

Public Document Pack

Mid Devon District Council

Environment Policy Development Group

Tuesday, 10 October 2023 at 5.30 pm
Phoenix Chambers, Phoenix House, Tiverton

Next ordinary meeting
Tuesday, 7 November 2023 at 5.30 pm

Please Note: This meeting will take place at Phoenix House and members of the Public and Press are able to attend via Teams. 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.

To join the meeting online, [click here](#)

Meeting ID: 397 267 386 028

Passcode: nD4d5t

Membership

Cllr M Fletcher
Cllr B Fish
Cllr C Adcock
Cllr G Czapiewski
Cllr C Harrower
Cllr B Holdman
Cllr J Poynton
Cllr S Robinson
Cllr G Westcott

AGENDA

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

- 1 **Apologies and substitute Members**
To receive any apologies for absence and 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 - 20*)
To consider whether to approve the minutes as a correct record of the meeting held on Tuesday 15 August 2023
- 5 **Chairman's Announcements**
To receive any announcements that the Chairman may wish to make.
- 6 **Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change Update**
(*Pages 21 - 38*)
To receive an update from the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Climate and Sustainability Specialist
- 7 **MDDC draft Budget 2024 - 2025 - First Review** (*Pages 39 - 52*)
- 8 **Himalayan Balsam**
For discussion by members of the PDG (no report)
- 9 **Work Programme** (*Pages 53 - 56*)
To receive the current work plan for the Environment PDG.

Stephen Walford
Chief Executive
Monday, 2 October 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 Teams.

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.

Residents, electors or business rate payers of the District may make a statement or shall be entitled to ask questions at a meeting which concerns the Council's powers / duties or which otherwise affects the District. If your question does not relate to an agenda item, the question must be submitted to the Democratic Services Manager two working days before the meeting to give time for a response to be prepared.

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 Democratic 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 David Parker on: dparker@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 **ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP**
held on 15 August 2023 at 5.30 pm

Present

Councillors

M Fletcher (Chairman)
E Buczkowski, G Czapiewski, C Harrower, B Holdman,
J Poynton, S Robinson, E Buczkowski and G Westcott

Apologies

Councillor(s)

C Adcock, and B Fish

Also Present

Councillor(s)

R Gilmour, D Broom, J Buczkowski, S J Clist, L Taylor and
D Wulff

Also Present

Officer(s):

Andrew Jarrett (Deputy Chief Executive (S151)), Matthew Page (Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste), Jason Ball (Climate and Sustainability Specialist), Darren Beer (Operations Manager for Street Scene), Luke Howard (Environment and Enforcement Manager), Andrew Seaman (Democratic Services Manager) and Angie Howell (Democratic Services Officer)

13 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (03:50)**

Apologies were received from Cllr C Adcock and Cllr B Fish.

The following Cllrs attended via teams:- Cllr G Duchesne, Cllr M Farrell, Cllr A Glover, Cllr S Keable, Cllr J Wright.

14 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (04:14)**

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

None were declared.

15 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (04:24)**

Questions were received from Town Councillor Sophia Beard, Castle Ward, Tiverton Town Council. The Chairman read out the following questions:-

In respect to your proposal to cease side waste collections from the 1 October 2023:-

Question 1

Please provide a detailed account of how this will be communicated to the wider public, including highlighting of your plan to reach those in the community for whom English is not their first language.

Answer

A wide variety of media would be used to include Press Releases, Social Media and potential posters. There is a google translation that is accessible on our website.

Question 2

How are you justifying giving less than 2 months' notice of this significant change to policy?

Answer

We should not be collecting side waste as part of a 3 weekly scheme as it defeats its purpose. We made it clear before introducing 3 weekly collections that the collection of side waste was a temporary measure and that all residual waste should be placed in the black bin.

Question 3

What consultation has been undertaken with the Town and Parish Councils in the district in respect of the implementation of your proposals?

Answer

We spoke with Cullompton Town Council before 3 weekly collections were introduced and also regularly speak to other Town and Parish Councillors around arising issues. We have continued to offer meetings and have also gone into certain different areas and proactively talked to residents around these issues.

Question 4

What consultations and collaborative working can you evidence has taken place with grassroot organisations on this issue for example Sustainable Tiverton, Tiverton Town Centre Partnership and their counterparts in the district?

Answer

We have worked with these organisations where appropriate according to the nature of the issues e.g. grass and hedge cutting, maintenance of town centre open spaces. We are willing to work with groups on increasing our recycling rates and cement best practice.

Question 5

How will you inform residents as to why the side waste left on pavements has not been collected? (assuming that they have not received your pre-implementation communications?)

Answer

Our Collections team have already been labelling both recycling and garden waste that has not been put out for collection properly over previous months and education has been invested in through the appointment of Recycling Officers. As you heard about in the last item the Environment Enforcement team have tackled the more serious waste offences including fly tipping. This will continue.

Question 6

What are you expecting residents to do with the additional side waste not collected (ie. Hold it for an additional 3 weeks?)

Answer

Ask them to put it into the black bin (and if capacity is an issue we look at that with them). Ultimately we would target problem areas for education through site visits and subsequent enforcement as we currently do so.

Question 7

Under the Equalities Impact Assessment, how will this change in policy effect residents who currently benefit from the assisted collections policy, will you be leaving their side waste also?

Answer

Again we would work with the residents on their needs and if capacity is an issue we would address it with them.

Question 8

Under the Equalities Impact Assessment, what considerations will be made for residents residing in HMOs, flats and properties with no outside in the implementation of this proposal if it goes ahead?

Answer

We would work with the residents on their needs and if capacity is an issue we would address it with them. We are also working with town centre landlords to look at appropriate solutions and if more want to come and talk to us they can do so.

Question 9

With regard specifically to Tiverton Castle Ward, given that the Town Centre has a larger concentration of HMOs, flats and properties with no outside space, how will you support the Town Centre Businesses who will be adversely effected by the implementation of this policy where it leaves the uncollected side waste outside trading premises, creating a negative impression of the town centre as it prepares for the Christmas season.

Answer

We regularly patrol town centre spaces and car parks to identify potential problem areas and where we require either additional education, enforcement or ad hoc waste collections we implement this. So this is already in hand.

Question 10

How do you envisage the policy working in the post Christmas period where additional waste is likely to be created combined with the addition of bank holidays, will you still implement no side collections during this period into January 2024?

Answer

We would look to be more flexible in the post-Christmas period regarding additional waste as this is always a challenging time.

Hilary Tosdevin**Question 1**

Would like details of who has been consulted regarding the Devon Carbon Plan. (Asked about who was consulted e.g. demographics, methods used, time given to respond, questions discussed.)

Answer

It was explained that 70 people were selected from across Devon and the assembly met over 4 weekends. All information can be found on the Devon Climate Emergency website.

The Chairman also indicated that a written response would be provided.

James King**Question 1**

Cost of net zero plans - shows £117m for net zero projects. My concern is what is that money going to be spent on? Strongly believe it could be invested to make the community a 15 or 20 minute city. Tiverton seems to be shutting down quickly. Perhaps money could be better spent in developing the town rather than e.g. increasing car park charges.

Answer

The C&S Specialist apologised and said the figures should have a clearer explanation. All the costs for potential projects are estimates. Most are projects that the Council would not necessarily lead on or fund themselves. Mid Devon District Council would welcome any suggestions for ways to address climate change.

It was also indicated by the Chairman that a written response would be provided.

Elizabeth Anne**Question 1**

Does council know the following?

The human and environmental suffering involved in EV/ green component mining i.e. lithium and cobalt, 300 year damage to the local water supply, human slavery and child labour. Shipping companies are starting to ban EVs because of the fires that can't be put out. UK companies have banned their use on trains and buses.

Question 2

Has Devon Fire Service been consulted with regard to management of toxic run off from EV fires?

Question 3

Have you individually independently researched this whole net zero carbon neutral narrative? Should you choose to continue with this extreme plan? Remember we are mostly carbon!

I am requesting a public forum where Council can evidence their climate data and their claim of a *man-made* climate emergency, because half an hour is not sufficient time.

Most people don't know the full extent of the Net Zero plans. Few have read the Absolute Zero, C40 Cities & IPCC reports and are blissfully ignorant of how much our lives will radically change if recommendations go ahead.

A few examples from these reports;

By 2030, UK airports close except Heathrow, Glasgow and Belfast, which close by 2050. By 2030, 50% less lamb and beef production... had *you* noticed we're being conditioned to eat insects? Industries destroyed, limited employment.

Petrol and Diesel completely phased out by 2050, but don't worry, you'll have a rather generous 3 item clothing allowance per year!
And so it goes on.

If you expect the public to willingly go along with losing our entire way of life, our livelihoods and our freedom and being impoverished, for generations, then you absolutely must *conclusively* prove it's necessary. Anything less is unconstitutional.

And evidence not just using cherry picked data the, zero authority IPCC put out. Full chart data showing everything, including the inconvenient ice core sample data which shows CO2 levels over 5 times greater than they are now with much higher global temperatures, with no detriment to the planet. CO2 is in fact a gas of life and at 0.04% of the atmosphere. The science community is not settled on this narrative, thousands of scientists have been silenced and threatened to not speak.

I'm not a climate change denier, she is alive so will evolve and change. The onus is on council to *prove* these effects are man-made and a disaster/emergency.

From your agenda today

"Legal Implications: Full Council declared a Climate Emergency in June 2019".?
Excuse me how is that legal?

Question 4

Can council confirm the constitutional basis by which either they, or central government (both organizations made by the people) may act in any of these respects?

All I can find is on 1st May 2019 uk gov passed a non-binding motion to declare a climate emergency. All that is, is an opinion it has no legal binding and never lawful binding. It could not be voted on as it would be unconstitutional to every man women boy and girl of the land.

The Chairman indicated that a written response would be provided.

Les Tosdevin

How can you communicate the Council's plans to the 86% of voters that did not vote?

The Chairman indicated that a written response would be provided.

16 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (33:24)

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 20 June 2023, were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

17 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (34:11)

The Chair encouraged all members to share any ideas for this PDG to address and look into where possible.

18 CLIMATE AND SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMME (34:47)

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change addressed the Group. She hoped the report would answer the questions raised and explained that the science had existed for several decades and should not deter us from delivery. This was an international problem as well as a local problem.

Following this the group had before it, and **NOTED**, a "report from the Climate and Sustainability Specialist giving an update on the Climate Action Plan (CAP) and the wider Climate and Sustainability Programme.

The contents of the report were outlined as followed:-

- There were several updates and milestone transformational projects that had been implemented such as at leisure centres and community outreach projects that had been celebrated across Mid-Devon.
- Some of these had made the local press and social media such as the wildlife gardening, wildlife recovery projects and green spaces.
- A summary of our carbon footprint report, overall the carbon footprint had risen since 2018-2019.
- The report showed the figures and charts, with key points about how the Council could focus and prioritise actions to reduce emissions.
- Good positive tangible progress had been made that the Council could be proud of.

Consideration was given to:-

- Zed pods and whether they would have electric chargers for cars.
- The amount of emissions and to continue working to reduce this.
- To continue to improve recycling rates.
- The fly over in Tiverton and the impact of air quality.

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

19 ENVIRONMENT AND ENFORCEMENT POLICY UPDATE/REVIEW REPORT (42:28)

The Chair advised the Environment PDG that the title of this Agenda Item was incorrect and should read Environment and Enforcement Update and Review and that there were two reports under this item: the End of Year report and the Quarter One report.

The Group had before it, and **NOTED** a *report from the Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste which provided Councillors with an overview of the Environment and Enforcement service for the financial year 2022/23 – he introduced the report by advising the Environment PDG of the importance of the two reports to

look at the action taken around issues such as fly tipping, abandoned vehicles and dog fouling and that there had been a real improvement and excellence over the last 12-18 months.

The Environment Enforcement Manager highlighted the following:-

- Schemes had been implemented to encourage members of the public to be more environmentally aware and encouraged to come forward and report incidents such as fly tipping, dog fouling and abandoned vehicles.
- The implementation of evening patrols of car parks had been undertaken as spaces were being occupied without permits.
- A health and safety introduction for District Officers had been made with a video camera which had shown to be effective as there were less confrontations with members of the public.
- There had been a uniform rebranding during the summer of 2022 for the District Officers who were now identified by wearing coloured vests - blue for car parking and red for environment duties.
- Visits to primary schools were being continued to raise awareness of environmental crime and to give advice.
- Clear procedure for interviewing people under Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) conditions which is a legally recorded interview.
- Mid Devon County Council also lead on a Task Group made up of several local authorities as part of the 'Clean Devon' scheme to tackle fly tipping which would meet every six weeks to discuss problems in Devon and engaging with ways to tackle this as a collective group.
- The new electric fleet had been delivered and being utilised and hand held devices were being looked at.
- That a short report was due to be submitted to Parking and Traffic Regulations Outside London Joint Committee (PATROL_ for recognition regarding changes to parking service. This was an organisation that oversees car parking elements and if recognised we would receive an award.

In addition, the Group had before it, and **NOTED** a *report from the Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste which provided Councillors with an overview of performance from the Environment and Enforcement service during Quarter 1 of the financial year 2022/23. The Environment Enforcement Manager highlighted the following:-

- Statistics showed a strong improvement from last year.
- Cleaning inspections had shown a high proportion of highways and footpaths being graded as A or B.
- There had been several successful Fixed Penalty Notices issued to individuals for fly tipping.
- There had been a significant increase in the use of Ringo.
- The Street Cleansing Service had recently procured a walk-behind mechanical sweeper which had received positive feedback from the public.

Discussion took place regarding:-

- The grading on the report and what they represented.
- Ringo and how income was gained.

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

20 **REVIEW OF BIN IT 123 SCHEME (01:37)**

The Group had before it a report* from the Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste as to the Bin it 123 Scheme and the future Waste Service provision.

The contents of the report were outlined as followed:-

- The Council moved to a 3 weekly bin collection which was implemented in October 2022 to drive a lower carbon footprint.
- The report showed encouraging early signs with a 4.5% in recycling compared to last year.
- During the past 10 months the Council had been flexible with collecting side waste and the provision of extra bins and caddies though it was made clear that this would not be for the long term.
- Other Authorities had a zero tolerance of side waste and we also need to eliminate this.

The following was discussed:-

- The need to engage with members of the public and landlords to provide advice and support.
- The lack of space for some properties for waste to be stored before it is collected.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** to Cabinet:

1. To cease collecting side waste from 1 October 2023 and deliver a comprehensive communications programme in advance of this to minimise the need for enforcement.
2. To postpone the trial scheduled for 2023-2024 to allow for an evaluation of the effectiveness of the current scheme against the metrics of recycling % achieved, residual tonnage reduction, and overall cost to the Authority.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

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

21 **WORK PROGRAMME (01:58)**

The Group had before it their current work programme * for 2023/24.

The following was **AGREED** as needing to be added to the work programme for 2023/2024:

- The green standards in planning and information on how other local authorities put this into their work plan as residents had been sending examples of residential energy efficiency metrics.
- For waste to be an ongoing subject on the agenda.

Note: * Work Programme previously circulated

22 **QUARTER 1 POSITION AND FURTHER FINANCIAL TRAINING SPECIFIC TO THE PDG (02:00)**

The Deputy Chief Executive (S151) gave a verbal update on the Quarter 1 position and explained that the report was on a rolling quarterly basis to give the Environment PDG a finance performance update along with service delivery metrics and associated risks.

The presentation would be distributed to all members of the Committee with a request for any queries to be send directly to him.

Note: *report previously circulated.

(The meeting ended at 7.37 pm)

CHAIRMAN

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Public Question Time

Hilary Tosdevin

Question 1

Would like details of who has been consulted regarding the Devon Carbon Plan.

Written Answer

As promised, please find below, a written answer to your question to the Environment Policy Development Group meeting on 15th August 2023.

Members of the Environment PDG welcomed the public questions about the Councils' basis for and response to the climate emergency, which will only be possible to deliver if there is a united approach. The target to reach net zero by 2030 is ambitious but has been informed by the Devon Carbon Plan and the need for an international and local response to the predicted impacts of climate change. Mid Devon officers, members and residents will need to work together to play our part locally to support national and international efforts.

Key details about the Devon Carbon Plan (DCP) consultation processes.

Creating the Devon Carbon Plan involved five stages.



Evidence gathering at the early stages of developing the plan.

[Thematic Hearings – Devon Climate Emergency](#)

[Public Call For Evidence – Devon Climate Emergency](#)

Questions in the interim plan consultation.

[Interim Carbon Plan Consultation Report – Devon Climate Emergency](#)

Following the outcomes of the public consultation and the recommendations made by the [Devon Climate Assembly](#) the Interim Plan was updated to a Final Devon Carbon Plan. The Final [Devon Carbon Plan is available to read here](#).

Questions / issues addressed by the Devon Climate Assembly.

The assembly members met over [six weekends](#) in Spring 2020. The recruitment process for the Devon Climate Assembly (this included Mid Devon residents) in addition to details of how it worked, invitation criteria, the final report and the resolutions are available [here](#).

The assembly discussed: *HOW SHOULD DEVON MEET THE BIG CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE CHANGE?* The assembly focused on three big climate challenges which prior public consultation has said need further discussion:

- A. the role of onshore wind energy in Devon's energy mix;
- B. how to encourage people to use their cars less, whilst retaining mobility;
- C. and the issue of building retrofit.

The assembly split into three streams, each focusing on one of these three challenges. [Video recordings of sessions and topic presentations are available online](#).

What Now?

The Devon Carbon Plan is a 'live' document that belongs to all Devon communities, and widespread support is crucial to turn the aims into reality. The team that supports the Devon Climate Emergency partnership aim to maintain community engagement, as part of keeping it relevant, and share updates via the newsletter, social media etc. [Devon Carbon Plan – Devon Climate Emergency](#)

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I hope these are useful in illustrating the background to the DCP and how consultations were carried out.

James King

Question 1

Cost of net zero plans - shows £170m for net zero projects. My concern is what is that money going to be spent on? Strongly believe it could be invested to make the community a 15 or 20 minute city. Tiverton seems to be shutting down quickly. Money could be better spent in developing the town rather than increasing car park charges.

Answer

Dear Mr King,

As promised, please find below, a written answer to the question you raised at the Environment Policy Development Group.

Our 2023/24 service budget is £15.6m. The £117m figure is an estimate of costs for a range of potential schemes we have identified that could help to address climate change, but it is not a budget (and covers a much wider timeframe than a single year). Only projects that are shown to be affordable and feasible can go ahead.

As our Climate and Sustainability Specialist advised the committee, funding for possible schemes would need to be secured from a variety of sources, particularly

via Central Government. The majority of the circa £117m total estimated thus far for climate-related work c.£96.3m would benefit the Community; and by comparison only c.£20.9m for the Council's own Corporate climate work, of which over £4m has already been successfully sourced from central government and spent on invest-to-save energy efficiency and renewable energy projects.

Your wish for thriving, sustainable towns is reflected in the Council's work to support local enterprises and communities, ranging from grants to market places to the Local Plan for future development across Mid Devon. For example:

- [Mid Devon Prosperity Programme - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](https://www.middevon.gov.uk/mid-devon-prosperity-programme)
- [Love your Town Centre funding - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](https://www.middevon.gov.uk/love-your-town-centre-funding)
- [Food and Drink - Taste Mid Devon](https://www.middevon.gov.uk/food-and-drink-taste-mid-devon)
- [Other financial support - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](https://www.middevon.gov.uk/other-financial-support)

We would welcome your ideas for ways to address these matters.

Members of the Environment PDG welcomed the public questions about the Councils' basis for and response to the climate emergency, which will only be possible to deliver if there is a united approach. The target to reach net zero by 2030 is ambitious but has been led by the Devon Carbon Plan and the need for an international and local response to the predicted impacts of climate change. Mid Devon officers, members and residents will need to work together to play our part locally to support national and international efforts.

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Answer

Dear Ms Feltham,

As promised, please find below, a written answer to your questions to the Environment Policy Development Group meeting on 15th August 2023.

A combined answer to the questions posed.

What does the Council's climate emergency declaration mean?

The Council recognises (along with many other organisations and individuals) the climate change crisis is so severe that it deserves an urgent and coordinated

'emergency' response, to help communities to successfully deal with the consequences of climate change and find ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Full Council declared a Climate Emergency in June 2019. The resolution was debated at length and support was unanimous, as recorded in the decision details ([published here](#)). As a local government body, Mid Devon District Council has the authority to resolve declarations, decisions and policy. This fundamental Council function is laid out in its [Constitution](#).

Legally binding obligations for the Council with regard to current legislation.

The Council's environmental sustainability duties are underpinned by legislation e.g. [Environment Act 2021](#), [Climate Change Act 2008](#), [NERC Act 2006](#). All local authorities have obligations under the Climate Change Act 2008 with regard to climate change adaptation (resilience) and mitigation (emission reductions). Related national level policy, guidance, strategies and plans also feed into the actions and decisions that the Council take - about the way we operate and how we can work in partnership to influence Mid Devon as a whole.

Legal implications for reports.

The notes about legal implications on committee reports such as the 'Climate and Sustainability Update' pertain only to that paper. The note does not attempt to summarise the whole of the Council's statutory obligations.

Mid Devon communities care about action to address climate change.

Community consultations ([Devon Carbon Plan example](#)) and surveys have consistently found that residents are concerned about climate change. A large majority feel climate action is a high priority. (Mid Devon [2021](#) example.)

I hope that this assists you.

Les Tosdevin

How can you communicate the Council's plans to the 86% of voters that did not vote?

Answer

In fact, the voter turn-out at the last election was 34%.

We have a Communications Team which is well versed in communicating Mid Devon District Council's plans and aspirations to the whole of the electorate. This is done through a variety of channels including our website, social media channels, via our newsletter sign up platform and through local media, both print and online. The team also share material with all our elected members for them to disseminate within their communities, as well as through a network of parish clerks and local newsletters. Services also use direct mail where appropriate and paid for adverts if needed. The Council has also recently launched a two way engagement hub called Let's Talk Mid Devon which shares council news and consultations and seeks feedback and ideas from our electorate.

In relation to the questions about our climate change work and net zero target, we are considering convening a citizens' forum on climate change/net zero when the time is right. The Liberal Democrat manifesto makes a commitment to closer dialogue with Parish and Town Councils this Autumn, leading up to the State of the District debate (next Spring) through which the Council will seek their opinions and ideas on how the Council is working towards delivery of the 2030 target.



Report for: Environment Policy Development Group

Date of Meeting: 10 October 2023

Subject: Climate and Sustainability Update

Cabinet Member: Cllr Natasha Bradshaw - Cabinet Member for Climate Change.

Responsible Officer: Jason Ball - Climate and Sustainability Specialist.
Paul Deal - Corporate Manager for Finance, Property and Climate Change.

Exempt: None.

which are Exempt from publication under paragraph 3, Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) as it contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

Wards Affected: All.

Enclosures: Annex A. Guidance: climate and environmental sustainability statements.

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)

To receive an update on the Climate Action Plan (CAP) and the wider Climate and Sustainability Programme.

Recommendation(s):

1. **That the Environment PDG notes and accepts this report as an update on the Council’s response to the Climate Emergency, documenting progress with the Climate Action Plan (CAP) and the wider Climate and Sustainability Programme.**

2. **That the Environment PDG recommends to Cabinet the adoption of the attached guidance for officers and Members regarding climate and sustainability statements. This guidance relates to business cases and committee reports. Guidance was developed in consultation with the Net Zero Advisory Group and Corporate Managers and should now be used and maintained to help shape decisions and delivery in line with policy and statutory obligations.**

Section 2 – Report

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council's Corporate Plan places a strong emphasis on environmental sustainability matters in all aspects of its work, linked to everything from procurement to promoting nature recovery.
- 1.2 The Climate and Sustainability (C&S) Specialist leads development of the Council's Climate and Sustainability Programme, working inclusively with all colleagues and Councillors, particularly the Corporate Manager for Finance, Property and Climate Change; and the Cabinet Member for Climate Change.
- 1.3 The Council has declared a Climate Emergency and aims to be climate neutral by 2030. The term 'climate neutrality' describes a balance achieved, for any given period, for carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases released into or removed from the atmosphere; related to the actions taken by organisations, businesses or individuals. The goal of climate neutrality is to achieve a net zero climate impact.
- 1.4 The Council's work to address the climate change crisis aligns with the climate emergency declaration across Devon, and the Devon Carbon Plan. Council actions with regard to **climate mitigation** (reducing greenhouse emissions) and **climate adaptation** (resilience to climate change risks) can be split into two work streams:
 - an internal organisational / corporate focus for the Council;
 - the wider agenda to enable actions across Mid Devon communities.
- 1.5 Therefore this report is divided into **corporate** and **community** items (some overlap is possible). Clearly the Council can monitor and manage matters related to our own assets and operations to a significant degree. For the wider agenda linked to the whole Mid Devon area, we will work as a partner with local businesses, organisations, community groups and residents.
- 1.6 This report emphasises activity and progress updates for brevity. For background details, please refer to previous reports, all [available online](#).

2.0 Performance

- 2.1 Aims, Priorities and Performance Indicators
 - 2.1.1 Progress on Performance Indicators (PI) related to the Corporate Plan is provided separately; [available online](#).
- 2.2 The Council's Carbon Footprint
 - 2.2.1 Annual carbon footprint reports (greenhouse gas accounting) are published on the Council's [Sustainable Mid Devon](#) website: [Our Plan](#).

3.0 Community and partnership activities

3.1 Community engagement.

3.1.1 The C&S Specialist and the Cabinet Member for Climate Change welcome opportunities to liaise with local groups to understand their priorities and to seek partnership opportunities such as events, projects or community engagement. Recent interactions include being kindly invited to a Sustainable Tiverton meeting, and a Sustainable Crediton meeting.

3.1.2 Housing teams have worked with tenants on environmental sustainability through activities and topics that are engaging and important to residents. Such as:

- Energy saving advice.
- Mid Devon in Bloom. Tenants entered into our gardening competition (March-July). A wildflower garden with a pond and vegetable patch won the prize for most sustainable garden. Other category prizes included best communal garden, best baskets and containers and best overall garden.
- Willand Wildlife Garden. Surveys in spring and summer helped plan for new plants and bulbs to be planted this autumn. Wild flora recorded has included bluebell, cuckoo flower and Ficaria verna. Hedgehog houses have been built by a volunteer.

3.2 Promoting local events, exemplars and projects

3.2.1 Online promotion continues through the Council's social media channels, engagement platform and the [Sustainable Mid Devon](#) website. Examples:

- [Free energy efficiency upgrades](#)
- [Mapped - Devon's Community Fridges](#)
- [EV Charge Points at Home and Work](#)

3.3 Bin-it-123.

(CP aim: env06.)

3.3.1 Council teams are running a proactive educational campaign to inform households that recyclable and residual waste must be in the right containers (residual waste left on the side will not be taken). Since the Bin It 123 launch in October 2022, the district's recycling rate has increased by 9% compared to the same period last year. The amount of residual waste collected during the 12 month period up to May 2023 reduced by 1,491 tonnes; again a significant positive change achieved by Mid Devon households.

3.3.2 Anyone requiring more recycling containers can [request additional containers](#) online and can also [request additional black bins on the Council's website](#).

3.4 Devon Energy Planning Group

3.4.1 The C&S Specialist is involved in establishing a partnership approach to energy action planning and preparedness. By setting up a local modelling capability the Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) will provide a pipeline of

investable projects that will act at a local level to achieve Net Zero energy systems for the full range of energy uses and types.

3.5 Sustainable Economy

(CP aims: Env01, Env02.)

3.5.1 The C&S Specialist supported the Economy Team bid for an extra £24k towards green business grants. This will, if approved, boost the Council's Shared Prosperity Fund from April 2024 so we can support local resource efficiency projects, energy saving investments and renewables.

3.6 Electric Vehicle Chargepoints: Delivery via the Deletti Partnership.

3.6.1 Leases have been agreed at the first 3 of 6 public car parks where the Council will host rapid vehicle chargers and will earn revenue as a small percentage of operator income. At no capital cost to the Council, these fully funded units will be owned and operated by Wenea / Gamma Energy (contract procured by lead partner Devon County Council).

3.6.2 The first phase is: Market Street at Crediton, Forge Way at Cullompton and William Street at Tiverton. The next phase will be: St Saviour's Way at Crediton, Westexe South at Tiverton and the Pannier Market at Tiverton.

3.7 Devon's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) working group.

3.7.1 We are actively involved in the Devon's county working group that will help deliver the [£7million LEVI funding](#) investment in more EV chargers (attended by the C&S Specialist). [The draft Devon EV strategy](#) 'solution hierarchy' prioritises different charger roles to meet local needs, and this will be reflected in the scheme.

3.7.2 The county council plans to run a consultation for town and parish councils. Therefore now seems a good time for local councils to consider how to influence 'best practice' and where communities would like to see investment targeted e.g. trials of on-street slow charger installations.

4.0 Corporate activities

4.1 The Net Zero Advisory Group (NZAG).

(CS priority: 1.)

4.1.1 An advisory group of the Environment PDG. NZAG met on the 22nd August and has a strong support from a wide range of Members, who expressed a wish for the NZAG to facilitate community engagement, local action and projects that link with other PDG committees. Cllr Beckett Fish agreed to be NZAG Chair.

4.2 Sustainability appraisals for decision-making and reports.

(CS priority: 1.)

4.2.1 Cabinet endorsed Environment PDG recommendations, for the PDG and NZAG to liaise with Corporate Management Team (CMT) to:

- formulate a method for a Climate and Sustainability Statement that can be consistently applied to all business cases

- devise a consistent approach to climate change impact statements noted on committee reports
- 4.2.2 This was carried out and final draft guidance was circulated to this PDG and all PDG Chairs. Environment PDG may now recommend it to Cabinet. The guidance would be a 'living' corporate reference document for the Council, helping to support and monitor delivery e.g. towards the 2030 net zero target.
- 4.3 Sustainability in Planning and Development.
(CS Priority 1.)
- 4.3.1 Zed Pod installations at Cullompton have begun. The Council was named Highly Commended in the "Client of the Year" in the Offsite Awards 2023, for its Zed Pod social housing schemes on brownfield sites. Zed Pods are superbly well-insulated and energy-efficient housing units with a Net Zero carbon performance powered by solar PV panels, constructed off-site and installed with the help of local contractors.
- 4.4 Project: Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS).
(CS priority: 2, 3. CP aims: env01, env02, ec01.)
- 4.4.1 A capital funding bid for PSDS funding for Culm Valley Sports Centre is being prepared. The Council had submitted a PSDS bid for funds to carry out a detailed design in advance of the capital bid, but this did not succeed due to over-subscription for PSDS on a national level.
- 4.5 Renewable Energy for Council Consumption
(CS Priority 2 and 3. CP aims: Env02, Ec01.)
- 4.5.1 The decision by [Cabinet 04 July 2023](#) sought to achieve 100% renewable electricity supply within 2 years, to avoid carbon emissions of circa 560 tCO₂e annually. Arrangements have been initiated to secure fully renewable supply when we commence the October 2024 to September 2028 contract.

Financial Implications: The financial implications associated with this report are the overall costs of the Climate and Sustainability Programme, budgets linked specifically to the Council's Corporate Plan, Climate Strategy and CAP.

Legal Implications: The Council's environmental sustainability duties are underpinned by legislation e.g. [Environment Act 2021](#). All local authorities have obligations under the [Climate Change Act 2008](#) with regard to climate change adaptation (resilience) and mitigation (emission reductions). [Full Council declared a Climate Emergency in June 2019](#).

Risk Assessment: Progress on Performance Indicators (PI) provided separately by Performance and Risk Reports. There are 2 main risks (to the Council): 1) that the Council does not take sufficient actions to enable it to meet its Climate Emergency declaration ambitions; and 2) that the financial implications of Climate Change are not adequately measured and reflected in the Council's decision making.

Impact on Climate Change: The role of the Climate and Sustainability (C&S) Specialist in support of the corporate officer team is central to the Council's Climate

and Sustainability Programme by actions such as the development of strategic positions and delivery of projects through internal, community and partnership work.

Equalities Impact Assessment: There are no equality impacts associated with this report. Specific projects and policies are subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty. (Assessing the equality impacts of proposed changes to policies, procedures and practices is not only a legal requirement, but also a positive opportunity for authorities to make better decisions based on robust evidence.)

Relationship to Corporate Plan: Please refer to Annex A which shows the Council's Corporate Plan aims (Table 1) and Climate Strategy priorities (Table 2).

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks

Statutory Officer: Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151

Date:

Statutory Officer: Maria de Leburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

Date:

Chief Officer: Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive/Corporate Director

Date:

Performance and risk: Steve Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

Date: 28/09/2023

Cabinet member notified: Yes.

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Jason Ball - Climate and Sustainability Specialist: Email:

JBall@MidDevon.gov.uk Tel: 01884 255255.

Background papers: Related papers: The previous report was provided to the [Environment Policy Development Group](#) on [15 August 2023](#).

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Background paper: Environment Policy Development Group. Topic: Climate Strategy priority 1, corporate culture etc. Title: **Guidance: climate and environmental sustainability statements.**

Date of Meeting: 10 October 2023.

1.0 Cabinet endorsed Environment PDG recommendations, for the PDG and NZAG to liaise with Corporate Management Team (CMT) to:

- formulate a method for a Climate and Sustainability Statement that can be consistently applied to all business cases
- devise a consistent approach to climate change impact statements noted on committee reports

2.0 Final draft guidance was circulated to this PDG and all PDG Chairs. Environment PDG may now recommend it to Cabinet. The guidance would be a 'living' corporate reference document for the Council.

Content is provided below. The guidance document will include a title page with a contents table and version control.

Contact details: Jason Ball - Climate and Sustainability Specialist: Email: JBall@MidDevon.gov.uk Tel: 01884 255255.

Related papers: none.

Guidance: climate and environmental sustainability statements

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Version Control

Version	Contributor initials:	Approval by:	Approval date:
Draft 0.1 03 March 2023	JPB. AB.	Corporate Management Team (CMT) consulted then circulated to Environment PDG.	in progress
Draft 0.2 14 June 2023	JPB. Cllr NB.	CMT approved for consideration by Environment PDG for approval.	in progress
QA Final Draft	CMT.		in progress
Final			

1. Background

“We will aim for Mid Devon to be carbon neutral by 2030 and all decisions made by the council will be considered in light of the climate crisis.”

Mid Devon District Council [Climate Emergency Declaration](#) June 2019.

This guidance supports a consistent approach to considering the climate change crisis in the way we manage and facilitate decision-making across all teams and work themes. Doing this well is part of delivering on the Council’s commitments made to Mid Devon’s communities and its obligations under UK law (such as the Climate Change Act 2008).

Cabinet has resolved the following:

- That Environment PDG and Net Zero Advisory Group (NZAG) consult with CMT and the C&S Specialist to devise a consistent approach to climate change impact statements noted on committee reports. Feedback to inform a Recommendation to Cabinet.
- That Environment PDG consult with Corporate Management Team (CMT) to formulate a method for a Climate and Sustainability Statement that can be consistently applied to all business cases. Feedback to inform a Recommendation to Cabinet.

2. Guidance: committee reports

Reports to committees such as cabinet and policy development groups require a summary paragraph “Impact on Climate Change” along with other assessments such as Equality.

Please note:

- A reduction or removal of greenhouse gas emissions is **climate change mitigation**.
- Action to improve resilience to climate change risks is **climate change adaptation**. Adaptation could relate to matters such as flood risk, raised temperatures or the frequency of extreme weather events.
- Typically climate change adaptation benefits are not easily quantified, but should be tangible e.g. reduced flood risk. Some aspects can be quantified e.g. land area (km²) managed to bring benefits and reduce flood risk.
- Activity at a strategic or programme level tends to deal with broad aims / outcomes, and might not lend itself to quantifiable measures.
- However, reports specific to a project or business case are expected to assess their climate change impact, and actions to address climate change (mitigation or adaptation) in a tangible manner.
- Whole life-cycle impact assessments are important for some projects such as construction, where often the biggest impact relates to embedded carbon in materials and methods.

Your climate change impact statements on a Committee report should have the following key elements:

1. Where there are quantifiable impacts (good or bad) these must be provided. Estimated emissions must be expressed as tCO₂e (tonnes of CO₂ equivalent).
2. Where there are no quantifiable impacts, but there are benefits or costs related to climate change, these must be provided.
3. Make it clear whether the impact is positive (beneficial) or negative (harmful) and the activity duration (short-term or long-term).
4. Please be clear on the scale / reach and the magnitude / weight of the effect.

Absence of a statement is not acceptable – please include something, even if you need to say there will be no impact or difference made. Estimates are fine, but please provide caveats. Keep assessments brief and give detail in the report or supporting material.

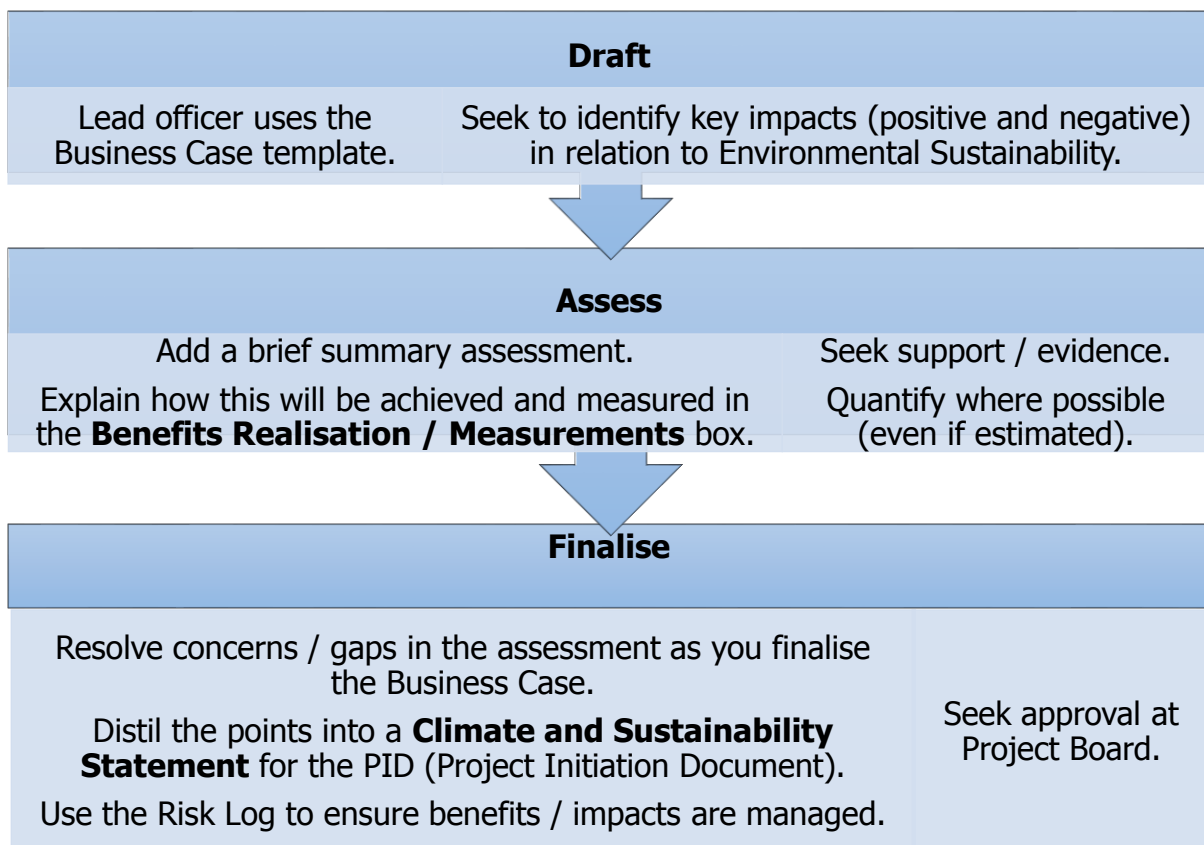
3. Guidance: Climate and Sustainability Statements for business cases

All business cases must use the PRINCE Business Case template on SharePoint. A business case or project proposal typically has a developmental phase as you prepare and submit it (before approval) and a delivery management phase (after approval) to ensure the approved goals are delivered and the benefits realised.

Add your Climate and Sustainability Statement as a brief summary assessment in the **Climate and Sustainability Statement** box on the Business Case form. Put relevant objectives in the **Benefits** box. Explain details - how this will be achieved and measured - in the **Benefits Realisation / Measurements** box. A process flowchart is shown below.

An approved project must be listed on the Council’s Climate Action Plan (where relevant), with emissions expressed as tCO₂e allocated to scopes 1, 2, or 3 (or a combination). The Project Manager should add a KPI (or an item on the Risk Log) as relevant to impact management and related goals and decisions. Project reporting could include e.g. Red-Amber-Green (RAG) indicators.

Process Flowchart (business case)



A Climate and Sustainability Statement should cover all the environmental benefits and impacts affected by your proposal. Climate change considerations might typically include:

- energy performance in buildings;
- renewable energy investment or procurement;

- improved efficiency in work arrangements or upgrades to systems;
- transport needs / modes / changes;
- embodied carbon linked to manufacture, transport and lifecycle of materials;
- embodied carbon linked to construction;
- preparations appropriate to the increased likelihood of extreme weather events.

Sustainability considerations additional to climate might include, for example:

- consumption of resources such as materials, chemicals, PPE, goods, water;
- water, land or air pollution, e.g. [air quality management](#) plans;
- natural capital;
- ecological effects on e.g. breeding habitats, hibernation sites, connectivity.

Climate change impacts, benefits and risks are often related to other issues such as landscapes and ecology, but even if those are assessed or managed separately or by other organisations, the climate-related aspects should still be given consideration (e.g. a project to avoid soil erosion could be considered with regard to climate change risks and 'climate change adaptation' in parallel to other bodies / partnerships concerned with farming and food security; whilst emissions from the loss of *sequestered carbon* held by soils and habitats comes under 'climate change impact').

Back your conclusions with background research, and indicate how you will provide evidence to shape and verify your assessment. Be proportionate to the project scope and Council requirements e.g. will you consult with colleagues to check assumptions and estimates, would hyperlinks to best-practice guidance suffice, or will the project require independent reports by suitably qualified consultants?

Key elements at each phase.

Developmental Phase (before approval)

- **Scope**
- **Purpose / Process / Activity**
- **Context**
- **Wider considerations e.g. procurement implications.**

Management Phase (after approval)

- **Monitor / verify the results.**
- **Report back to the Project Board on actual impacts/benefits.**

4. Resources

Seek help where needed. The Climate and Sustainability Specialist provides support across all teams. Colleagues are on hand to share project experience and expertise.

Why do we consider the climate impact of projects and the way we work?

Making decisions in a way that supports the Council's net zero 2030 target is vital, because the right choices can speed up our ability to cut the Council's carbon footprint.

Monitoring the Council's Carbon Footprint.

The Council reports its 'Carbon Footprint' or 'Greenhouse Gas Inventory' - an assessment of its climate change impact as an organisation, measured in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO_{2e}). The tCO_{2e} is based on the Global Warming Potential (GWP) of different greenhouse gases over a 100-year period in comparison to carbon dioxide (CO₂).

Carbon Footprint reports, a progress chart and headline figures are published at <https://sustainablemiddevon.org.uk/our-plan> and updated annually.

Does this really matter to the Council?

Yes, working to address climate change and environmental sustainability is a high priority to the Members, and surveys consistently show a huge majority of our communities care too. The Council's recognition of a climate emergency was widely welcomed in Mid Devon communities and this echoed the response across Devon.

The Council's environmental sustainability obligations are underpinned by legislation (e.g. [Environment Act 2021](#), [Climate Change Act 2008](#), [NERC Act 2006](#)). For example, [we must](#) seek to [conserve and enhance biodiversity](#). The Council's statutory duty to address climate change means adaptation and mitigation considerations are woven into the way we operate and how we work in partnership to influence Mid Devon as a whole. Sometimes communities or the Council can push further than minimum requirements, e.g. in Neighbourhood Plans and the Local Plan. The Council is a signatory partner to the [Devon Carbon Plan](#).

How can we find the right background information?

The UK Government website is a useful starting point.

- [Local government, climate change and the environment \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-government-climate-change-and-the-environment)

Some information is provided within the Council's own reports (e.g. Environment Policy Development Group), strategy documents (e.g. Housing Strategy), policies (e.g. climate emergency planning policy statement) and plans (e.g. Climate Action Plan).

- [Studies and Data – Devon Climate Emergency](#)
- [Greenhouse gas reporting: conversion factors 2023 \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/greenhouse-gas-reporting-conversion-factors-2023)
- [Energy and climate change: evidence and analysis \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/energy-and-climate-change-evidence-and-analysis)
- [Agriculture and climate change \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/agriculture-and-climate-change)

- [The UK climate change statistics portal](#)

Free data tools

- [Community carbon calculator \(impact-tool.org.uk\)](#) including Mid Devon data.
- [Greenhouse Gas Accounting Tool \(local authorities\) - Local Partnerships](#)

Official data and guidance on carbon footprints and the climate impact 'emissions factors' of different fuels, foods, transport types, activities, etc can be found via government agencies and government departments e.g. [Department for Energy Security and Net Zero](#) (DESNZ), Defra, Department of Transport.

The [Climate Change Committee](#) (CCC) is an independent review body for the UK which advises and challenges progress with policy and delivery.

Adaptation information and assessments of climate change risks can be found via the MetOffice, Environment Agency and advisory bodies.

- [Environment Agency and climate change adaptation \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Flood risk assessments: climate change allowances \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [UK Climate Projections \(UKCP\) - Met Office](#)
- [UK climate maps and data - Met Office](#)

Useful research findings and facts can often be found published online by academic centres e.g. Centre for Alternative Technology, Grantham Institute, University of Exeter. External expertise and guidance could provide valuable reference material and there is a range of knowledge exchange hubs, partnerships and programmes out there.

- [Climate, environment and waste | Local Government Association](#)
- [Climate Adaptation Toolkit - Local Partnerships](#)
- [South West Net Zero Hub \(swnetzerohub.org.uk\)](#)

Examples of impact statements

A: Reports.

Impact on Climate Change: *For the homes in our management, repair and improvement strategies are informed by the need to reduce carbon emissions with a decarbonisation programme; the need to reduce fuel poverty is also a key consideration.*

The example above was appropriate for the scope of the report. (An assessment of the works programme would need to provide figures on the emissions reduction achieved.)

Impact on Climate Change: *The improvements made substantial energy savings of 3,975,431 kilowatt-hours (kWh) in electricity and a 1,854,450 kWh saving in gas. This saved a third on annual energy expenditure -*

approximately £95k. The council also benefitted from a reduction in maintenance costs, helping to free up budgets.

The poor example above quantified energy and cost savings, but the emissions figures should have been stated (kgCO₂e or tCO₂e) so this did not assess climate impact.

Impact on Climate Change: *The recommendation to seek to increase the proportion of renewable power consumption (currently circa 50%-55% of electricity on half-hourly metered supplies is on a renewable tariff) aligns with the Council's climate emergency policy and net zero 2030 target. The LASER framework offers green tariff options such as 'green basket' and renewable energy sources, and LASER can provide advisory and facilitation services for power purchase, trading and portfolio management. To continue the LASER framework would not preclude or prevent the Council from implementing measures to reduce and offset carbon emissions from gas and electricity consumption.*

The example above was used on a Cabinet report on energy procurement; it comments specifically on how the report recommendations would affect / enable Council policy. More detail in the report and annex provided estimates of associated greenhouse gas emissions. Such as:

Our standard tariff electricity has greenhouse gas emissions of 0.261 kilograms of CO₂ equivalent (kgCO₂e) per kWh unit. This would total circa 544 tonnes CO₂e per year if the Council had not sourced a renewable tariff for some sites (noted below).

Together the summary and further details enabled Members and Officers to evaluate the impact of the decisions and options in the report.

B: Project Proposals

A hypothetical example of a short summary statement for a project or decision:

Practical implementation of our policy could reduce climate impact by circa 28 tonnes of CO₂e by avoiding an additional 4,000 car commuter journeys per year.

A hypothetical example of more detailed explanation in the body of the report:

We estimated the climate impact (benefit) of avoiding 4,000 journeys based on commuting emissions of 7.0 kgCO₂e per day in an average car travelling 16.1 km each way. $4,000 \times 7 = 28,000$ kgCO₂e or 28 tCO₂e.

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Report for: Environment Policy Development Group

Date of Meeting:	10 October 2023
Subject:	Medium Term Financial Plan – General Fund (GF)
Cabinet Member:	James Buczkowski – Cabinet Member for Finance
Responsible Officer:	Andrew Jarrett – Deputy Chief Executive (S151)
Exempt:	N/a
Wards Affected:	All
Enclosures:	Appendix 1 – General Fund MTFP Summary Position Appendix 2 – General Fund Savings Options

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)

To present to Member's the updated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) which covers the period 2024/25 to 2028/29 for the General Fund (GF) and consider initial savings options.

Recommendation(s):

That the Policy Development Group Members:

- 1. Note the updated MTFP's for the General Fund covering the years 2024/25 to 2028/29**
- 2. Consider the options included within the Appendix 2 and recommend to Cabinet the way forwards, noting that if the committee doesn't support any options, alternative suggestions should be made.**

Section 2 – Report

1.0 Introduction and purpose of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

- 1.1 This report summarises the report to Cabinet on 19 September outlining the MTFP position for the General Fund (GF). Members are encouraged to read**

that Cabinet report in full to provide greater understanding of the overarching financial position.

- 1.2 The main purpose of the MTFP is to show how the Council will strategically manage its finances in order to support the delivery of the priorities detailed in the Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 and future years beyond that plan. This will importantly need to take account of the new council administration in their emerging corporate plan ambitions.
- 1.3 The MTFP has been a key corporate requirement for a number of years and is an essential part of the budget setting process. It provides a financial model which forecasts the cost of providing Council services over a future rolling five year period, together with an estimate of the financial resources that will be available.
- 1.4 The MTFP helps strategically plan the budget setting process, but of equal importance, gives Management and Members an overview of future budget gaps so strategic decisions can be made over levels of future spending, Council Tax levels, policies for fees and charges, asset investment or disposal, etc.

2.0 Framework for the Medium Term Financial Plan

- 2.1 The starting base for an MTFP is the 2023/24 approved budget, which is then adjusted for any supplementary estimates approved by the Council or any significant budget variances identified in the budget monitoring report to the Cabinet.
- 2.2 This base then has to be adjusted for unavoidable costs, such as, pay increases, inflation, service pressures associated with new legislation, a growing residential or business property base or improving performance, etc. The MTFP will also consider forecasts for investment receipts and income from fees and charges.
- 2.3 Finally the MTFP considers and makes assumptions regarding future levels of funding, in particular Council Tax including the potential growth in tax base, Business Rates again including any movement in the baseline as well as changes in the reliefs, multipliers and overall retention levels. Forecasts are also made for the likely level of future Central Government funding.
- 2.4 Note however, at this time, the financing requirement included reflects the 2023/24 Capital MTFP as it is currently being refreshed. The update will be brought back to Cabinet later in the budget cycle. Furthermore, the MTFP should be recognised as a high level estimate of the financial position – it is not a projected based upon a line-by-line review of costs / income.

- 2.5 The MTFP models an overall aggregated position for the GF based on a range of assumptions. This then predicts an overall budget position, which can highlight a potential budget gap and then propose remedial action which can be taken to resolve it. Clearly, these assumptions can be challenged or changed. They will vary due to changes in the local, national and international economic position and of course, the ongoing consequences of the Cost Of Living Crisis will have implications, not only for the current year, but also for the years to come.
- 2.6 The development of a five year financial model is based on a number of assumptions and perceived risks. These become more difficult to predict the further into the future you consider. In general terms a prudent/reasonable approach has been taken regarding forecasts, professional accounting guidance has been followed and external technical opinion has been sought where necessary.

3.0 Background to the Medium Term Financial Plan

- 3.1 Given this is a new administration, Members should be aware that this MTFP has been developed against a backdrop of:
- Austerity – an aggregate cut in Central Government Grant of c£5m during the austerity measures put in place since 2010/11 and been replaced with lower levels of more volatile funding sources e.g. New Homes Bonus, Business Rates and numerous one-off grants. In addition certain funding streams have also been capped, such as Council Tax;
 - Covid-19 – service income through fees and charges in some areas is only just recovering to pre-covid-19 levels, i.e. Leisure and Car Parking;
 - The invasion of Ukraine significantly impacted the availability and therefore price of energy and fuel, leading to A Cost of Living Crisis not seen since the early 1980's. It has required the reallocation of Council resources into supporting the Government with their Energy Rebate and Homes for Ukraine schemes and is impacting budgets through high pay and price inflation;
 - Locally, resources previously realigned to manage the Government's response to the Pandemic and Cost of Living Crisis are again only just returning to their substantive roles;
 - Nationally, the cost of the Pandemic and Cost of Living Crisis has been significant, with the government's gross debt being £2.537bn (100.5% of

GDP) with the net borrowing £24.4bn¹. This indicates that austerity measures are likely to continue;

- Political change at a national level leading to uncertainty and emergency policy decisions being taken that have unsettled the financial markets. Interest rates have soared to combat the high inflation as is now expected to reduce at a slower rate.

Yet the Council continues to deliver a wide range of well performing services.

4.0 Summary of the Medium Term Financial Plan

- 4.1 There is significant pressure on the GF arising from the decisions taken to balance the 2023/24 budget, namely the £400k staffing vacancy target and the £625k draw from reserves. The assumption is that these are not rolled forward into 2024/25. However, despite this in-year £1,025k challenge, the Qtr. 1 forecast indicated an over spend of £527k on the General Fund, indicating that £498k has been offset, albeit not all through ongoing savings measures. Any overspend position will negatively affect reserve balances, which reduce the option to smooth this budget deficit over time.
- 4.2 There are also a range of other pressures falling on the budget, including, but not restricted to, the following:
- The Cost of Living Crisis with high inflation affecting pay and material prices for all services. The 2024/25 assumed pay award is an increase of 4% - adding a pressure of circa £700k to the GF budget.
 - Many services are experiencing high staff turnover and sickness levels requiring additional temporary staff being employed to keep key services such as waste collection operational. To mitigate this pressure and deliver the £400k staffing vacancy target within the GF, a soft recruitment freeze has been implemented. Where a role is required to maintain key service provision, for example a lifeguard or waste operative, these positions will be filled. However, where other posts become vacant, recruiting is being delayed / postponed to free up budget. Inevitably, this does impact on the quality and speed of service delivery, and this is mitigated as far as possible.
 - The significant increases in energy charges have also had an impact on the Council's finances. The Cabinet recently agreed to extend the current provider (Laser) and increase the proportion of Electricity purchased from 100% renewable sources. It is currently too early to receive the new energy prices due to cover the year beginning 1 October 2023, therefore the

¹ [UK government debt and deficit - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

forecast remains as previously projected, although the energy cap has reduced since that forecast, potentially leading to a saving for the Council from the assumed circa £400k GF pressure. Furthermore, over time with the use of more electric vehicles, there will be a move away from fossil fuel to electricity.

- There are also regulatory requirements to fulfil such as Fire Safety, decarbonisation and increased the use of renewable energy.

4.3 In summary, the forecast GF shortfall for 2024/25 can be attributed to the removal of the one-off targets included within the 2023/24 budget, plus the assumed inflationary uplift driven by the Cost of Living Crisis. The sum of these pressures has added c.£2.1m to our cost base. The longer term shortfall (rising to £5.2m) is largely due to inflation and the assumptions around reduced government funding.

4.4 This is clearly a challenge built upon a number of assumptions, caveats, decisions based upon external advice and the most up to date information available at this time. Clearly, any major variations in these assumptions would require a fundamental review of the MTFPs and would be reported back to Cabinet and the wider Membership as soon as practical, coupled with proposed courses of action that could be implemented.

4.5 The Council has a legal requirement to set a balance budget and needs to ensure its overall costs are affordable i.e. they can be funded through income and planned short-term use of reserves. Members therefore need to take the necessary decisions and actions to manage net spending within affordable limits.

5.0 Approach to closing the Budget Gap

5.1 In order to reduce the forecast deficit the Council will strive to constantly manage its costs and revenues by:

- Ensure fees/charges are revisited regularly and that the Council are charging appropriately for all items possible;
- A continued reduction of service and employee costs – which may incur short term upfront costs;
- Continue and expand partnership working where practical;
- Investigation of a number of spend to save projects;
- Review the current and future property asset requirements;
- Maximise procurement efficiencies;
- Explore new commercial opportunities;
- Examine different ways of delivering services to reduce costs;
- Continued benchmarking and learning from best practice;

- Consideration of growing the residential and commercial property base to align delivery with Government funding priorities.
- 5.2 The above plans will require all service areas to play an active role in securing future savings and the Council will also continue to consult with all of its major stakeholders, especially the tax payers and tenants, to ensure all future budgetary decisions accord with their priorities.
- 5.3 During the summer, services have been reviewing a range of budget options that could be considered in order to help mitigate the 2024/25 budget shortfall. Those relevant to this Policy Development Group (PDG) are included within **Appendix 2**. The views of this PDG on where any possible budget savings could be found to resolve the immediate budget gap for 2024/25 and future years will form the basis of the discussions with a view to the PDG making recommendations to Cabinet.
- 5.4 Members will appreciate that all budget options will require political support and therefore if some suggestions are deemed to be unacceptable then other savings will need to be proposed. Members should indicate where these alternatives should be sought.

6.0 Balances and Reserves

- 6.1 The Council should look to match on-going spending plans to available in-year resources. It currently holds an uncommitted General Fund Reserve with a balance of £2,025k, which is above the current balance of £2m set by Full Council. However, this will be impacted by the outturn position of 2023/24 and the degree to which the £1,025k in-year target cannot be mitigated, which is projected to reduce to £527k. This will only leave £1,498k in the reserve and will need to be replenished over the lifetime of this MTFP.
- 6.2 The Council holds these reserves for a number of reasons. Firstly to deal with any short term cash flow or funding issues. Secondly to provide a contingency for exceptional one-off acts (i.e. flooding, fire, terrorism, business rate failure, etc.) and, thirdly to provide a buffer for known circumstances whose final affect is unknown (i.e. changes in legislation or major funding changes). Clearly, the more uncertainty that exists, the higher the balance required to mitigate this risk. This level of minimum reserves is assessed annually to ensure it is adequate.
- 6.3 As stated above, this plan does not include any utilisation of these reserves. However, with the scale of the deficit, it is conceivable that some utilisation could be necessary. If so, this should be on the basis that the reserve is replenished by the end of the MTFP period.

6.4 The Council also holds GF Earmarked Reserves of circa £20m, which have been set aside for a specific purpose, such as sinking funds for asset replacement. Although these reserves are ring-fenced and should not to support ongoing expenditure within the budget, a review of all Earmarked Reserves is undertaken annually and any identification of funding no longer required to be earmarked can be released and could be used to support the budget. As these funds are one-off, they only delay the requirement for the identification and implementation of a sustainable saving.

7.0 Conclusion

7.1 The MTFP will continue to be updated to ensure it is a live document. It is subject to amendment and review by Leadership Team and Members and will provide a clear guide prior to commencing the annual budget setting process in future years.

7.2 Like all councils, Mid Devon is facing an ongoing and very challenging financial future. Having a realistic financial plan for the next five years will enable the Council to ensure it is allocating its limited financial resources to its key priorities. Moving forward Members will be provided with regular updates on the financial impact of any variation to what has been previously assumed.

7.3 It should also be noted that the PDGs will continue to play a pro-active role in both reducing ongoing service costs and exploring new possibilities to raise additional income. Options will be brought forward for consideration over the next few months in the run in to setting the 2024/25 budget in February 2024.

Financial Implications

By undertaking an annual review of the MTFP the Council can ensure that its Corporate Plan priorities are affordable. The implications of the revised budget gap are set out within the paper. Many areas require greater clarity, particularly around national funding and the possibility of additional funding to offset the implications of the Cost of Living Crisis. Therefore a number of key assumptions underpin the reported position, which will be refined as greater clarity is received through the budget setting process.

Legal Implications

None directly arising from this report, although there is a legal obligation to balance the budget. There are legal implications arising from any future consequential decisions to change service provision, but these would be assessed at the time.

Risk Assessment

The MTFP makes a number of financial assumptions based on a sensible/prudent approach, taking account of the most up to date professional advice that is available.

Impact on Climate Change

The allocation of resources will impact upon the Council's ability to implement/fund new activities linked to climate change, as the MTFP sets the broad budgetary framework for the Council over the coming years. However, some provision has already been included in the base budget and further evaluation/consideration will be made as the draft budget passes through the PDGs over the next few months. Significant investment is currently forecast within the Capital Programme, however this will be dependent upon full options appraisals and levels of Grant funding available.

Equalities Impact Assessment

No implications arising from this report.

Relationship to Corporate Plan

The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) sets out the financial resources available to deliver the Council's ongoing Corporate Plan priorities.

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks

Statutory Officer: Andrew Jarrett
Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151
Date: 18 September 2023

Statutory Officer: Maria De Leiburne
Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 18 September 2023

Chief Officer: Stephen Walford
Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive/Corporate Director
Date: 18 September 2023

Performance and risk: Dr Steve Carr
Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager
Date: 18 September 2023

Cabinet member notified: Yes

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Andrew Jarrett – Deputy Chief Executive (S151)
Email: ajarrett@middevon.gov.uk
Telephone: 01884 234242

Contact: Paul Deal – Corporate Manager for Finance, Property and Climate Change
Email: pdeal@middevon.gov.uk
Telephone: 01884 234254

Background papers:

- 2024/25 Medium Term Financial Plan report to Cabinet 19 September 2023

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Appendix 1 – General Fund Medium Term Financial Plan

The Table below gives an overall summary of the Council's General Fund MTFP position (which includes a wide range of assumptions).

MTFP General Fund Summary

2023/24 £'000		Notes	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000
16,845	Net Direct Cost of Services		17,035	17,468	18,210	19,036	19,752
(1,884)	Net recharge to HRA		(1,948)	(2,006)	(2,067)	(2,129)	(2,193)
703	Provision for Repayment of Borrowing	1	898	970	1,066	1,063	1,101
15,665	Net Service Costs		15,986	16,432	17,210	17,969	18,659
(1,032)	Net Interest Costs/(Receipts)	2	(1,030)	(1,000)	(900)	(900)	(900)
180	Finance Lease Interest Payable		200	126	116	106	99
(1,582)	Net Transfers to/(from) Earmarked Reserves	3	(59)	188	288	214	314
(625)	Net Transfers to/(from) General Reserves		0	0	0	0	0
12,606	Total Budget Requirement		15,097	15,747	16,715	17,389	18,172
	Funded By:						
(4,319)	Retained Business Rates	4	(4,449)	(4,138)	(4,218)	(4,301)	(4,385)
(98)	Revenue Support Grant		(98)	0	0	0	0
(547)	Rural Services Delivery Grant		(547)	(547)	(547)	(547)	(547)
(320)	New Homes Bonus	5	(320)	0	0	0	0
(90)	2022/23 Services Grant	5	(90)	0	0	0	0
(485)	2023/24 Funding Guarantee		(485)	0	0	0	0
(6,749)	Council Tax–MDDC	6	(7,007)	(7,330)	(7,560)	(7,795)	(8,037)
(12,606)	Total Funding		(12,994)	(12,013)	(12,323)	(12,641)	(12,967)
0	Annual Gap – Increase/(Decrease) In-year		2,103	1,631	658	357	457
0	Cumulative Gap		2,103	3,733	4,392	4,749	5,206

Notes:

1. The Provision for repayment of borrowing incorporates the financial implications of the current Capital Programme.
2. The reduction in Net Interest Costs / (Receipts) reflects the removal of the possible interest earned from 3 Rivers Developments Ltd and is replaced by an assumption on interest earned through treasury investments. Assumption on interest rates to be reviewed.
3. Net Transfers to / (from) Earmarked Reserves reflects planned contributions to, or drawdowns from reserves. This is likely to change significantly during this budget process.
4. The Retained Business Rates increase is assumed to be 3% in 2024/25 and a 2% increase is assumed in future years. However income drops in 2025/26 to reflect the potential changes the Government might implement to the Business Rates Retention Scheme. These include Re-Baselining and Resource Equalisation. No use of the Smoothing Reserve has been factored in (currently £720k but dependent upon annual collection surplus/deficit).

5. The current assumption is for a cash freeze in grants for 2024/25. However in 2025/26, it is assumed that the long awaited implications for grant funding arising from the Fair Funding Review are implemented, i.e. those announced as one off / ceasing will have stopped. However, there is an expectation that these are replaced, at least in part, but forecasting that is impossible. Therefore it is hoped that this is the prudent / worst case forecast.
6. Council Tax income is forecast assuming Band D charge increases in line with referendum limits in 2024/25 and assumed referendum limits in future years, and an increase in the taxbase in line with the local plan requirements (c350 properties per annum) and a return to normal (98%) collection rate over the life of the MTFP.

2024/25 Headline Savings options - Round 1

Appendix 2

Cabinet /	Service	Budget	Cost	BRIEF Saving Description (including risks of delivery)	Low Risk	Medium Risk	High Risk
Environment	Street Scene	Matthew Page / Darren Beer	FM580	Removal of pool cars	£ 13,000		
Environment	Waste	Matthew Page / Darren Beer	WS725	Impact of Shared Saving Scheme - Forecast in April and actual amount will be sent in September 2024. Budget £150K forecast £290K but could be more.	£ 140,000		
Environment	Waste	Matthew Page / Darren Beer	WS700	Increase Garden Waste Fees in line or above inflation (includes extra forecast above budget for 2023-24)		£ 15,000	
Environment	Waste	Matthew Page / Darren Beer	WS710	Increase trade waste charges above 3% base (Increase of further 1%) Implications: Potential for customers to change provider	£ 9,000		
All	ALL	ALL	All Services	Potential savings could be made in certain areas linked to de-scoping or downsizing activity, should turnover allow for a natural wastage approach in these identified areas. Organisation-wide turnover should allow for a realisation of some of these savings over the coming months and years. However, they are categorised as amber/red to denote that these are not immediately realisable (amber) or would not be recommended due to the severe negative impact on service delivery (red). This aligns with the early steer from the administration around prioritising and protecting service delivery to customers alongside a desire to ensure no redundancies are required given the opportunities to manage workforce resource effectively through targeted vacancy and turnover management.	£ 40,680	£ 370,840	£ 363,806
All	ALL	ALL	All Services	Reduction in agency spend Implications: Will require services to scrutinise need and develop greater relationships with agency providers, negotiating where required Could result in services offering a lesser service at a lower rate should it be decided agency spend is not favourable			?
All	ALL	ALL	All Services	Reduction in cost of sickness Implications: Would require us to take a less risk adverse attitude to managing sickness which could result in claims Will require consistency across the whole organisation			?
All	ALL	ALL	All Services	Business Rates - possible reduction arising from appeals	?		
All	ALL	ALL	All Services	Energy costs - possible movement depending on new unit price. Need to reduce usage.	?		
All	ALL	ALL	All Services	Fuel Costs - Possible movement depending on how prices move	£ 30,000		
TOTAL					£ 269,380	£ 535,566	£ 532,731

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ENVIRONMENT PDG WORK PLAN 2023-2024

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Theme	Officer Responsible	Comments
10th October 2023				
10.10.23 14.11.23	MDDC Draft Budget 2024-25 First Review To review the draft Budget for 2024 - 25		Deputy Chief Executive (S151)	
10.10.23	Climate and Sustainability Update		Climate and Sustainability Officer	
10.10.23	Himalayan Balsam			
10.10.23	Work Programme			
7th November 2023				
7.11.23	Climate and Sustainability Update		Climate and Sustainability Officer	
7.11.23 12.12.23	Revised Budget 2024 - 2025 - Second Review		Deputy Chief Executive (S151)	
7.11.23 12.12.23	Bereavement Services Fees and Charges		Corporate Manager for Finance, Leisure and Climate Change	

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Theme	Officer Responsible	Comments
7.11.23 12.12.23	Review of Bin It 123 including Side Waste Collection To discuss a suggestion relating to Side Waste collection		Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste	
7.11.23 12.12.23	Fly Tipping Policy		Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste	
7.11.23	Environment Enforcement Quarter 2 Update			
7.11.23 12.12.23	Environment Educational Enforcement Policy		Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste	
23rd January 2023				
23.01.24	Climate and Sustainability Update		Climate and Sustainability Officer	
23.01.24 6.02.24	Renewable and Alternative Energy, Energy Efficiency including Community Energy Projects		Climate and Sustainability Officer	
23.01.24 6.02.24	Green Standards in Planning including Renewable and Alternative Energy, Energy Efficiency and Community Energy Projects		Climate and Sustainability Officer	
12th March 2023				
12.03.24	Climate and Sustainability Update		Climate and Sustainability Officer	

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Theme	Officer Responsible	Comments
12.03.24	Chairman's Report for 2023-2024 To receive a report from the Chairman of the Environment PDG on the work of the Group for 2023-2024			

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