED** that officers should consider the following:

- Planned maintenance within Leisure services being reduced, as long as this does not impact on health and safety.

(Proposed by Cllr S Pugh and seconded by Cllr W Burke)

- A vacancy factor be set for Leisure services, as long as this does not impact on health and safety or income generation.

(Proposed by Cllr S Pugh and seconded by Cllr Mrs E Slade)

In addition the PDG **AGREED** that officers should not consider the following:

- Savings within Community Safety as this should be considered a high priority service area which should be protected.

(Proposed by Cllr S Pugh and seconded by Cllr W Burke)

- Savings within Public Health as this should be considered a high priority service area which should be protected.

(Proposed by Cllr Mrs E Slade and seconded by Cllr Mrs M E Squires)

Note: *report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

47 **WORK PROGRAMME (1.04.15)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, the *Community Policy Development Group Work Plan for 2022-2023.

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

(The meeting ended at 3.23 pm)

CHAIRMAN

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**COMMUNITY PDG
28 MARCH 2023**

COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY AND MEDIA POLICY

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Dennis Knowles
Responsible Officer: Jane Lewis, Communications and Engagement Manager

Reason for Report: The purpose of this report is to provide members with the revised Communication and Engagement Strategy and accompanying Media and Social Media Policy.

Recommendation: To recommend to Cabinet the content of the revised Communication and Engagement Strategy and the Media and Social Media Policy

Financial Implications: The revised strategy does not have any specific financial implications. Should the Council wish to implement larger scale communication changes, such as to develop a new intranet or carry out a full rebranding exercise, this would involve a financial cost and these would be accompanied by a business case.

Budget and Policy Framework: This is a review of the existing Communication and Engagement Strategy.

Legal Implications: To ensure that all communication and methods of consultation are GDPR compliant and adhere to the Council's Single Equality Scheme.

Risk Assessment: Failure to engage with the Council's stakeholders could mean the Council's actions and objectives are not understood, risking reputational damage.

Equality Impact Assessment: Any consultation and communication channels would have regard to the Council's Single Equality Scheme.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: To ensure that our customers, staff, members and stakeholders are informed about Council services, news and changes through appropriate and varied channels.

Impact on Climate Change: The Communication and Engagement Strategy includes work to support the Council's ambition to become carbon neutral by 2030. By maximising our digital communication and engagement channels we contribute to a reduction of our carbon footprint from printing and postage.

1.0 Summary

1.1 The Council has a duty to consult and engage effectively with residents, partners, employees and other stakeholders when deciding about future changes to services and new developments.

- 1.2 As a council we must offer value for money and customer satisfaction, therefore two way engagement is an essential part of delivering our services.
- 1.3 This engagement must be delivered in an open and transparent way that is accessible to our audience.
- 1.4 Since the last strategy was revised in 2021 the communications team has continued to support services across the Council.
- 1.5 Notably in the past year the team has contributed to the successful launch of the Bin-IT-123 scheme leading on the branding, advertising, and interaction with residents.
- 1.6 The team has also supported the elections service, notably with the Tiverton and Honiton bi-election which saw more than 50 members of the media present at the count. We will also continue to support the elections team with the upcoming roll out of voter ID and the district wide elections this May.
- 1.7 Each year the communications team organises the Council’s stand at the Mid Devon Show, which in 2022 focused on sustainability and our environment, and highlighted the Council’s work in this area with support from our Climate Specialist Jason Ball.
- 1.8 A drive to improve engagement with our residents has also seen our social media presence grow and we now have more than 34,000 followers across our platforms.

Channel	Jan 2021	Jan 2022	Jan 2023
Facebook	2,272	3,562	5,171
LinkedIn	-	2,109 (March 2022)	2,452
Twitter	4,243	4,435	4,573
Next Door	-	-	10,024 (March 2023)
Gov Delivery	9,754	10,954	12,329

- 1.9 The team has also launched two full resident surveys, which in both 2021 and 2022 saw more than 1400 people respond to us each time.
- 2.0 **Future**
- 2.1 The communications team will continue to support services across the authority.
- 2.2 Upcoming projects in 2023 include supporting the delivery of the new CRM project and the implementation of Engagement HQ, an online consultation

platform. The team will also continue to share the positive news and achievements to both our residents and our staff.

Contact for more Information: Jane Lewis Communications and Engagement Manager Tel. 01884 234953 email: jlewis@middevon.gov.uk

Circulation of the Report: Councillor Dennis Knowles, Leadership Team

List of background papers: Communication and Engagement Strategy 2021.

Appendices:

Appendix one: Communication and Engagement Strategy 2023.

Appendix two: Media and Social Media Policy 2023

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Appendix One

Version Control Sheet

Title: Communication and Engagement Strategy
Purpose: To set out how the Council will inform, engage and listen to our communities, in order for the Council to provide services which are fit for purpose for our customers and provided in a cost effective and transparent way.

Owner: Communications & Engagement Manager
jlewis@middevon.gov.uk

Date: March 2023

Version Number: 1.0

Status: DRAFT

Review Frequency: Every two years or sooner if required

Next review date: March 2025

Consultation: This document will be sent out for consultation to the following:
Community PDG
Cabinet

Document History

This document obtained the following approvals.

Title	Date	Version Approved
Community PDG*		
Cabinet		

*- Delete if not applicable

1.0 Introduction

The Communications and Engagement Strategy sets out how the Council will inform, engage and listen to our communities, in order for the Council to provide services which are fit for purpose for our customers and provided in a cost effective and transparent way.

Communication within the Council supports the Council's values which are People, Pride, Performance and Place as well as and sharing the objectives and successes detailed in our Corporate Plan.

The Communication function is split into three key areas. These functions are:

- Community engagement
- Media relations
- Internal communication

This strategy works in conjunction with the Media and Social Media Policy, the Corporate Branding Guidelines and the Single Equality Scheme.

2.0 What we do

The core functions of the communication team are:

- Media relations and media monitoring
- Social media management
- Staff communication
- Community consultation and engagement
- Stakeholder consultation and engagement
- Branding and corporate campaigns
- Communication advice and training
- Website editing

The current structure of the Communication Team is a part time Communication and Engagement Manager, a part time Communications Officer and a full time Digital Communications Officer. The team sits within the Digital Transformation and Customer Engagement service and works closely with all service areas of the Council to provide a more effective approach to communication and engagement with our customers.

3.0 Who we communicate with

The Council has a wide audience in terms of demographics with a population of 82,800 spread over an area over a largely rural area.

The majority of the work carried out by the Communication Team is with our customers who live in the district and with our staff who run our services.

This communication may be directly with these audiences or via the local media, partners or stakeholders such as local charities, parish and town councils, MPs and schools, as well as visitors to the area.

Communication with Mid Devon businesses is an important part of the Council's work, but this strand of communication is led by the Growth and Economic Development Team.

4.0 Our aim

The Council aims to provide communication which is:

- accessible and clear
- planned and proactive
- creative and engaging
- cost-effective
- positive and transparent

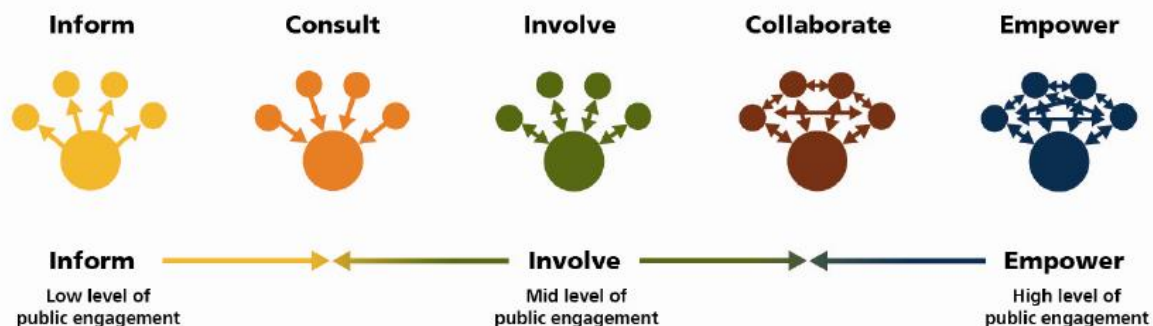
5.0 Community Engagement

The Communications Team provides effective engagement channels which aim to give the local community a greater say and impact on the delivery of local services, while being better informed about the Council's work.

Community engagement is about putting communities at the heart of their own local services. Effective community engagement is essential to ensure the services the Council operates are fit for the communities they serve.

In some areas of the Council there is a statutory consultation requirement when the Council has a duty to engage with the public, such as Planning and Licensing, which is supported by the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement 2020. At other times the Council voluntarily and actively seeks out the views of the community to ensure the Council is delivering a high quality, cost effective service which meets the needs of the customer.

There are different levels of engagement and this should be considered when embarking on any form of engagement. The most appropriate method of engagement will depend on the desired outcome and audience.



To develop and improve community engagement the Council should:

- understand and respond to the needs of our customers
- plan and deliver better and more efficient services
- take transparent decisions based on evidence and be held accountable for these decisions
- build relationships with the local community
- test out ideas and explore local issues
- measure the performance of the Council in delivering services

The Communications Team will support this by:

- Sharing information via multiple channels in multiple formats
- Exploring new partnerships, particularly with community and voluntary groups, as well as statutory/public sector partners
- Working with Members to promote the work of the Council and to receive feedback from constituents
- Encouraging service areas to share news and upcoming events and consultation
- Giving the community and stakeholders a means to express their views
- Listening to the feedback from our customers

Our community engagement methods will also support and adhere to our Single Equality Scheme 2021.

6.0 Media relations

The Communications Team works closely with existing and emerging media (local and national) to inform and engage the public about the work of the Council, ensuring the reputation of the Council is upheld and enhanced.

We will do this by:

- Generating news content
- Generating photo and video content
- Monitoring local and national news and sharing this information internally

- Liaising regularly with local reporters and editors
- Linking trending articles to the Council's work on social media
- Working closely with Members on issues that matter to them
- Using paid for adverts, when budget allows, particularly for campaigns

7.0 Media Training

The Communications Team can support Members and officers who wish to learn or improve their interview skills and media handling, as well as support them with the setting up of social media pages. The team can also support Members by utilising external training providers for media training, particularly as part of the Member Induction programme.

8.0 Internal communications

The Communications Team works closely with the Leadership Team, Corporate Management Team, Operations Managers and Human Resources to support staff communication across the organisation.

Our aim is to provide an internal communication system which promotes interaction and ensures staff and elected members, at all levels, feel valued and informed, giving them the best position to support the objectives and values of the Council.

We will do this by:

- Ensuring communication is shared with staff in a timely, easily accessible way, especially during periods of change, so that they feel better informed and engaged
- Help employees see the connection between their job and the organisation's aims and objectives
- Recognising that different methods of communication are needed depending on the audience and message
- Encouraging staff to share good practice and expertise
- Encouraging senior management to listen to staff feedback and questions and respond accordingly, creating a climate of two-way communication and improved levels of trust
- Facilitating free flowing communication

9.0 Emergency Planning

The Communications Team is on hand to support the Council during an emergency ensuring residents, staff, visitors and businesses are kept up to date in a time of crisis. The team is part of the Local Resilience Forum and liaises regularly with other local authorities within Devon. There is a mutual aid agreement in place with Devon County Council for use during an emergency if further communications resources are need.

10.0 Corporate Branding

The Council recognises the importance of communicating in a way that is clear, consistent and uses plain English. The Council has Corporate Branding Guidelines which should be adhered to when undertaking communications.

11.0 Accessibility

The Council must follow WCAG 2.1 AA standards on all public facing websites and business applications that the public can use such as apps. The standards required can be found here: <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/>

Any software procured / commissioned by the authority should be checked to ensure it meets WCAG 2.1 AA standards. We would be breaking the law if we purchase publicly visible apps / websites that don't meet this criteria.

The Communications team and web developer manage a team of content editors/uploaders who are responsible for the accessibility of the content they upload to any Council run website or where a website is hosted by a third party supplier such as ModernGov.

Officers in the Council have a responsibility to ensure content they would like in the public domain is accessible following WCAG 2.1 AA Standards.

Appendix Two:

Media & Social Media Policy

February 2023

Media and Social Media Policy

Version Control Sheet

Title: **Media and Social Media Policy**

Purpose: **To outline how we deal with media and social media and to provide advice and guidance to officers and elected Members**

Owner: **Communications & Engagement Manager**
jlewis@middevon.gov.uk

Date: **February 2023**

Version Number: **1.0**

Status:

Review Frequency: **Every two years or sooner if required**

Next review date: **February 2025**

Consultation: **This document will be sent out for consultation to the following:**
Community PDG
Cabinet

Document History

This document obtained the following approvals.

Title	Date	Version Approved
Community PDG*		
Cabinet		

*- Delete if not applicable

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1 Introduction

This policy outlines procedures for Mid Devon District Council officers and elected Members who may come into contact with the media. It supports the Council's **Communication and Engagement Strategy**.

With the growth of social media, online versions of newspapers, blogging and citizen journalism, any media policy must now take into account both the traditional media (newspapers, magazines, radio and TV) and online digital media (including websites, blogs and social media).

It explains processes in relation to: proactive media relations; dealing with media enquiries; and dealing with posts on social media. It also provides guidance on a range of other media-related issues.

1.1 Our strategic aim

To work closely with existing media, and to develop relationships with new media channels, to inform and engage the public about the work of the Council, ensuring the reputation of the Council is upheld and enhanced.

1.2 Our policy statement

Mid Devon District Council recognises the value of the media and social media, as a means of communicating information and messages to the public. We are committed to:

- transparent government;
- a positive working relationship with the media;
- always being open, honest and proactive in our dealings with the media and on social media, and;
- respecting the right of the media to report all views on any given topic.

2 Proactive media relations

Positive media coverage comes from pro-active media relations and the recognition of a good news story. Ideas for stories can come from both officers and elected Members. The drafting of press releases is undertaken primarily by the Communications team. Creative and editorial support is also offered to services; however they are free to submit their own drafts where appropriate sign-off has already been sought.

2.1 Press releases

Media coverage is predominantly generated through the publication and distribution of press releases to:

- Increase public awareness of services provided by the Council and the functions we perform
- Explain to residents and council taxpayers the reasons for particular policies and priorities
- Improve local accountability
- Publicise forthcoming events
- Encourage participation in public consultations
- Explain changes to services
- Explain how the Council is dealing with issues of particular interest to local communities
- Share good news

2.1.1 Press release content

For advice on writing a press release, see **Phoenix Portal >> Communication >> Media Relations**:

- [How to write a good press release](#)
- [Quick checklist when writing a press release](#)

Tip: Make sure that the relevant Cabinet Member(s) – and, for local issues, any Ward Members – are informed about what is happening and that a press release is being prepared (even if those Members are not actually quoted in the press release).

2.1.2 Who should be quoted in a press release?

Quote attribution depends on the nature of the press release, for example:

- The relevant Cabinet Member and the officer most directly involved in the subject may both be quoted – this gives the media a strategic/policy viewpoint, as well as the day-to-day operational viewpoint
- An officer
- A Member
- An external partner

If the press release provides only straightforward information, there's no need to include a quote.

2.1.3 Contact details on press releases

Only contact details for the Communications team are included in the 'ENDS' of all press releases for follow-up enquiries from the press. This is to prevent journalists from contacting officers directly with future enquiries and to ensure all contact with the press is directed through, and logged with Communications.

Specific contact details may only be included in relation to consultations, where a 'return path' is required for respondent enquiries.

Tip: Where a press release covers a specialist subject for which follow-up inquiries from the press can only be answered confidently by a specific officer or Member, he/she should ensure they're available for contact by the Communications team, the following few days after release

2.1.4 Press release approval

For press releases written by the Communications team, sign-off is sought from the relevant Corporate Manager and Cabinet Member. Where a press release has been written by a service directly, it's up to the author to agree sign-off with the relevant Service Manager or Corporate Manager and Cabinet Member before submitting to communications@middevon.gov.uk, for publication and distribution.

Before issuing to the media, the Communications team will undertake checks for spelling, language and grammar.

Tip: Depending on the complexity of the subject matter, various people may need to agree the wording of a press release, such as:

- Any quoted elected Member/officer(s)
- The relevant service manager
- The Chief Executive, Director or Corporate Manager (for important corporate issues or important operational issues)
- The Leader of the Council or the relevant Cabinet Member (for important strategic issues or policy decisions)
- Relevant partner organisations

2.1.5 Press release distribution

Press releases from services which are time-sensitive and sent in advance, must contain *****EMBARGOED***** within the subject line, along with the specified date for release. Press releases must also be accompanied with an appropriate image at an industry standard resolution of ~300dpi. This is not

only for publication online, but also for reprinting by the press, should they choose to cover the article.

All press releases are published onto the Council's website and then distributed via email to all media contacts, town and parish councils, and internally to Corporate Managers, Members and Customer First for info.

Press releases are further promoted through:

- social media posts published on the corporate [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) , LinkedIn and Nextdoor pages, which link back to the story on www.middevon.gov.uk/news and;
- via e-bulletin to GovDelivery subscribers subscribed to the Council's email subscription service.

2.2 Other ways of generating coverage

The Communications team can be consulted for advice on other aspects of media relations including:

- Planning media campaigns
- Setting up photo opportunities
- Media briefings and media launches
- Use of embargos (where the media is given advance notice but cannot publish until a specified date)
- Negotiating special features
- Improving web pages to support publicity
- Making better use of social media
- Increasing community engagement through GovDelivery

3 Reputational issues

3.1 Imbalanced or inaccurate media coverage

When media coverage of a particular issue is unduly negative and imbalanced, services can liaise with the Communications & Engagement Manager about how best to try to redress the balance. Action taken in response may involve:

- A letter to the press
- A request for a correction
- Communications & Engagement Manager, Chief Executive and/or Leader to meet and discuss with the Editor
- Generating further media coverage to move the story on in a more positive way

If we judge the following coverage to still be unfair or not based on fact, a complaint may be made to the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO).

3.2 Confidential information

Leaking of confidential information, exempt agenda items and minutes to the media, is viewed seriously by the Council. The [Freedom of Information Act 2000](#) (see also 4.3 below), allows certain information to be available on request to anyone including the media, unless the Council has a valid reason for not releasing it. Please refer to the [Freedom of information Policy](#) on SharePoint for further information.

Occasionally, issues come to the notice of the media that involve staff or Members and aspects of their private lives or employment contracts. Our policy is not to comment upon such issues. Factual responses are permitted, for example: *'I can confirm that the employee is no longer in employment with Mid Devon District Council, but I am not able to discuss the situation in any greater detail'*.

The Communications Team will liaise with a member of the Leadership Team to discuss any response to the leaking of sensitive information.

3.3 Issues relating to employee relations

It is recognised that there will be occasions where the Unions wish to comment to the media in relation to issues rather than individual cases, on behalf of itself and its members.

There are mechanisms for complaining about issues or situations arising in the workplace and individual employees should refer to the procedures laid out in the appropriate policies (e.g. [grievance](#), [dignity at work/harassment](#) and [appeals procedure](#), [whistle-blowing](#)), available on SharePoint. If in doubt about how to raise concerns or which policy would be most appropriate for their needs, employees should seek advice and guidance from [Human Resources](#).

3.4 Protecting the Council's reputation

While it is recognised that elected Members will want to comment on particular issues such as Council policies and decisions, neither officers nor Members should bring the Council into disrepute or publicly criticise individual officers or associates.

4 Media enquiries

Every media enquiry can be used as a positive opportunity to get a message across to the public. Failure to provide a response explaining 'our side of the story' is an opportunity missed to ensure the subsequent reporting is fair and balanced. Our preference is to provide a response rather than a reply of 'no comment', which can come across as aloof, uncaring or that we have something to hide. If, for some reason we cannot comment in detail, for example, in relation to case work which is ongoing, we can usually provide a general comment and an explanation as to why we cannot go into detail.

4.1 Points of contact for media enquiries

4.1.1 Communications

The press and media personnel are encouraged to contact the Communications team with any requests for comments, supporting information or interviews. Communications will liaise with the relevant Corporate Manager or service spokesperson to coordinate a response. The enquiry and proposed response is also Cc'd to the relevant:

- generic department email;
- Cabinet Member;
- Leader of the Council (if controversial), and;
- Committee Chair (if in relation to an incident or comment made at a committee meeting).

The Communications team will ensure all statements received are well written and submitted within the media's deadline. Final statements will be appropriately attributed, ensuring staff names and job titles are correct. Care is also taken to ensure that direct contact details for staff are not disclosed in any replies sent to the press.

Where a response from the relevant service is outstanding, we will respond to acknowledge receipt of the journalist's enquiry and to ask whether he/she is willing to extend the deadline for their enquiry. If no one is available, we will reply stating that the appropriate officer is currently unavailable for comment.

All contact between the press and staff is currently documented on the media reporting system CommsFlow for future reference and month end analysis. This system will be replaced in the new CRM.

4.1.2 Officers and Members

The media may contact officers or Members directly. If the enquiry is straightforward, requiring only a factual answer, this can be answered there and

then. However, the responding officer or Member must notify the Communications team to record the enquiry onto CommsFlow.

With the immediacy of news now being published predominantly online, Officers and Members should be aware of the urgent need to respond within the deadline set by the enquiring journalist. It is within our mutual interest to respond positively and on time. The forging of good relations with the press allows us to build favours and any future coverage will likely be more favourable, or at least less critical if the story is negative. Similarly, journalists will be more willing to amend or withdraw a story if it's been reported inaccurately.

Note: Nothing in this policy precludes Members or political groups from speaking to or contacting the media. Members should make it clear to the media whether they are speaking:

- officially on behalf of the Council – in this case the Communications team should be kept informed, *or*;
- officially on behalf of their particular political group, *or*;
- in a personal capacity.

Media training will be offered to all Members who are likely to be called on to speak to the media.

4.2 Media interviews and comments

4.2.1 Officers

It is up to Operations Manager and Corporate Managers to make arrangements for which officers in their teams can act as a spokesperson to provide comments or be interviewed by journalists.

The relevant Cabinet Members, should be consulted for advice at any time and be involved in drafting any media statements or preparing for interviews that are highly controversial or where this is a significant reputational risk to the Council.

Officers are likely to be called on to comment on these issues:

Chief Executive Leadership Team	/	Major corporate issues (and in situations where the Leader would normally respond but is not available within the timescale)
Corporate Managers		Corporate issues within their service areas (and in situations where the Cabinet Member would normally respond but is not available within the timescale)

Officers	To answer questions of fact and/or technical information within their areas of expertise and in relation to projects and initiatives they are involved in, but they will not be expected to do live on-air interviews unless they have received appropriate media training
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4.2.2 Members

Members are likely to be called on to comment on these issues:

Leader	Strategic issues, key policy decisions, and other major corporate issues affecting the Council
Cabinet Members	Issues that come under their remit
Chairmen of PDGs	Issues their PDG is involved in
Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of committees	Recent committee decisions
Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Scrutiny	Issues that Scrutiny raise and reviews that they are working on
Local Ward Members	Issues of particular local concern
Group Leaders	Issues that transcend politics, for example obituaries

4.3 Freedom of Information (FOI) requests

Some media enquiries are submitted as FOI requests, in which case the Performance, Governance and Health & Safety team will coordinate the response in accordance with the applicable legislation. See [Freedom of Information Policy](#) in the Governance area within 'Policies & Strategies' on SharePoint.

5 Social media

In addition to posting proactive stories on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), LinkedIn, Nextdoor, and You Tube social media is now also used as a customer service channel, where we can respond directly to customers' questions, comments or complaints.

Customer enquiries are currently dealt with via the Communications team but in future this area of social media may fall to the Customer Services team. The

new CRM may also affect how direct messages are answered by the Council and by whom.

5.1 Main corporate accounts

The Communications team maintains and administers the corporate [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and Nextdoor accounts. Where applicable, notifications in the form of questions, complaints and comments are dealt with directly by a member of the Communications team. If the query is more complex, or concerns service policy, the relevant service is approached for information and guidance when forming an appropriate response.

Services should be aware there is no such thing as a deadline on social media; customer expectation is for a quick response – certainly hours rather than days – and leaving a post (particularly a negative comment or complaint) unanswered for more than a few hours gives the impression we are ignoring it.

5.2 Other service-specific accounts

A number of services have their own specific social media accounts and these include:

- Mid Devon Housing
- Tiverton Pannier Market
- Electric Nights Streetfood
- Mid Devon Leisure (one main page and three separate pages, one for each site)
- Culm Garden Village
- Mid Devon Business
- Visit Mid Devon

Staff within these services respond to their own notifications, however, with the use of Meta Business Suite for Facebook, the Communications team can access and publish posts onto these pages, where urgent action is required and the relevant page editor is absent. (This does not apply to Twitter, for which there is no Business Manager equivalent).

Any service wishing to set up a new social media account must discuss this with the Communications & Engagement Manager first. An officer/ service must prepare a business case in conjunction with the Communication and Engagement Manager before setting up any new channel/page. This must include details about clear aims and reason for the channel, methods of management control and responsibility for content creation and direct messaging. The overall approval for a new social media page/channel lies with the Corporate Manager for Digital Transformation & Customer Engagement & Digital Services.

The relevant service Operations Manager (or equivalent post) has overall responsibility for their social media content and users.

Two factor authentication must also be used on all social media channels. This will have implications for users who access pages using personal devices. Under Facebook T&Cs all pages must be linked to a personal profile meaning personal accounts must use two factor authentication.

All users must be included in the Council's Register of Social Media Access document. Each department will be limited to a maximum of five registered social media users per team/site, unless the Operations Manager (or equivalent role) has put a case forward for more users to Communications team

It is also mandatory for all registered users to read the latest Media and Social Media policy each year via the LMS.

As a commercial arm of the Council, Mid Devon Leisure also runs a number of social media pages and channels. The leisure social media pages, and those staff accessing these pages and platforms, will follow this policy and it is recognised the overall governance of those accessing these pages is the accountability and responsibility of the leisure management team.

5.3 Dealing with detractors

When dealing with detractors, ALL page editors and administrators using social media business accounts should avoid getting into an argument or inflaming a discussion. Officers will try to help in the first instance; if the user continues to post without engaging our offer of help, their posts will be ignored.

5.4 Deleting abusive or discriminatory comments

As a general principle we do not attempt to moderate posts on social media, as to do so could also open us up to accusations of censorship. However, we will remove any posts from our social media accounts that are abusive (for example, use of language or personal attacks on a particular named officer or Member) or discriminatory (for example, racist or homophobic).

5.5 Social media guidelines

The following guidelines set out the responsibilities, standards of behaviour and provide guidance to employees and Members using social media in a professional capacity, and things to consider when using social media for personal purposes.

All employees and Members should be aware of and adhere to the following policies, whichever is applicable:

- [Dignity at Work](#)

- [Single Equality Scheme](#)
- [Member Code of Conduct](#)
- [Officer Code of Conduct](#)
- [MDDC safeguarding policy](#)

5.5.1 Do

- **be responsible and respectful** at all times by adhering to the existing policies listed above
- **trust yourself** to use social media – the Council already trusts you to send an email on behalf of the organisation and the same applies for social media
- check your **privacy** settings – understand who can see the information you publish and your personal information
- **chat** informally with other users – use language and tone of voice that’s consistent with your target audience
- **credit** other people's work, ideas and links
- **respond** to all comments and private messages as quickly and honestly as possible. Be personal and professional in your response – show empathy and a desire to find a resolution to problems where appropriate
- Drive the conversation **offline if it’s sensitive** in nature or likely to escalate – ask the individual to message you privately with more details and include your name so the customer knows who he or she is talking to.
- **listen** in on other pages to what’s being said about the Council, its services and the local area, then join in on discussions, and;
- **share** helpful content and links signposting people to the appropriate service or authority to inform & grow your audience. If you're in any doubt about sharing any particular content, the best rule-of-thumb to follow is don’t share it!
- **seek** [legal advice](#), it's there to help you
- **add value** by creating content that educates and spreads awareness about Council services. Include positive stories encountered whilst on the 'day job' and news-bites with perspective to show the human side to public services
- align your posts with the **Council’s purpose and values** as summarised in the [Corporate Plan 2020-2024](#)
- **seek permission** to publish any information, report or conversation that is not already in the public domain. Do not cite or reference customers, partners or suppliers without their approval
- **respect copyright** when linking to images or other online material – obtain owner permission and provide appropriate attribution when using images that aren't your own, and make sure you purchase the correct license for any stock images used
- respect the pre-election period known as ‘**Purdah**’ (see [local.gov.uk/our-support/purdah](#))

- **ask** your followers questions to glean valuable insights (but ensure there's a clear and resourced return path for respondents to leave their feedback and make sure you share the results with them)
- **monitor and evaluate** the success of your activity.

5.5.2 Don't

- post content which will **embarrass** the Council or yourself
- **reduce your credibility** by posting your every personal thought – especially if you're complaining
- **moderate posts** unless they are abusive – blocking someone or deleting their posts without just cause will incur accusations of “censorship”
- use council **jargon** or corporate speak
- **ignore comments** and private messages (unless engaging will inflame a situation or the comment is clearly politically motivated, or the person commenting has received an answer multiple times to the same question)
- say anything you **cannot substantiate** – if you don't know the answer, let the individual know you're looking into the matter
- **argue** with customers or inflame a discussion
- refer customers to **another channel** such as email or telephone – if they've contacted you via Twitter, you should respond in kind. The exception would be sensitive topics such as comments in relation to planning applications, etc.
- follow or share **political opinions** or groups which could otherwise compromise the Council's impartial service to the government
- **broadcast** or talk at people. Users who post information which is mostly information-sharing have twice as many followers than those who post mostly relating to themselves
- **cover up** mistakes, be honest and you'll get more respect for it in the long run
- disclose **personal information** – to do so would be in contravention of the [Information Security Incident Policy](#) and the social media platform's rules
- **assume** that social media will look after itself – you will need to invest time, enthusiasm and energy to make it work.
- **share your passwords** with anyone other than the Communications Team.

5.6 Training

One-to-one staff or Member training to use social media can be provided by the Communications team on request. Such requests should be emailed to communications@middevon.gov.uk. [A Social Media Guide for Members and Staff](#) is available.

6 Other issues and special circumstances

6.1 Emergencies and out-of-hours contact

In the event of an emergency situation affecting multiple agencies, a Media Cell will be setup by the lead agency to manage communications and the press. For more information, please refer to the [Devon Emergency Planning Service \(DEPS\) Incident Response & Recovery Plan](#) on SharePoint.

In the event of the media contacting the Council outside normal office working hours and if deemed an emergency, contact details for the Communications & Engagement Manager and Communications Officers are listed in Part 5 of the DEPS Incident Response and recovery Plan. The Communications & Engagement Manager will decide if and what response is required. If a response is required, she will contact the relevant officer (Chief Executive or head of service) and/or lead Member.

6.2 Court cases

The Council will occasionally launch prosecutions and will want to use successful outcomes of court cases to deliver a message to the public. The best way of doing this is by issuing a press release, or prior notification to the media of an impending court case. The relevant Corporate Manager should be consulted.

6.3 Photography and child protection

As outlined in our [Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy and Procedures](#), Officers, Members and volunteers should be vigilant at all times. Any person using cameras or videos within Council premises and at events or activities which involve children and young people, should be approached and asked to complete a [Photography Consent Form](#) (see **SharePoint >> Communications >> External Communications**).

Guidance for commissioning professional photographers or inviting the press to cover Council services, events and activities

- Ensure that you make your expectations clear in relation to child protection
- Check credentials of any photographers and organisations used
- Ensure identification is worn at all times, if they do not have their own – provide it
- Do not allow unsupervised access to children or young people or one-to-one photographic sessions

- Parents must be informed when photographs of their child or young person may be taken at activities or events, and parental consent forms need to be signed agreeing to this
- It is recommended that the names of children or young people should not be used in photographs or video footage, unless with the express permission of the child or young person's parent

6.4 Data protection

Personal information and data protection

The Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) determines the way in which the Council obtains, holds, uses, releases and disposes of personal information. Under the DPA you are entitled to request copies of your personal information that is held by us. For more information please see Personal information.

Freedom of information

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) provides a right of access to information held by Public Authorities. Under the FOIA you are entitled to request disclosure of any information that is held by us. However, some of the information held may be exempt. The FOIA also places an obligation to proactively publish certain information through the Council's Publication Scheme. For more information please see Freedom of information.

For guidance, see [Data Protection Policy](#) or contact our Corporate Performance and Improvement Manager.

6.5 Elections

During elections, all publicity referring to a political party or anyone standing for election will – except as in the following paragraph – be suspended between the publication of a notice of election and polling day.

Members will not be quoted in press releases during this period unless it is a Member holding a key political or civic position commenting on an emergency or an important event outside the Council's control and where there is a genuine need for a response by a Member. For further information concerning the publicity restrictions observed by Local Authorities during the pre-election period previously known as 'purdah', please refer to local.gov.uk/our-support/purdah.

6.6 Filming, recording and use of social media at Council meetings

All media, including radio and TV journalists, and members of the public may attend Council, Cabinet, PDG and committee meetings (apart from items where

the public is excluded). They may record, film or use social media before, during or after the meeting, so long as this does not distract from or interfere unduly with the smooth running of the meeting. Anyone proposing to film during the meeting is requested to make this known to the Chairman in advance. The Council also makes audio recordings of meetings which are published on our website.

7 Media monitoring and evaluation

7.1 Monitoring

7.1.1 Newspaper and online mentions

The Communications team monitors local media, notably Mid Devon Gazette, Crediton Courier and Devon Live and the BBC.

Any articles referencing the Council, its staff or Members are summarised and sent to the Leadership Team, relevant Corporate Managers and Members for information.

For any printed or online reporting which is found to be baseless, either the Communications & Engagement Manager or relevant Corporate/Service Manager can decide whether any follow-up action is required in response (see also 3.1 above). Any coverage generated – whether from a press release or by responding to a media enquiry – is collated and reported monthly to the Leadership Team for evaluation.

7.2 Hard copy press cuttings

Because it is prohibitively expensive, we do not have the necessary NLA Media Access licence to permit us to photocopy or electronically scan press cuttings. Officers and Members should therefore not make or store any copies of press cuttings for any purpose, as to do so would be breaking copyright law. The originals of articles may, however, be cut out from newspapers and kept.

7.3 Social media monitoring

The social media channels for the following areas are monitored by the Communications team:

- Media organisations (both local and national)
- Community news and forums (including some groups members may be part of)
- Local what's on pages, partners and charities
- National partners, charities and government organisations

References to the Council or Members are flagged and reported as above where seen. Note that social media monitoring can be a full time role and there is not currently the capacity within the Council to carry out this task in this way.

7.4 Web Alerts

Monitoring of the web for accessibility is carried out on a quarterly basis using Sort Site.

The Communications team receive Google Alerts to detect changes in content for predefined search terms. Terms have been entered for the Council, its premises, ongoing plans/developments, and names of key staff, Members and vexatious complainers. Additional search terms are added as and when appropriate, or the need arises. Any detections are automatically emailed to communications@middevon.gov.uk, then forwarded to the relevant staff and/or Members, as above.

**COMMUNITY PDG
28 MARCH 2023**

AGENDA ITEM:

SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME

Cabinet Members: Cllr Nikki Woollatt, Cabinet Member for Working Environment and Support Services

Responsible Officer: Matthew Page, Corporate Manager for People, Performance & Waste

Reason for Report: To provide Members with an update on action taken to help meet the Council's statutory duties under the Equality Act (2010).

RECOMMENDATION(S): That Members recommend to Cabinet that they approve the Single Equality Scheme together with the Equality Objectives for 2023/24.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: The Equality Objectives reflect Corporate Plan aims under the Community and Corporate priorities.

Financial Implications: The Single Equality Scheme does not have any financial implications itself beyond those identified in individual service's equality impact assessments.

Legal Implications: The Single Equality scheme contributes to the Council's complying with the Equality Act (2010). Failure to adopt Equality Objectives or to collect relevant data could lead to the Council being in breach of the Equality Act 2010.

Risk Assessment: Approving the Single Equality Scheme and Equality Objectives helps to ensure the council meets its legal responsibilities in relation to equality.

Equality Impact Assessment: The adoption and monitoring of Equality Objectives helps to ensure that the needs of all protected groups are taken into account in service delivery.

Impact on Climate Change: No impacts identified for this report.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Equality Act (2010) replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with the aim of simplifying the law and removing inconsistencies. The Act places a requirement on public bodies to demonstrate compliance with each part of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

1.2 Under the Equality Act 2010 local authorities have a duty to have 'due regard' to:
Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;

Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and

Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

- 1.3 Underpinning the General Duties are Specific Duties which require public authorities to:
- Publish information that demonstrates how the authority is meeting the General Duty (updating this at least annually).
 - Publish one or more specific and measurable objectives to achieve the General Duty (updating these at least every four years).
 - Publish the information and objectives in an accessible way, so that the public can see for themselves how the authority is performing.
- 1.4 'Information' includes that relating to the protected characteristics of employees and other people affected by policies and practices:
- Workforce profiles (this can include data about recruitment, training, promotion, flexible working, maternity returners, grievance/issues, dismissal, leavers, service, pay, satisfaction, Members). Only applies where the organisation has more than 150 employees.
 - Service user/community profiles (this can include information about outcomes such as health, safety and wellbeing, achievement such as skills and education, access to services, satisfaction, complaints, feedback, demographics).
- 1.5 Case law has clarified that considerations of equality should not only be placed at the centre of policy development but that bodies subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty must apply this duty to the carrying out of any functions of a public body not just statutory functions.
- 1.6 Local authorities also have specific duties under the Act to publish Equality Information annually and 'Equality Objectives' at least every four years. All such information is either included in this report or signposted to. The council's [Equality webpages](#) will be updated in 2023/24 to better promote this information.
- 1.7 The Single Equality Scheme has been reviewed and updated by officers (Appendix 1). This is a detailed policy document which sets out the council's approach to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion. This document has been revised and updated for 2023/24. Significant changes have been made to Section 3 "Understanding Our Community" given the most recent data releases at a district level from the Census 2021.
- 1.8 Mid Devon District Council is a member of the [Devon Joint Declaration for Equality](#). The declaration demonstrates our commitment to the achievement of equality and fairness for all people in the county and our district and recognises the importance and benefits of an equal society and will behave in ways that reflect an equal society.
- 1.9 The Council wants to understand the needs and views of our residents and people working in our district. We have a dedicated [web page](#) to access all our consultations and welcome residents to participate.
- 1.10 Whilst we aim to provide high-quality services to all who live or work in the Mid Devon area, we recognise people may wish to complain, or pay a compliment to our officers or give us suggestions on how we could improve a service. Full details are available on our [website](#) using a number of different mediums.

2.0 Progress to meet our Equality Objectives

- 2.1 In 2022/23, the council had five Equality Objectives, these were:
1. Meeting the needs of an aging population
 2. Overcoming the problems faced by vulnerable individuals caused by rural isolation
 3. Overcoming the effects of multiple disadvantage in families with complex needs
 4. To continue to concentrate on mental health issues within MDDC and the wider community
 5. Secure decent digital connectivity for all of Mid Devon (Corporate Plan aim).
- 2.2 Progress to meet these Equality Objectives in 2022/23 is detailed at Appendix 2.
- 2.3 There are no proposed changes to the Equality Objectives for 2023/24. An action plan will be developed in year by the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Group.
- 2.4 We publish information on our website about our [pay policy](#) and [pay supplement policy](#). Within our pay policy we include reporting on the council's gender pay gap, this is included below for ease of reference:

	Mean Average Hourly Rate	Median Average Hourly Rate
Male	£14.38	£12.92
Female	£14.36	£12.92
HMRC % Gap	0.14%	0%

- 2.5 The mean gender pay gap for the whole economy (according to the October 2022 Office for National Statistics (ONS) Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) figures) is 15.4%. At 0.14% Mid Devon District Council's mean gender pay gap is significantly lower than that for the whole economy

3.0 Further Updates on Equalities, Diversity, and Inclusion

- 3.1 The Equality Forum was reformed as the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Group in 2022. This group contains both council officers and elected members. It met in December 2022 and February 2023 and has principally been focussed on the review of the Single Equality Scheme and the Equality Objectives. The EDI Group will meet quarterly and is chaired by the Corporate Performance and Improvement Manager.
- 3.2 The EDI Group has responsibility for delivering three recommendations from the Spotlight review "Does Local Government Work for Women". Following discussions with the Local Government Association (LGA), the recommendation is that the Member Champion role is adopted as part of a cabinet position (following elections in May 2023). A role description has been drafted. Two other recommendations will be worked upon once a Member Champion is identified:
- 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.
 - That further research is carried out into member experience of equality in the Council

- 3.3 In 2023, Mid Devon District Council has signed up to the Disability Confident Scheme to be recognised as a Disability Confident Committed employer.
- 3.4 Following a recommendation from an internal audit, the Equality Impact Assessment process will be reviewed in 2023/24 to ensure it meets current best practice.
- 3.5 Through the Changing Places grant fund, the council has been awarded more than £150,000 to improve our existing disabled toilet provision at each of our leisure centres.

Contact for more Information: Matthew Page, Corporate Manager for People, Performance & Waste mpage@middevon.gov.uk; Dr Steve Carr, Corporate Performance and Improvement Manager, scarr@middevon.gov.uk

Circulation of the Report: Members of Community PDG, Cabinet Members, Leadership Team

Single Equality Scheme

Mid Devon District Council's Single Equality Scheme sets out how we are working to implement the equality duties that are set out in the Equality Act (2010).

The Equality Act (2010) protects us all from unfair treatment because of a physical or other specific characteristic that is fundamental to our being. It also requires public authorities to observe the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations.

Through the Equality Act (2010) legislation, we are all legally protected against discrimination on the basis of:

- Age
- Gender reassignment
- Being married or in a civil partnership
- Being pregnant or on maternity leave
- Disability
- Race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Section 149 of the Act imposes a duty on 'public authorities' and other bodies when exercising public functions to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct.
- Advance equality of opportunity (remove or minimise disadvantage; meet people's needs; take account of disabilities; and encourage participation in public life).
- Foster good relations between people (tackle prejudice and promote understanding).

These three parts of the Duty are complementary but must also be considered separately. The protected characteristic of marriage and civil partnership only applies in relation to Work.

Underpinning the General Duties are Specific Duties which require public authorities to:

- Publish information that demonstrates how the authority is meeting the General Duty (updating this at least annually).
- Publish one or more specific and measurable objectives to achieve the General Duty (updating these at least every four years).
- Publish the information and objectives in an accessible way, so that the public can see for themselves how the authority is performing.

'Information' includes that relating to the protected characteristics of employees and other people affected by policies and practices:

- Workforce profiles (this can include data about recruitment, training, promotion, flexible working, maternity returners, grievance/issues, dismissal, leavers, service, pay, satisfaction, Members). Only applies where the organisation has more than 150 employees.
- Service user/community profiles (this can include information about outcomes such as health, safety and wellbeing, achievement such as skills and education, access to services, satisfaction, complaints, feedback, demographics).

1.0 Our Vision

Mid Devon District Council is committed to providing quality services delivered in a fair and equitable way and to promoting good relations between different groups within the community. We value the positive contribution that all our residents bring to the district, and want to work with individuals and groups to continue to improve our services and to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion.

2.0 How will we achieve this?

In order to achieve our vision we will:

- Seek to understand the needs of our community
- Know our customers and their specific needs
- Involve the community in changes that might affect them
- Develop services that can respond to the requirements of different residents
- Develop an inclusive working environment
- Ensure equality in procurement and commissioning
- Promote equality through working with others
- Recognise the needs of specific equality groups

3.0 Understanding our Community

In order to provide services that meet the needs of people who live, work and study in our region, we must first understand our community. The following gives a brief profile of the district. This data is drawn from a range of published sources including from the 2021 Census, the Office for National Statistics (ONS), Public Health England and various Government Departments. Wherever possible, the most recent data has been used.

Mid Devon is a rural district lying equidistant between the north and south coasts. Covering an area of 91,290.07 hectares, Mid Devon has three principle towns – Tiverton, Cullompton and Crediton. These towns provide services for surrounding rural communities, Figure 3.1.



Figure 3.1: A map of Mid Devon showing electoral boundaries and major settlements.

3.1 Population

In 2021, the population of Mid Devon was 82,852 (51.2% female and 48.8% male, data derived from the 2021 Census). This is a 6.5% increase since the 2011 Census when the population was 77,750. This increase in population is lower than the average for the South West overall (7.8%). Mid Devon ranked 281st out of 309 local authority areas in England for total population, an increase of two places in a decade.

The population pyramid for Mid Devon for 2021 indicates that the region has an aging population (Figure 3.2).

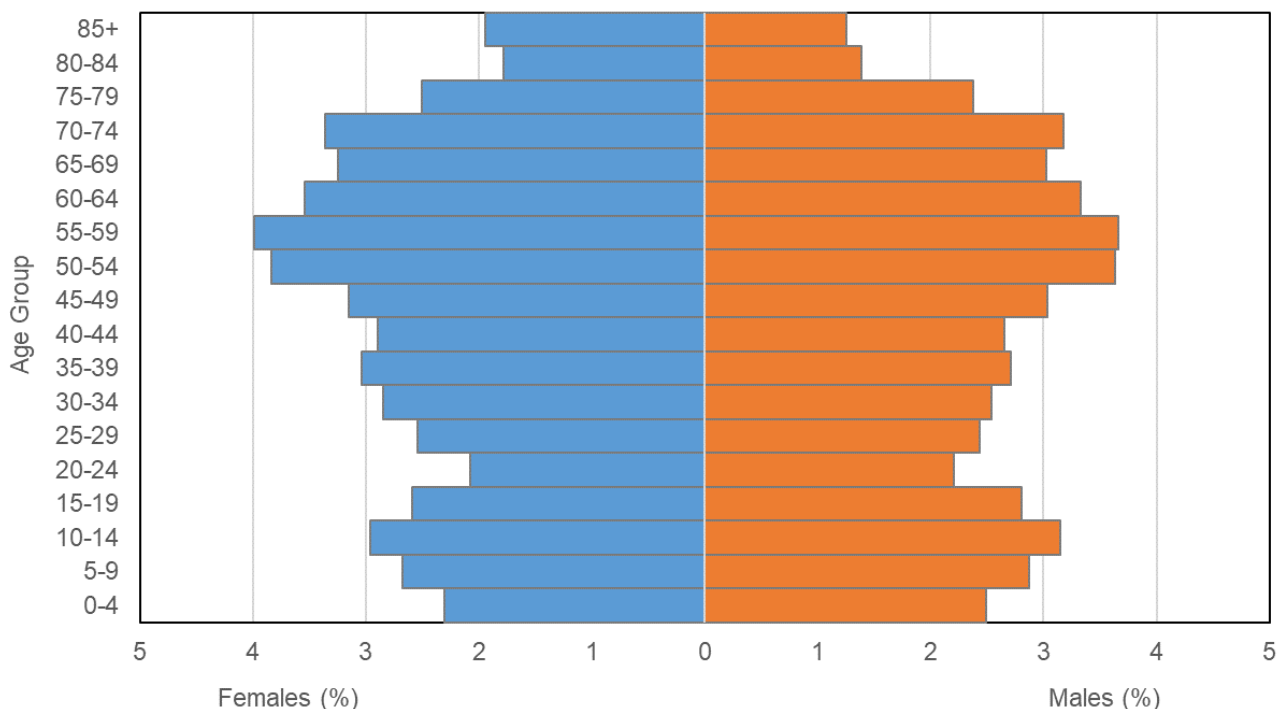


Figure 3.2: Population Pyramid for Mid Devon, 2021. Data from the Office for National Statistics.

The population distribution for Mid Devon shows a number of key differences to the South West (average), Figure 3.3:

- Mid Devon has more people aged 0-14 than the South West
- Mid Devon has fewer people aged 20-34 than the South West
- Mid Devon has slightly more people aged 50-54 than the South West

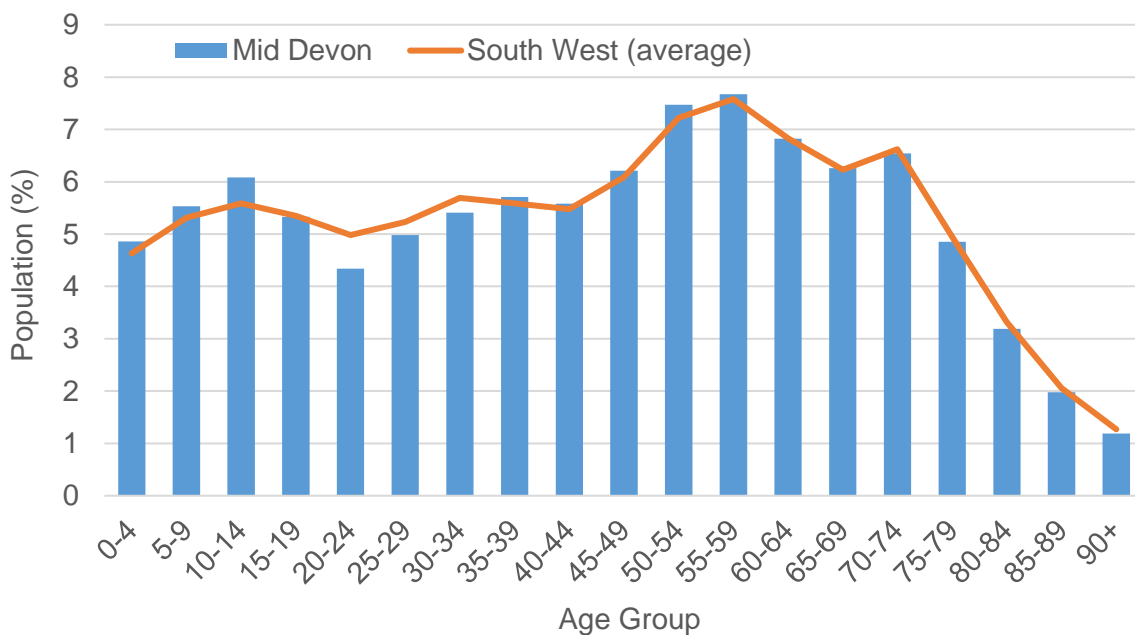


Figure 3.3: Population Distribution by age for Mid Devon and the South West of England, 2021. Data derived from the 2021 Census, LG Inform Plus.

The median age of Mid Devon residents has increased from 44 years old (2011) to 46 years old (2021). The median age in 2021 is higher than the South West (44 years old) and England as a whole (40 years old).

In Mid Devon there has been an increase of 25.4% in people aged 65 years and over in the past ten years, Figure 3.4. There has also been an increase of 1.8% in people aged 15 to 64 years, and an increase of 1.1% in children aged under 15 years.

When considering five year age bands, there has been a decrease in populations in six groups, most notably those aged 40-44 (-19%), age band 45-49 (-14%), and 0-4 year olds (-11%). The largest increases are for those aged 70-74 (+45%), 75-79 year olds (+39%), and those aged 90 years old and above (+32%).

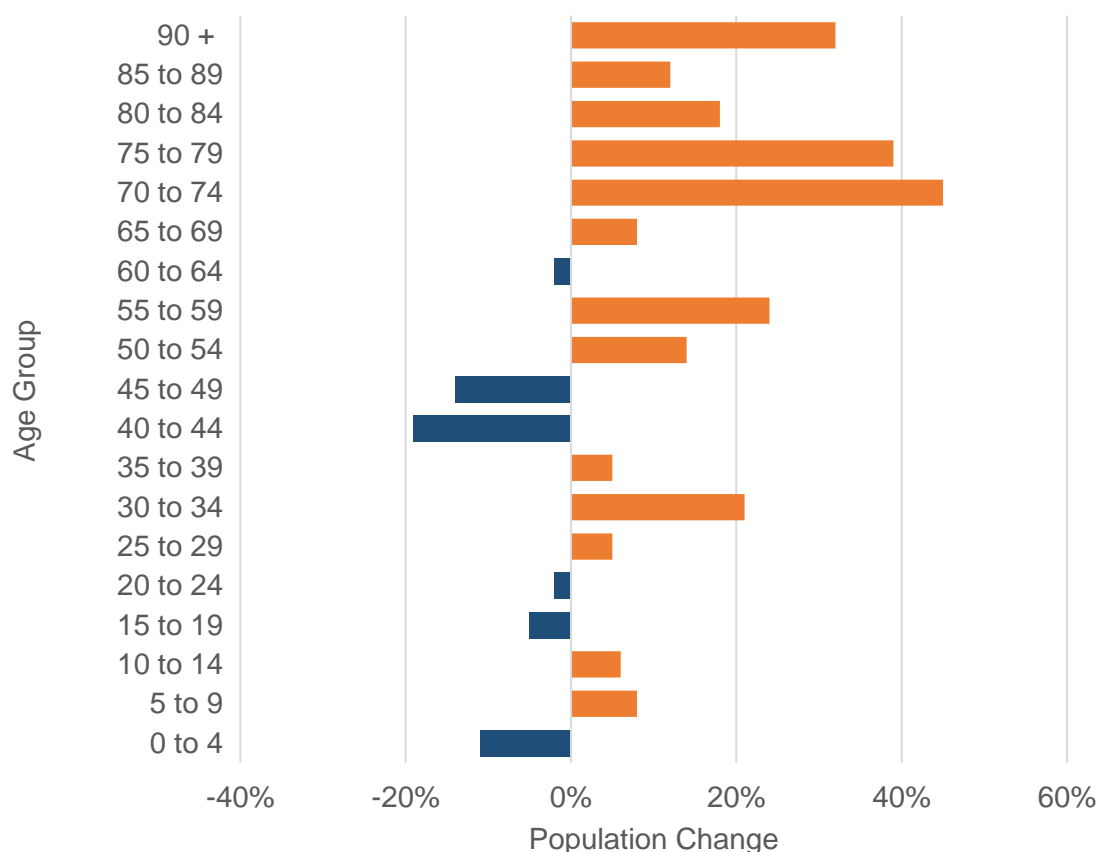


Figure 3.4: Population Change (%) by Age Group in Mid Devon, 2011 to 2021. Data derived from the 2011 and 2021 census.

Mid Devon has a comparatively low population density. As of 2021, Mid Devon is the fourth least densely populated of the 30 local authority areas in the South West, with an area equivalent to two football pitches per resident.

3.2 Ethnicity

In the 2021 Census, 81,068 (97.8%) residents in Mid Devon identified as White, with 1.1% identifying as Mixed/ Multiple ethnic groups, 0.7% as Asian/ Asian British, 0.3% selecting “Other ethnic group”, and 0.1% identifying as Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British, Figure 3.5.

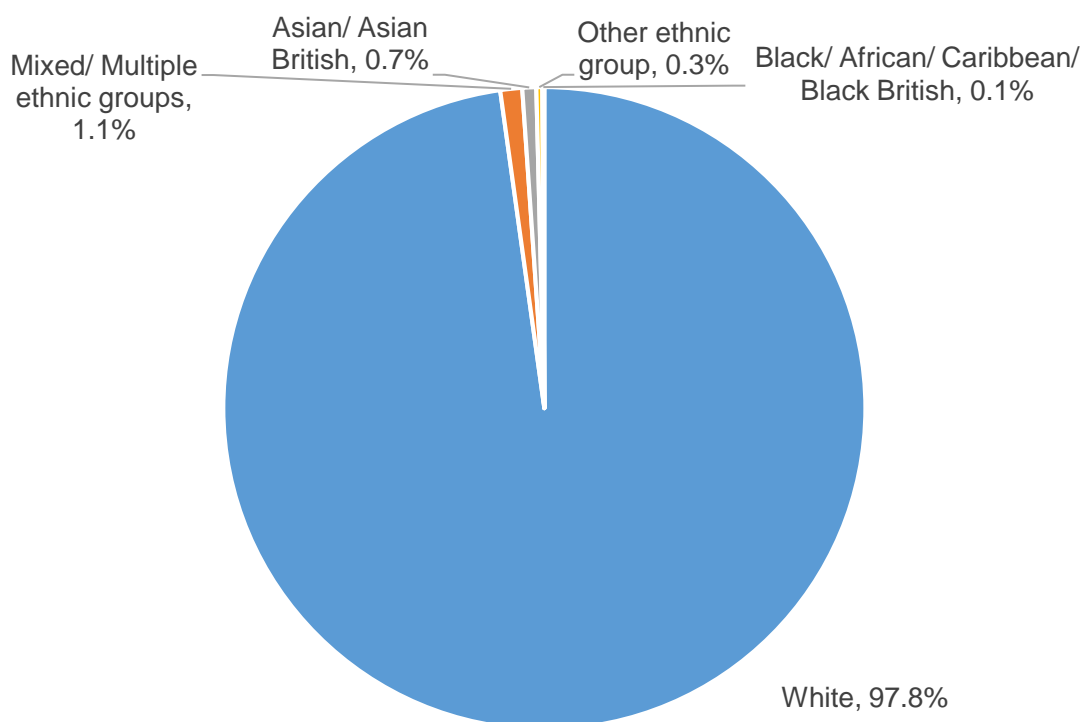


Figure 3.5: The ethnic split of Mid Devon residents in 2021. Data derived from the 2021 Census, LG Inform Plus.

In the 2021 census, around 75,700 Mid Devon residents said they were born in England. This represented 91.4% of the local population. The figure has risen from just under 71,900 in 2011, which at the time represented 92.4% of Mid Devon's population.

Wales was the next most represented country of birth, with just under 1,000 Mid Devon residents reporting this country of birth (1.2%). This figure has remained relatively unchanged from 2011.

The number of Mid Devon residents born in Poland rose from just over 650 in 2011 (0.9% of the local population) to just over 850 in 2021 (1.0%).

3.3 Disability

The age-standardised proportion of non-disabled residents decreased in Mid Devon between the 2011 and 2021 censuses, but rose across England. Age-standardised proportions enable comparisons between populations over time and across geographies, as they account for differences in the population size and age structure. In Mid Devon, the proportion of non-disabled residents fell from 83.3% in 2011 to 82.4% in 2021, while across England it rose from 80.7% to 82.3%.

The percentage of people who identified as being “disabled and limited a lot” in Mid Devon decreased from 7.1% to 6.6%, while the percentage of people who identified as being “disabled and limited a little” increased from 9.6% to 10.9%.

The census in 2021 was undertaken during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This may have influenced how people perceived their health status and activity limitations, and therefore may have affected how people chose to respond.

3.4 Religion

In the 2021 census, 45.0% of Mid Devon residents reported having "No religion", an increase from 28.5% in 2011, Figure 3.6. This question is voluntary in the census and as such there can be varying response rates between different areas or censuses.

Across the South West, the percentage of residents who described themselves as having "No religion" increased from 29.3% to 44.1%, while across England the percentage increased from 24.8% to 36.7%.

In 2021, 47.3% of people in Mid Devon described themselves as Christian (62.1% in 2011), while 6.3% did not answer this question (8.4% in 2011).

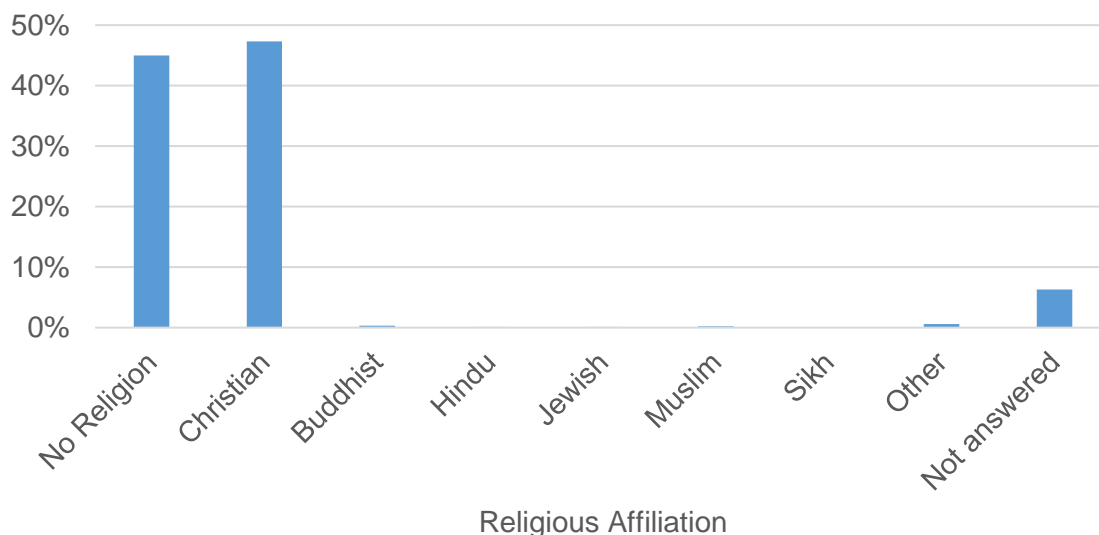


Figure 3.6: Religious Affiliation of residents in Mid Devon, 2021. Data from the 2021 Census.

3.5 Economy

Strategically located on South West England's main transport and communication corridor, Mid Devon is mid-way between Taunton and Exeter. New employment sites are being developed in Tiverton and Cullompton and a major new development of up to 5,000 houses planned for the 'Culm Garden Village'. Key employment sectors in Mid Devon include Manufacturing (specialist/light industrial), Agriculture, Food and Drink, and (Green) Tourism.

Of Mid Devon residents aged 16 years and over, 57.9% said they were employed (excluding full-time students) in the 2021 census, down from 59.9% in 2011.

The total number of residents that were "economically active" was 61.1% in 2021, a decrease from 2011 (64.2%), Figure 3.7.

In 2021, 1.7% said they were unemployed, compared with 2.4% in 2011. The percentage of retired Mid Devon residents increased from 25.3% to 26.5%.

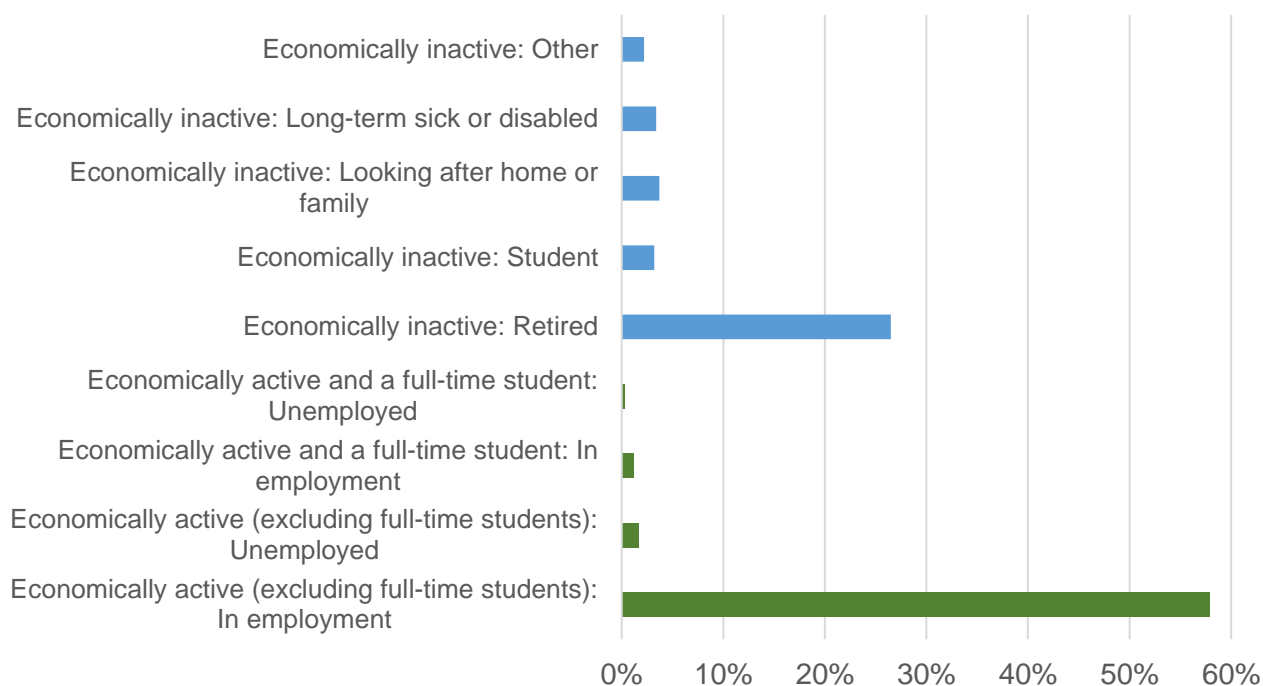


Figure 3.7: Employment status of Mid Devon residents, 2021.

The occupations of Mid Devon residents are shown in Figure 3.8. The most common occupation is classified as “Professional”, with this replacing “skilled trades” as the top profession in the district between 2011 and 2021. There has been the largest increase in the “Managers, directors and senior officials” category (+1,067), with the largest decrease (-533) for “Skilled trades”.

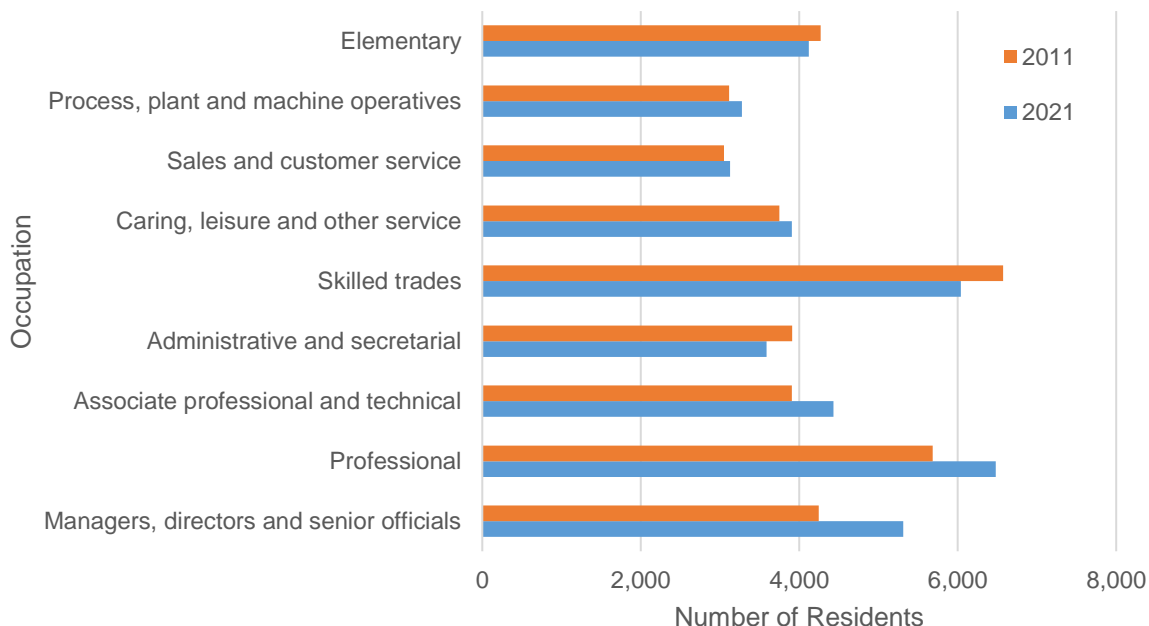


Figure 3.8: Occupations of the residents of Mid Devon, 2011 and 2021. Data from Census 2011 and 2021.

3.6 Housing

According to the 2021 Census, there are 35,633 households in Mid Devon. Mid Devon District Council currently has a social housing stock of 2,965 properties. Household tenure in Mid Devon is:

- Owned outright (39.6%)
- Owned with a mortgage or a loan (28.0%)

- Rented from a private landlord or letting agency (16.0%)
- Rented from Council or equivalent (7.9%)
- Rented from other social landlords (4.7%)
- Rented from other private owners, including from relative or employer (2.5%)
- Shared Ownership (1.0%)
- Occupiers living rent free (0.1%)

The largest number of households live in properties owned outright (39.6%). This compares with 42.2% for Devon County and 37.7% for the South West.

The second largest number of households live in properties owned with a mortgage or loan (28.0%). This compares with 26.0% for Devon County and 28.2% for the South West.

In 2020 it was estimated that 11.8% of Mid Devon households were in fuel poverty (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) compared to 13.2% of households in England. It is expected that a much higher number of households will be classified as in fuel poverty in 2022/23 given the increased cost of energy.

3.7 Deprivation

When considering multiple deprivation, the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is a useful tool. IMD is a combined measure of deprivation based on 37 indicators that have been grouped into seven domains. Each domain reflects a different aspect of deprivation experienced by individuals living in an area. Using the IMD produced using 2019 data, Mid Devon is ranked 9th (out of 18) districts in the South West, and 174th out of 317 authorities in England. When calculating the IMD, England is broken down into 32,844 small geographical areas called LSOAs (Lower Super Output Areas). Mid Devon has no LSOAs that are within the 10% most deprived in England. Figure 3.9 shows the distribution of Mid Devon LSOAs according to levels of multiple deprivation.

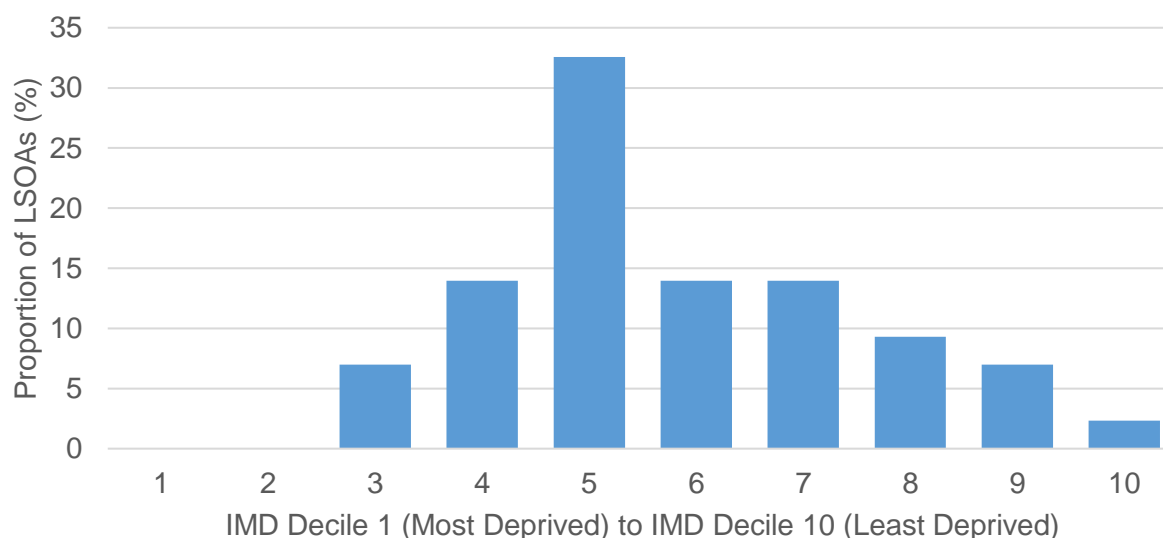


Figure 3.9: Proportion of Mid Devon LSOAs in each IMD decile, data from LG Inform for 2019.

When considering the seven domains which make up the IMD tool, Mid Devon achieves the following rank position in 2019 for each (where rank 1 is the most deprived district in England, and rank 317 is the least deprived):

- Living Environment (24th)
- Barriers to Housing and Services (68th)
- Education, Skills and Training (147th)
- Employment (186th)
- Income (198th)

- Health and Disability (259th)
- Crime (284th)

This shows that using the IMD tool, the lowest scoring domain for Mid Devon is “Living Environment” which is calculated based on the quality of housing, air quality, and road traffic accidents.

3.8 Education

The Census asks residents about their highest level of educational qualification, Figure 3.10. There has been an increase in residents having higher levels of qualifications in Mid Devon, with the number of residents with a qualification at level 3 or above increasing from 39% (2011) to 49% (2021). The number of residents indicating they have no qualifications has decreased from 23% (2011) to 17% (2021).

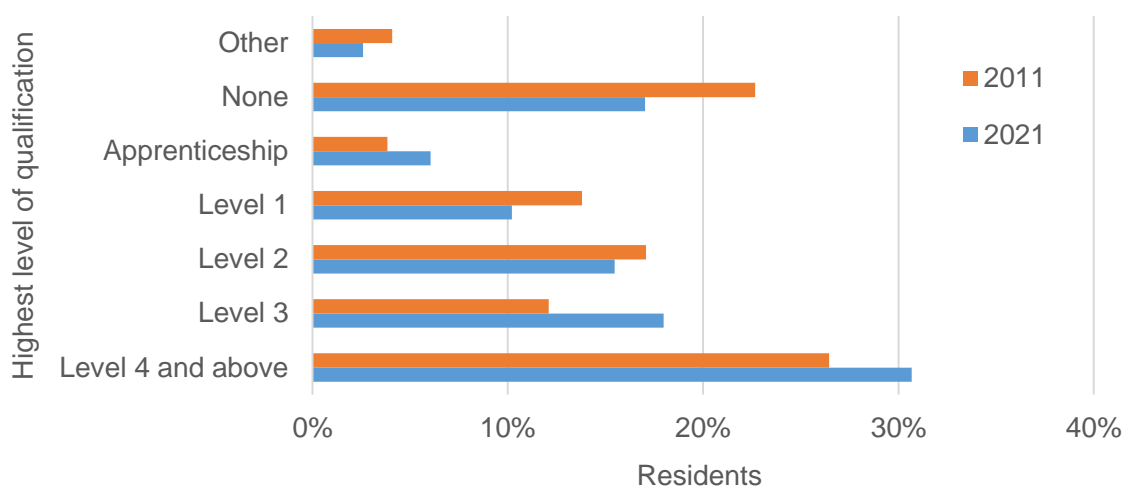


Figure 3.10: Highest level of qualification for residents of Mid Devon for 2011 and 2021, from Census data.

3.9 Access

Being a rural district, a large percentage of residents live in rural areas. This brings challenges for residents to access a variety of services, including employment opportunities. The average travel time to access key services by car in Mid Devon is 15.4 minutes (2019, Department for Transport), compared to 10.3 minutes for England. The average travel time to access key services in Mid Devon has increased from 12.8 minutes in 2014. Journey times are likely to be considerably longer when considering alternative forms of transport.

The need to be digitally connected in rural areas is also high. In 2022, 81.3% of homes in Mid Devon have superfast broadband available, ranked 17th out of 18 districts in the South West (data from Connected Nations, Ofcom).

3.10 Health

In the 2021 census, 48.9% of Mid Devon residents described their health as "very good", increasing from 47.2% in 2011. Those describing their health as "good" fell from 35.5% to 34.5%. These are age-standardised proportions.

The proportion of Mid Devon residents describing their health as "very bad" was 1.0% (similar to 2011), while those describing their health as "bad" remained at 3.4%. This data reflects people's own opinions in describing their overall health on a five point scale, from very good to very bad.

Census 2021 was conducted during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This may have influenced how people perceived and rated their health, and therefore may have affected how people chose to respond.

Life expectancy has increased across the UK over the past 40 years, but has remained fairly stable over the past decade. Life expectancy (at birth) is higher in Mid Devon than the average for the South West and for the UK, Table 3.11. There is some evidence for a slight decline in life expectancies for 2018-20 due to COVID-19 pandemic leading to a greater number of deaths than normal in 2020.

	Female	Male
Mid Devon	84.7 years	80.8 years
South West	84.2 years	80.4 years
UK	82.9 years	79.0 years

Table 3.11: Life Expectancy at Birth, 2018-2020. Data from LG Inform.

Obesity levels are lower in children in Mid Devon than in England when measured at both reception year and in year 6. For the academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, the obesity levels were:

- Reception year: Mid Devon (5.4%), England (9.9%)
- Year 6: Mid Devon (15.4%), England (21.6%)

Obesity levels have decreased in Mid Devon when measured at the reception year, from 7.9% (2014/15 and 2015/16) to the current figure (5.4%), despite an increasing national trend.

3.11 Marriage and Civil Partnerships

Of Mid Devon residents aged 16 years and over, 30.0% said they had never been married or in a civil partnership in 2021, up from 26.4% in 2011 (Data from the 2011 and 2021 censuses).

In 2021, 50.7% said they were married or in a registered civil partnership, compared with 53.9% in 2011. The percentage of adults in Mid Devon that had divorced or dissolved a civil partnership increased from 9.7% to 10.0%.

3.12 Equality Priorities

Mid Devon District recognises that there are five main equality priorities for the district:

1. Meeting the needs of an aging population
2. Overcoming the problems faced by vulnerable individuals caused by rural isolation
3. Overcoming the effects of multiple disadvantage in families with complex needs
4. To continue to concentrate on mental health issues within MDDC and the wider community
5. Secure decent digital connectivity for all of Mid Devon (Corporate Plan aim).

4.0 Knowing Our Customers – Equality Monitoring

Mid Devon District Council believe that it is important to know who uses our services. By comparing this with what we know about the community as a whole, we can see if there are any groups who are underrepresented, highlighting where there may be barriers to overcome.

Where customers are prepared to share information regarding equality, data is captured to inform and shape services and customer engagement based on customer needs. For example, the Housing service has been undertaking work to better understand its residents, and it holds data on 53% of tenants.

Our [Complaints and Feedback policy](#) was reviewed in October 2021. It details our commitment to encourage and accept customer feedback of all types. This will enable the identification of recurring issues and support us to learn from any mistakes. It also sets standards for all staff in recording and managing feedback received.

As part of the complaints process within the Council, complainants are asked if they believe they have been discriminated against because of protected characteristics. If yes is selected, they are asked to provide details of their reasoning for this. This process enables the Council to identify any equality issues that may contribute to the complaint or problem. The equality information collected can be used to:

- Review service delivery
- Compare our performance over time
- Assist in the development of services in line with people's needs
- Monitor the impact of any service changes

Under current legislation, we will publish relevant equality information this information includes:

- An equality profile of the district
- Workforce information

5.0 Involving the community

As part of our commitment to good consultation, the Communications and Engagement Strategy and Action Plan were reviewed and approved during 2018/19. The Council is keen to make sure that people from different equality groups take part in consultation, and will try to find the most appropriate way to consult with them according to their needs.

The communications team uses multiple channels to engage and inform our communities to ensure we reach as many people as possible, with the resources available. We acknowledge that engaging with minority groups can be difficult in Mid Devon, particularly due to the limited diversity within the district. However, the communication team will engage with groups on an issues basis and will ensure all our communications are provided in multiple formats and channels. This is through Language Line, by ensuring our website is (WCAG)2 compliant and through our multiple channels – print, online, in person, social media, sign up notification systems and through our many stakeholders.

Mid Devon District Council will:

- work with groups representing the interests of people from different equality groups to get feedback on proposed service changes particularly relevant to them
- develop and support forms of consultation that are appropriate to the communication needs of different groups within the community
- monitor and assess the consultation methods used and where necessary adapt them to meet the needs of different participants
- publish the results of these consultations and feed them back into our decision-making processes in an open and responsible way.

Customer feedback

Mid Devon District Council positively welcomes feedback. We want to ensure residents' views, whether positive or negative, are noted and their concerns are addressed. We are aware that the Council's formal feedback process may be inaccessible to those sections of the community who have difficulties in accessing services. The Council encourages helper organisations to act as advocates for a complainant if necessary.

6.0 Developing responsive services

A primary factor in making a service accessible is providing information and advice in a usable and convenient format.

We seek to ensure that all users:

- know about the relevant services they might need
- are given support where necessary e.g. with completing forms
- are confident about using and contacting a service and, if necessary, complaining about it

We will do this by:

- communicating clearly both internally and externally
- providing information in plain English
- making as many services as internet accessible as possible
- offering information in different formats on request
- providing interpretation and translation services where possible
- ensuring that buildings that are open to the public, including leisure and community facilities, can be accessed and used by all residents
- making sure that our employees are trained and supported to deliver the highest possible levels of customer service in line with this policy.

Accessibility

Mid Devon District Council will endeavour to make online services compliant with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

Website(s) or mobile app(s) will be made accessible by making them 'perceivable, operable, understandable and robust'.

Changing services and policies

Mid Devon District Council has a responsibility to assess the likely impact on residents and employees of policies or services it is proposing to change or introduce before they are adopted. This is to make sure that any changes do not disproportionately affect any particular group, and any adverse impacts can be reduced as much as possible.

Policies, in particular, are frequently adapted or replaced to reflect changes in the legal, social and political environment. Our objective is to build equality and diversity into the policy making process and to make that process clear, open and inclusive.

The Council undertakes detailed Equality Impact Assessments on those changes most likely to impact on the wellbeing of certain individuals or groups. The impact assessment process asks how the service or policy affects the different groups in the community. Each Equality Impact Assessment includes an action plan for describing what actions can be taken to mitigate any negative impacts identified. The template includes the consideration of rurality which is identified as a specific issue in Mid Devon.

In 2023, we will undertake a review of our Equality Impact Assessment process to ensure it meets current best practice.

7.0 Developing an inclusive working environment

The Council considers equality and diversity in all aspects of employment, from advertising vacancies, recruitment and selection, terms and conditions of employment, training and personal development, to reasons for ending employment.

We will promote equality in recruitment by:

- advertising jobs as widely as possible
- providing job details and accepting job applications in alternative formats on request as appropriate to the needs of the applicant
- monitoring recruitment processes and taking action as a result of the findings
- acknowledging that recruitment and selection decisions should be based upon objective, measurable and reasonable selection criteria
- asking only for the skills and qualities actually needed to do the job
- commitment to equality in employment and in service delivery will be reinforced in staff induction programmes for new staff
- training managers on how to recruit in a non-discriminatory way, making sure that all job applicants, whether redeployment candidates, existing employees or people who do not currently work for the District Council, demonstrate that they are qualified, motivated and competent to do the job.

We will promote equality in disciplinary procedures by:

- regularly reviewing our disciplinary and grievance procedures to ensure an appropriate mechanism is in place to deal with bullying and harassment at work.

We will promote equality in pay and conditions by:

- using a pay structure that makes sure employees are treated fairly and equitably.

We publish information on our website about our pay policy and gender pay gap.

We will promote equality in training and development by:

- providing training programmes for staff to raise awareness of equality issues and assist them in applying equality principles to their role within the Council
- recognising and supporting the potential of all employees by offering opportunities for training and personal development
- monitoring employee development to make sure that training and development opportunities continue to be open to all employees.

8.0 Ensuring equality in procurement and commissioning

Mid Devon District Council is a major purchaser of services. Every year we spend over £5 million with businesses so that we can deliver our services. We recognise that our spending power gives us the chance to influence how others work and to promote equality. We will:

- require any company or business that wishes to be one of our contractors or suppliers to demonstrate appropriate consideration in their policies on equality in relation to employment and service delivery
- seek to encourage any company, business or individual wishing to provide goods or services to Mid Devon District Council, to contribute to our policy by implementing fair practices in employment and training
- review our own policies and practices and where necessary make changes to them to ensure they do not discriminate or place unfair requirements on small businesses from Mid Devon
- cease issuing contracts to, purchasing from or commissioning any contractor, business or organisation, where we believe they fail to comply with our values in relation to equality and diversity
- follow good practice by having a procurement strategy that gives a clear commitment to equality of opportunity and to tackling discrimination and disadvantage.

9.0 Promoting equality through working with others

The Council recognises that it cannot meet its equality responsibilities without working closely with other public bodies, community groups and individuals. Mid Devon District Council will:

- use our standing in the area to help shape public opinion to promote understanding between different sections of the community
- work with other public, private, voluntary and community groups in Mid Devon to ensure that equality and diversity policies and plans similar to our own are adopted and implemented more widely
- share information, experience and examples of good practice on equality through links with other public, private, voluntary and community organisations in the region
- promote equality and diversity within partnership working and in our dealings with the media
- involve people from different equality groups in influencing our work and progress on equality
- learn from the equality and diversity policies and plans of other local authorities and organisations.

10.0 Meeting the needs of specific equality groups

The Council is aware that certain groups within society are particularly vulnerable to discrimination because of a particular protected characteristic (e.g. age, disability, gender, etc.). In order to

eliminate discrimination and promote equality we recognise the need to work with representatives who can advocate on behalf of particular equality groups in order to develop services that meet their specific requirements. We also recognise that people are individuals, and that although they may be included within a particular equality group they also have individual needs that may differ from the rest of the group. We are committed to dealing with every resident as an individual with their own particular needs.

11.0 Monitoring

Monitoring Impact and Acting on Results

Mid Devon District Council recognises that monitoring is an important way of assessing the effects of policies in practice and is a vital part of any strategy to promote equality.

Monitoring will help us check whether our policies, operations and organisational culture are discriminating against some groups and individuals. This will help us find out why and how discrimination takes place. Where we see that any of our policies or procedures have a negative impact we will investigate the reasons for this and revise them accordingly.

Publishing Results

If Mid Devon District Council is to be successful and keep public confidence, we need not only to promote equality but also to be seen to be doing so. The Council will therefore publish the results of its monitoring, assessment and consultation activities. This includes our Equalities Impact Assessments, an annual report on the Single Equality Scheme, and our pay policy and data on the gender pay gap.

12.0 Concerns

If there are any concerns about any matter regarding equality of opportunity or discrimination is suspected, you are referred to the following related policies:

Whistleblowing Policy
Dignity at Work and
Grievance Policy

Equality Objective	Progress in 2022/23
<p>Meeting the needs of an aging population</p>	<p>The Mid Devon Meeting Housing Needs Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was approved at Cabinet in March 2023 for public consultation. This planning document highlights the growing need for housing for older persons and people with disabilities. It includes sections on accessible and adaptable homes, wheelchair accommodation, and bungalow provision.</p> <p>Where a tenant or household member has a disability or a long term illness, the council may provide equipment or adaptations to their home to enable them to remain living in that property. The council will provide minor adaptations for works under £250 where the tenant feels that they may help them or their household member to live more independently.</p> <p>The council requires a referral from the Occupational Therapist for adaptations costing between £250- £1,000. Examples of adaptations include: ramps, safety glass or minor internal alterations to the kitchen or bathroom. The council will provide major adaptations to help eligible tenants and household members to live independently. A referral from an Occupational Therapist will be required before carrying out any works.</p> <p>Major adaptations can involve extensive structural alterations and will normally cost more than £1,000. Examples of major adaptations include: property access (ramps, drop kerbs) widening doorways, level access showers, change of heating or lighting controls, stair lifts or changes to the configuration of the bathroom or kitchen and extensions to the property.</p> <p>Mid Devon Housing started running a 'Winter Warmth Club' in 2022/23. This is predominantly attended by older people. Due to the value in offering tenants a meeting place, the Tenant Involvement team are looking into widening the offer and perhaps expanding to Cullompton and Crediton too.</p>
<p>Overcoming the problems faced by vulnerable individuals caused by rural isolation</p>	<p>At the Community PDG meeting (7th June 2022), Members agreed that it would be of interest to them to look into effective community integration and engagement focusing on topical experiences of refugee or asylum seekers in moving to the district given international conflicts. The members also agreed to broaden the scope of the project to include new residents in new housing estates.</p> <p>In 2022, the Council agreed to identify a Member Champion for Equalities and Accessibility. This remit has now been widened out to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and following engagement with the Local Government Association a role description has been drafted and it is recommended that this responsibility is part of a cabinet position. The Member Champion will be identified after the May 2023 elections. Working with other councillors, they will help to provide a more local level insight on rural isolation and vulnerable individuals</p> <p>Neighbourhood Officers signpost and refer Mid Devon Housing tenants where appropriate so tenants know where to go to receive the help they may require.</p>

Equality Objective	Progress in 2022/23
<p>Overcoming the effects of multiple disadvantage in families with complex needs.</p>	<p>Since October 2021, the council has appointed a Customer Engagement Coordinator who works to support tenants' involvement.</p> <p>In 2022, Mid Devon Housing adopted a revised Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard Policy. The aim of this policy is to ensure that our tenants live good quality lives in a place where people come together and contribute as one community, where people value decency and dignity and where neighbourhoods are clean, safe and well maintained.</p> <p>The Homes PDG received an update in September 2022 on the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. Members were informed that the family scheme was proving to be challenging but a lot was being done to provide support and signpost to helpful agencies. Consideration was also given to the complexities in having to support individuals and families experiencing trauma</p> <p>Becoming a Trauma Informed Council will ensure that MDDC services accommodate the needs of service users, including those facing multiple disadvantage. This proposal was taken to Cabinet in September 2022, paper entitled 'Mid Devon as a Trauma Informed Council'. Members of the Cabinet resolved to recommend to Full Council that the degree of investment the Council would be required to make towards becoming Trauma Informed as set out in the report and that a stepped approach be adopted. On 26th October 2022, Full Council voted for the motion to be carried.</p> <p>Neighbourhood Officers work with vulnerable tenants on a daily basis and signpost to further support as necessary.</p> <p>A new Customer Relationship Manager (CRM) System is being implemented at MDDC. This will aim to provide a more complete record of our residents and customers so that we can provide even better levels of support. The new CRM system will make it easier for residents and customers to access council services. Work on the implementation of the new CRM started in January 2023.</p>
<p>To continue to concentrate on mental health issues within MDDC and the wider community.</p>	<p>Regular articles have been posted in the council staff newsletter (The Link) regarding wellbeing and mental health. Examples from 2022/23 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signposting to wellbeing support from an organisation called 'Wellbeing Works' • Signposting to the Mental Health Foundation website regarding help and advice on how to cope with loneliness and improve mental health • Details of Mental Health First Aiders with a link to the SharePoint page published in the Link (4th July 2022) • Information relating to specific things relating to mental health – for example, information and signposting to Mind for further support relating to Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) • Tips and advice on how to look after your mental wellbeing during winter months while working from home • Information about 'Brew Monday' by the Samaritans – encouraging people to look at 'Blue Monday' in a new way and to reach out to someone for a cuppa and catch-up on any day, not just this one.

Equality Objective	Progress in 2022/23
	<p>MDDC currently has 10 officers trained as Mental Health first aiders. Their details are available on the intranet and noticeboards so that staff are able to contact them.</p> <p>A number of officers have been trained as workplace coaches to support colleagues with personal or work related concerns. There are currently eight workplace coaches, details of whom are available on the Learning and Development SharePoint page.</p> <p>Details of organisations who can support mental health are available on the council's website. Details of community support across the district are available on our website and there is a community support helpline.</p> <p>In view of the pandemic, Devon County Council were able to offer a Covid-19 Counselling Service specifically for our BAME communities and details are available on our website.</p> <p>The council's Reasonable Adjustment policy includes mental health impairments (this includes mental health issues). Examples of adjustments that can be made under this policy are – time off for counselling, extra breaks to help cope with fatigue (which can be a symptom of mental illness), additional supervision or mentoring, and allowing an employee to work in a private room instead of being in an open plan office (could be good for those who suffer with anxiety,etc.).</p> <p>The council can flag the account of someone who may be struggling to pay their council tax due to mental health issues so that officers are aware and can treat the individual accordingly.</p> <p>In 2022/23 Mid Devon Leisure Centres ran a pilot offering free leisure access to unpaid adult carers, parent carers and young carers. The scheme ran at all three MDDC leisure centres (Culm Valley, Exe Valley and Lords Meadow. Unpaid carers had access to all activities, excluding swimming lessons, and in order to access this scheme, all they had to do was show identification that they are an unpaid carer (a 'Carers Passport'). The purpose of this scheme is to enable unpaid carers to exercise freely and boost their own physical and mental wellbeing.</p>
Secure decent digital connectivity for all of Mid Devon (Corporate Plan aim).	<p>Airband is doing work in rural areas regarding digital connectivity and updates are provided regularly by Devon County Council through press releases, e.g. Airband rolls out full fibre broadband to another 1,700 homes and businesses.</p> <p>Orion was appointed in 2021 to look into a free-to-use Wi-Fi network for Tiverton and Cullompton town centres and have been progressing with establishing the necessary infrastructure. The Council is due to receive an update very soon.</p> <p>Within the council, a working group has been established to support the transition to hybrid working and hot-desking. In 2022/23, the first hot-desking areas have been established enabling staff to work in a more agile manner.</p>

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Community Policy Development Group Report 2022 - 2023

Introduction

I would like to thank Carole Oliphant for her help as clerk to the committee. I would also like to say thank you to all the officers that wrote reports and attended the meeting. I appreciated the committee for taking part in discussions and for all their input throughout the year - without whose help it would have been difficult.

7 June 2022

- Crediton Area History & Museum Society
- Revenue and capital revenue and capital revenue and capital outturn 2021/22
- Unauthorised encampment policy – three yearly review
 - RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that the updated Unauthorised Encampment Policy and procedure for managing and enforcing unauthorised encampments as detailed in annex A be adopted (Procedure for Managing and Enforcing Unauthorised Encampments)
- Corporate Plan 2020-24 – Mid Point Review

2 August 2022

- Performance and risk outturn report for 2021/22
- Mid Devon as a trauma informed council:
 - RESOLVED to recommend to the Cabinet that:
 1. It recommended to Full Council the degree of investment the Council would require towards becoming a Trauma Informed Council
 2. Subject to recommendation 1 that it recommended to Full Council a stepped approach was adopted, as set out in annex 1 (Mid Devon District Council Trauma Informed Stepped Approach)
- Report of anti-social behaviour working group
 - RESOLVED to recommend to the Cabinet:
 1. That Members of the ASB working group are consulted on the review of the Housing ASB policy (due to take place this year, and to be incorporated into Neighbourhood and Community Standard Policy) through an informal, in-depth discussion with the Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing and other officers.
 2. That information around ASB and how to report it is clearly communicated to Members and the public.
 3. That the Mid Devon Senior Inspector is requested to provide Members with a monthly update on policing in the District and consideration is given to other ways to engage with members.
 4. That the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) review the Community Trigger process.

27 September 2022

- 6 month Leisure – Update

22 November 2022

- Medium term financial plan

24 January 2022

- Council tax reduction – banded scheme
 - RESOLVED to recommend to the Cabinet:
 - 1) To increase the maximum reduction from 85% to 100%
 - 2) To disregard the housing element of universal credit in the calculation
 - 3) To increase the income bands by inflation each year
 - 4) That any income from welfare provision to be disregarded
 - 5) That this policy is adopted
- Draft Budget
 - The Policy Development Group agreed the following should be considered by officers:
 1. Planned maintenance within Leisure services being reduced, as long as this does not impact on health and safety.
 2. A vacancy factor be set for Leisure services, as long as this does not impact on health and safety or income generation.
 3. In addition the PDG AGREED that officers should not consider the following:
 4. Savings within Community Safety as this should be considered a high priority service area which should be protected.
 5. Savings within Public Health as this should be considered a high priority service area which should be protected

COMMUNITY PDG WORKPLAN 2022-2023 - 2022 TO 2023

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Theme	Officer Responsible	Comments
28 March 2023				
28.03.23 4.04.23	Community Engagement Strategy To receive the 2 yearly review of the Community Engagement Strategy (including Action Plan)		Corporate Manager for Digital Transformation and Customer Engagement Lisa Lewis	
28.03.23 4.04.23	Regulation of Investigatory Powers To receive the Annual Review of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers		District Solicitor and Monitoring Officer Maria De Leburne	
28.03.23 4.04.23	Single Equalities Policy and Equality Objectives To receive the annual review of the Single Equalities Policy and Equality Objectives		Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste Matthew Page	

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Theme	Officer Responsible	Comments
Postponed				
	Community Safety Partnership To agree the Action Plan for 2023-2024		Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing Simon Newcombe	
Page 64	Enforcement Policy To receive a review of the Enforcement Policy if required		Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing Simon Newcombe	
	Town and Parish Charter To approve a draft Town and Parish Charter for consultation.		Director Of Place	