

## Community Policy Development Group

**Tuesday, 23 January 2024 at 2.15 pm  
Phoenix Chambers, Phoenix House, Tiverton**

**Next ordinary meeting  
Tuesday, 26 March 2024 at 2.15 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.

**The meeting will be hybrid and an audio recording will be made and published on the website after the meeting**

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 376 197 090 751

Passcode: Ajit9g

## Membership

Cllr D Broom  
Cllr G Cochran  
Cllr C Connor  
Cllr A Cuddy  
Cllr A Glover  
Cllr C Harrower  
Cllr B Holdman  
Cllr S Robinson

## 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 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 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023.
- 5        **Chairmans Announcements**  
To receive any announcements that the Chairman may wish to make.
- 6        **Medium Term Financial Plan - Draft Budget Update for 2024/2025**  
To receive a verbal update on the draft budget position for 2024/2025 (based on the MTFP budget update report presented to the Cabinet on 12 December 2023 and 9 January 2024).
- 7        **Town and Parish Charter** (*Pages 9 - 28*)  
To receive a report from the Parish Liaison Officer for a review into the Charter between Mid Devon District Council and the Town and Parish Councils in Mid Devon.
- 8        **Customer Care Policy** (*Pages 29 - 52*)  
To receive a report from the Corporate Manager for Digital Transformation and Customer Engagement for a review of the Customer Care Policy and Customer Standards of Mid Devon District Council (MDDC).
- 9        **Public Access to Phoenix House - Working Group Update**  
To receive an update on the progress of the Working Group – Public Access to Phoenix House for Vulnerable Customers.

**Stephen Walford**  
Chief Executive  
Monday, 15 January 2024

Anyone wishing to film part or all of the proceedings may do so unless the press and public are excluded for that part of the meeting or there is good reason not to do so, as directed by the Chairman. Any filming must be done as unobtrusively as possible from a single fixed position without the use of any additional lighting; focusing only on those actively participating in the meeting and having regard also to the wishes of any member of the public present who may not wish to be filmed. As a matter of courtesy, anyone wishing to film proceedings is asked to advise the Chairman or the Member Services Officer in attendance so that all those present may be made aware that is happening.

Members of the public may also use other forms of social media to report on proceedings at this meeting.

Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting and listen to discussion. Lift access to the Council Chamber on the first floor of the building is available from the main ground floor entrance. Toilet facilities, with wheelchair access, are also available. There is time set aside at the beginning of the meeting to allow the public to ask questions.

An induction loop operates to enhance sound for anyone wearing a hearing aid or using a transmitter. If you require any further information, or

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

Tel: 01884 234251

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

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## **MINUTES of a MEETING of the COMMUNITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP**

held on 5 December 2023 at 2.15 pm

### **Present**

#### **Councillors**

B Holdman (Chairman)  
D Broom, G Cochran, C Connor (Vice  
Chairman), A Cuddy, A Glover, C Harrower  
and S Robinson

### **Also Present**

#### **Councillor(s)**

R Gilmour and D Wulff

### **Also Present**

#### **Officer(s):**

Paul Deal (Corporate Manager for Finance, Property and  
Climate Change), Dr Stephen Carr (Corporate  
Performance & Improvement Manager) and Angie Howell  
(Democratic Services Officer)

### **Councillors**

#### **Online**

J Buczkowski, G Duchesne and L G J Kennedy

## **40 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (03:04)**

There were no apologies.

## **41 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (03:12)**

There were no members of the public present.

## **42 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (04:50)**

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

There were no declarations of interest.

## **43 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (05:00)**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on the 24<sup>th</sup> October were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

#### 44 CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS (05:38)

The Chairman made the following announcements:-

- The Special Meeting of the Community Policy Development Group (PDG) on the 28<sup>th</sup> November was held on that day to ensure that Members of the PDG had plenty of time to discuss and consider the Strategic Grant Awards. There would have not been time to discuss and consider this item at today's meeting.
- The next meeting to be held on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024 would have several reports to discuss and the meeting was proposed to begin at 1.30pm rather than 2.15pm. Members were asked to advise the Clerk if they were able to attend at that time.

#### 45 DEVON AND CORNWALL POLICE UPDATE (06:39)

Police Sergeant Simon Andrews gave an update to the Community Policy Development Group on anti-social behaviour and informed the Group that the team had been involved in a number of initiatives that had been relevant to mainly Tiverton but also Cullompton and Crediton, in particular these were:-

- An intensification week targeting county lines establishing drug gangs mainly travelling down from Manchester.
- An operation looking at knife crime and Police Officers had executed warrants and set up a knife amnesty at the station and blades had been handed in there.
- There had been Business Crime intensification week where local and rural businesses were contacted.
- A special meeting was held at the Town Hall in relation to business crime in the town centre.
- As benches had been removed in Tiverton, this had disrupted the drinkers but had moved them to off street areas around local business. The Police had been working with local businesses in the area regarding this.
- There had been recent anti-social behaviour incidents which had all been dealt with and people had been arrested.
- Monthly meetings would be set up to help identify anti-social behaviour to try and deal with incidents more quickly.
- Most of the issues dealt with were related to mental health and domestic violence.
- There were more visible patrols and there would be 2 new officers attached to the team shortly.
- The reopening of the Tiverton Police Station which was now open and staffed Monday to Saturday 10am-3pm and the importance of people accessing this service.
- Councillors were encouraged to contact the Police with any concerns they had.

The Clerk would forward Police Sergeant Simon Andrew's details to all Members.

#### 46 **DEVON ENERGY PARTNERSHIP (53:49)**

Alex Munro the Director of Devon Energy Partnership Ltd gave a presentation to the Community Policy Development Group to look at ways to help communities reduce costs and address climate change. The presentation highlighted:-

- How clients could cut costs, reduce waste and improve their energy efficiency.
- The energy price inflations and why UK electricity prices were so high.
- How solar panels could help to reduce energy costs and save money in the long term.

The Clerk would forward Alex Munro's details to all Members.

Notes:- Cllr C Connor left the meeting at 3.45pm

#### 47 **PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD (01:38:17)**

The Corporate Performance and Improvement Manager provided the Community Policy Development Group with a verbal update on performance for Quarter 2.

The Group asked for the following information:-

- For further information on the number of Environmental Protection Service requests received in the year so far.
- Regarding complaints, the Group requested clarification on the target timescales for responding to complaints.

Dr Carr would forward these details to the Community Policy Development Group.

The information presented was **NOTED**.

#### 48 **WORK PROGRAMME (01:48:10)**

The Chairman informed the Policy Development Group that the following changes had been made to the work programme:-

- 23 January 2024 – removal of the Devon Serious Violence Strategy which will now go directly to Cabinet.
- 23 January 2024 – CCTV Policy had moved to 26<sup>th</sup> March 2024 meeting.

(The meeting ended at 4.05 pm)

**CHAIRMAN**

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**Report for: Community Policy Development Group**

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Date of Meeting: 23 January 2024

Subject: Town and Parish Charter Review

Cabinet Member: Councillor David Wulff  
Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure

Responsible Officer: David Parker Democratic Services Officer and  
Town and Parish Liaison Officer

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: (i) Charter between Mid Devon District Council and the Town and Parish Councils  
(ii) Annexe 1 – Planning Charter

## **Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)**

To present to the Policy Development Group the proposals for a review into the Charter between Mid Devon District Council and the Town and Parish Councils in Mid Devon.

### **Recommendation(s):**

**That the PDG considers and recommends to Cabinet that the proposed new Charter is sent to the Towns and Parishes for review between February and April 2024.**

## **Section 2 – Report**

### **2.0 Introduction**

- 2.1 The Town and Parish Charter was originally approved in December 2010, following this the Charter was circulated to Parishes for adoption at the Annual Meeting of the Town and Parish Council Clerks in March 2011. As of May 2012 of the 48 Town and Parish Councils in Mid Devon 37 had adopted the Charter.
- 2.2 As agreed at that time, the Charter was to be reviewed after 12 months and thereafter on a 3 yearly basis.
- 2.3 In May 2012, a review duly took place and amendments were made to the document providing clarity and in line with changes to legislation.
- 2.4 A further review took place in 2016/2017 meaning that a review was due during 2020. This review commenced but, with the ongoing effects of Covid-19 and changes within the organisation, the review was not completed.
- 2.5 This review is therefore proposed in order to reflect on the current effectiveness of the Charter and ensure it is fit for purpose in accommodating the needs and working practices of both the District Council and Parish and Town Councils.

### **3.0 Proposed 2024 Consultation and Review**

- 3.1 This review has been led by the Town and Parish Liaison Officer, but has also involved engagement with the Development Management (Planning) and Forward Planning (policy) teams in order to ensure that both the Charter and the Planning Charter reflect current legislation, best practice and working practices.
- 3.2 The draft Charter with the Towns and Parishes is attached for review and consideration. Proposed changes are shown through “tracked changes” so that the PDG can review the current and proposed wording side by side. It is also proposed that, if agreed, the document is circulated to Towns and Parishes with the same tracked changes so that they can easily reference the proposed changes.
- 3.3 In considering the proposed changes, it is considered important to make specific reference to the following points to allow full consideration of the proposed changes:
  - 3.3.1 The Town and Parish newsletter stopped being published during Covid. Now that the Communications Team send out regular press releases with any items of interest, it is considered to be unnecessary to recommence the Town and Parish Newsletter especially bearing in mind the historical difficulty of finding enough content to fill its pages.
  - 3.3.2 Since Covid, the District Council and many Town and Parish Councils have become much more technologically agile so that many meetings are now held virtually, facilitating and enabling increased public participation.

3.3.3 Resources: Council resources continue to be squeezed meaning that the District Council is, along with many other Council's, needing to find efficiencies and financial savings wherever practicable in order to ensure that it can continue to meet its statutory obligations. Although the changes proposed through the document are considered minor and are not considered to fundamentally affect the operation or intent of the Charter, it is necessary to understand that some of the proposed changes seek to reflect working practices which have been adopted in order to ensure the Council in achieving more efficient ways of working and operational cost savings.

#### **4.0 Next Steps**

4.1 If the draft Charter is approved by the Community Policy Development Group (PDG), the proposed revisions to the Charter between Mid Devon District Council and Town and Parish Councils in Mid Devon (and its annexe) will be sent to the Town and Parish Councils for them to consider and reply within three months. This time frame is considered necessary in order to give all Town and Parish Councils due opportunity to review and comment upon the proposed changes.

4.2 Once the responses have been received from the Towns and Parishes, the responses will be collated into a report for the Community PDG for recommendation to Cabinet to amend the charter and its annexe.

**Financial Implications:** As set out within the main body of the report; direct financial implications to the Council are minimal. However, it should be noted that some of the proposed changes do reflect current working practices which have been adopted in order to ensure the efficient use of financial resources. Should any of the proposed changes not be accepted, it is therefore possible that financial implications would accrue to the District which would place pressures on existing budgets.

**Legal Implications:** Community engagement and empowerment is one of the key implications of the Localism Act 2011. Good working relationships with the parish and town councils will build mutual trust and support, leading to more effective local government. By contrast, poor relationships may lead to a breakdown in trust, communication and ethical standards.

**Risk Assessment:** Failure to work effectively with Town and Parish Councils could lead to a breakdown in the relationship which could ultimately impact on our community.

**Impact on Climate Change:** No direct impact, although there is a link with ensuring effective communication with Town and Parish Councils in planning matters and ensuring that the Council (the LPA) fully discharges its obligations on planning consultation and in the achievement of climate/carbon/biodiversity objectives and requirements.

**Equalities Impact Assessment:** No equality issues have been identified.

**Relationship to Corporate Plan:** Strengthening the relationships with Town and Parish Councils assists in the delivery of the 'empowering our communities' policy.

### **Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks**

**Statutory Officer:** Andrew Jarrett  
Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151  
**Date:** 09 Jan 2024

**Statutory Officer:** Philip Langdon  
Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer  
**Date:** 09 Jan 2024

**Chief Officer:** Stephen Walford  
Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive/Corporate Director  
**Date:** 09 Jan 2024

**Performance and risk:** Steve Carr  
Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager  
**Date:** 12 Jan 2024

**Cabinet member notified:** (yes/no)

### **Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

**Contact:** David Parker, Democratic Services Officer and Parish Liaison Officer  
Email: [dparker@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:dparker@middevon.gov.uk)  
Telephone: 01884 234311

**Background papers:** None



# Charter

**Mid Devon District Council**

and

**Town and Parish Councils  
in Mid Devon**

**JANUARY~~OCTOBER~~ 201724 (V23)**

## **CHARTER BETWEEN MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL AND THE TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS IN MID DEVON**

Partnership working between town and parish councils (local councils) and the district council will only be successfully achieved if both partners recognise, understand and respect the role that the other plays and work to promote those roles. This Charter has been agreed following consultation between Mid Devon District Council and the local councils and sets out a framework to enable this to happen. The Charter will be reviewed on a three yearly basis, consultation will take place with Town and Parish Councils prior to consideration by the Community Policy Development Group.

The District Council will work in partnership with local councils in its area to promote sustainable social, economic and environmental development for the benefit of local communities.

**Mid Devon District Council** recognises that local councils:

- 1 Are an important part of local government representing their communities at the most local level.
- 2 Are a primary source of information about the community's opinions and aspirations.
- 3 Provide an opportunity to develop greater engagement with the local community.
- 4 Are heavily reliant on volunteering and goodwill. The differences between smaller and larger local councils in terms of ability to handle information and resources will be respected.

**Local Councils** recognise that Mid Devon District Council:

- 1 Whilst conscientiously taking account of local views also has to take into account community interests across the Mid Devon District.
- 2 Has strategic roles and responsibilities and has to work within Government financial and other constraints.
- 3 Is able to work most effectively with parishes that are well organised, pro-active, informed and willing.

### **Communications and Liaison**

**Mid Devon District Council** will undertake to:

- 1 Arrange and host on at least an annual basis a district-wide meeting of clerks to discuss matters of mutual concern and also to periodically arrange training and meetings for Town and Parish Councillors.

- 2 Provide a liaison officer(s) who will act as the point of contact for local councils, providing support and information, directing enquiries, advising and ensuring that issues are followed up and dealt with in a timely manner.
- 3 Work with the Devon Association of Local Councils to provide more information to towns and parishes about obtaining 'Local Council Award Scheme' and the 'General Power of Competence'.
- 4 ~~Continue to send the Town and Parish newsletter electronically, in order to keep local councils informed and share information.~~ Assist Town and Parish Councils with the formulation of an Emergency Plan.
- 5 Encourage District Councillors to attend their local council meetings and ensure that issues raised by District Councillors acting in support of local councils will be responded to.
- 6 Formally add to the role of Chairman of the District Council that of being 'Local Council Lead Member' who will encourage better working across the district by attending local council meetings and providing feedback on any issues of local concern or interest.
- 7 Encourage officers to attend local council meetings and speak on issues of concern/interest.
- 8 Ensure District Council key documents, where appropriate, contain a short executive summary or an explanation of their relevance.
- 9 Use plain English in written communications.

**Local Councils** will undertake to:

- 1 Be represented at the annual meeting of clerks.
- 2 Use the Council's Liaison Officer for contact with the District Council in the first instance where the name of the appropriate officer is not known, unless responding directly to consultations.
- 3 ~~Contribute to the Town and Parish newsletter when there is an item that other local councils will find of interest.~~
- 34 Welcome District Councillors to town and parish meetings and send them agendas and minutes and invite reports.
- 45 Utilise the services of Customer First where appropriate.
- 56 Invite relevant officers to meetings where there are issues of concern or interest to the local council.

## Consultation

**Mid Devon District Council** will undertake to:

- 1 Consult local councils on all issues which are likely to affect their area.
- 2 Allow five weeks for local councils to respond to consultation. If this is not possible the local council will be given an explanation. (This does not apply to planning applications. These are covered in the attached annexe).
- 3 Provide briefing sessions/workshops to groups of local councils on complex consultation issues.
- 4 Make specific arrangements for consultation on planning (see Annexe 1).
- 5 Have regard to the views of the local councils when making decisions.
- 6 Keep under review the level and quality of consultation.

**Local Councils** will undertake to:

- 1 Take part in consultation exercises and respond within the given period.
- 2 Notify Mid Devon District Council if they cannot respond to a consultation within the given period, but will be making a response.
- 3 Work with Mid Devon District Council to seek the views of residents on issues of common interest.

## Planning

**Mid Devon District Council** will undertake to:

- 1 Have due regard to the views of the local councils in determining all planning applications and where relevant neighbouring parishes.
- 2 Ensure planning notices are prominent for all planning applications and A3 size notices are used for major applications.
- 3 Ensure where practicable, notices in connection with planning policy public consultation meetings are placed prominently and at least 14 days in advance of meeting dates.
- 4 Be willing to advise in the creation of Neighbourhood / Parish Plans.
- 5 Notify the relevant local council(s) of any public meetings and exhibitions organised by Mid Devon District Council about policies and plans affecting the parish.



- 6 Hold separate meetings in the three main towns where matters affecting the ~~Local Development Framework~~ preparation of a local plan and specific sites only are being considered.
- 7 Consult with the local councils on planning applications within the Town or parish area in accordance with statutory procedures –and on applications in neighbouring parishes where appropriate and inform the Local Council which Planning Officer is dealing with the application.  
  
(NB. Plans with only minor changes are not subject to re-consultation)
- 8 Consult with local councils with regard to the use of discretionary S106 monies and request that schemes are put forward that would enhance the local area.
9. Allow a representative of local councils to attend and speak at meetings of Mid Devon District Council's Planning Working Group in respect of any planning application within that parish/town and to address the Planning Committee in accordance with the Council's scheme of public participation.
- 10 Explain the reasons for planning decisions within the Officer report and decision notice.
- 11 ~~If staff resources allow,~~ endeavour to havmake officers available to attend meetings of local councils to clarify the details of significant or controversial applications.
- 12 Endeavour to ensure that the 'Public Access' facility on the website is available at all times.

Please note: A more detailed Planning Charter between MDDC and Town and Parish Councils is attached to this document (Annexe 1). ~~The Planning Guide has not been included in this version as fundamental changes are expected to the planning system via the Housing White paper~~

**Local Councils** will undertake to:

- 1 Acknowledge that Mid Devon District Council will not always be able to accede to the views of parish/town councils.
- 2 Respond to all consultations on planning applications within the District Council's deadlines, even if it is a 'no comment' response.
- 3 Comment on planning applications on material planning grounds, and specify as fully as possible the reasons for an objection to, or support for, a particular application.
- 4 Ensure that all councillors are made aware of the contents of planning decision notices sent to the local council by reference to the reasons for approval / refusal.

- 5 Assist Mid Devon District Council by reporting perceived local breaches of Town and Country Planning Legislation, submitted via the online "alleged planning breach" form.
- 6 Attend relevant meetings, briefings and training to gain a better understanding of the planning process.
- 7 Consider preparing a Parish/Neighbourhood Plan. If they have made one, consider offering their assistance and experience to other councils that have not. Provide Mid Devon District Council with sufficient advance notice of requests to designate a neighbourhood area, draft neighbourhood plan consultation, or the submission of a neighbourhood plan, so that Mid Devon District Council is able to provide technical support and meet statutory time limits where it is responsible for these stages.

## Training and Support

**Mid Devon District Council** will undertake to:

- 1 Continue to provide regular and ongoing planning and ethical standards training to local councils with particular emphasis on the guidance already provided.
- 2 Endeavour to provide website advice where requested.
- 3 Share training where appropriate.

**Local Councils** will undertake to:

- 1 Use the services of Customer First and the Parish Liaison Officer.
- 2 Examine the wide range of training and best practice sources available, particularly through the Devon Association of Local Councils.
- 3 Ensure, where possible, the training needs of their councillors, clerks and chairmen are met.
- 4 Consider training requirements when setting their precepts.

## Partnership and Financial Arrangements

**Mid Devon District Council** will undertake to:

- 1 Collect and pay in a timely manner any precept levy requested by the local councils.
- 2 Operate and keep under review the financial arrangements with local councils in respect of services such as public conveniences and street cleaning.

**Local Councils** will undertake to:

Make any precept requests within the timescale set by Mid Devon District Council.

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# Planning Charter for Parish & Town Councils

[Proposed January 2024](#)

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Town and Parish Charter (Appendix 1) [proposed January 2024](#)

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## PLANNING CHARTER FOR TOWN and PARISH COUNCILS (TPC's)

1. The Planning Team of Mid Devon District Council will consult with its constituent Town and Parish Councils on all applications for planning permission, Advertisement Consent, Listed Building Consent, deemed applications from Devon County Council and Government Departments, and some notifications (for example, telecommunications).
  2. In order to aid the decision making process, we will make every effort to forward full and adequate details of applications to Town and Parish Clerks within **three working days** of their validation, together with [a link to](#) application drawings and other relevant information. All information will be provided in electronic format. Weekly email alerts of new applications can be sent to Parish and Town Clerks if an email address is provided.
  3. Planning will consider any reasonable requests for additional information from Town and Parish Councils whilst having regard to the statutory, fifty-six day period (8 weeks) for determining most planning applications., ninety-one days (13 weeks) for Major applications and one hundred and twelve days (16 weeks) for applications accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).
  4. The Planning Team will wait **twenty-one days** for receipt of Town and Parish Councils views on the above noted applications (a week in excess of the fourteen day period provided by statute) before determining applications and issuing the relevant Decision Notice.
  5. Any reasonable requests to delay consideration of applications so as to allow full comment to be made by Town and Parish Councils will be at the discretion of the Development Management Manager or relevant case officer. In the majority of cases, Town and Parish Councils will be expected to respond to notification on planning applications within twenty-one days of receipt of an application.
  6. Representations received from Town and Parish Councils will be considered in accordance with the Council's Planning Scheme of Delegation.
- An electronic alert of your Planning Application(s) on Weekly List will automatically be sent every Friday (if an email address is provided) with web links to associated documents.
7. The Planning Team will continue to advertise details of applications in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). [It should be noted that further](#) neighbour notifications may be sent according to the case officer's assessment of who may be affected materially and directly by the development following a site visit.
  10. At the discretion of the Development Management Manager or relevant case officer, Town and Parish Councils will be notified of planning application revisions (unless of a minor nature), and copies of revised plans will be forwarded.

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Deleted: <#>The Planning Section Team is continually developing the electronic delivery side of its service. We will be considering ways of enhancing access to information, receipt of consultation responses from Town and Parish Councils, development of its web site, and e-mail communications. In addition, officers will attend local Council meetings if requested to advise on current procedures and working practices if staff resources allow.¶

Deleted: <#>The 'Weekly List' advising all new planning applications will be sent to all Town and Parish Clerks. The list will give the case officer contact details for information and advice. It also identifies the expected decision level i.e. 'DEL' Delegated and 'COMM' Committee. ¶

Deleted: the local press on a weekly basis. In addition, the Planning Section will continue to advertise every planning application on site (A3 size if Major application) and notify the occupiers of properties that share a boundary with the application site in

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11. We will ensure that the opportunity is given for Town and Parish Councils to attend and speak at Planning Committee. A representative of the Town or Parish Council may also attend and speak at meetings of the Planning Working Group on site.
12. We will report, in full, representations received from Town and Parish Councils on applications that are presented to Planning Committee. The views will be included on the agenda report, but if received after printing, views will either be tabled or verbally reported.
13. The Planning Team will advise Town and Parish Councils of the relevant date it is anticipated a deferred application will be presented back to Planning Committee.
14. The Planning Team will provide full, unrestricted access to all public information held on planning application files and on the Council website [www.middevon.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=113](http://www.middevon.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=113) via the <https://planning.middevon.gov.uk/online-applications/> link for Planning, an on-line service that allows you to view Mid Devon applications. You can also search and view property details, submit comments (within 21 days) on individual applications, view weekly lists of applications, the decision, reasons for the decision and a copy of the officer report.
15. Within five working days of issuing the decision to the applicant, we will notify Town and Parish Councils of that decision and by email alert on a weekly basis if subscribing to the service.
16. The Planning Team will undertake full consultation where appeals are lodged in order to provide Town and Parish Councils with an opportunity to make their views known or to be taken into account by the Planning Inspectorate. (Please note this does not apply to Householder Appeals where only the comments made at application stage can be taken into account).
17. The Planning Team will respond to all reasonable requests for appropriate officers to attend Town and Parish Council meetings to discuss planning matters or development proposals where resources allow.
18. We will act promptly on [high priority breaches of unauthorised development, submitted via the online 'alleged planning breach' form](#), and will keep them informed of the progress and outcome of subsequent enquiries and action proposed. [The alleged planning breach form can be found on the Council's website at https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/planning/planning-enforcement/](#)
19. The Planning Team will seek to involve Town and Parish Councils regarding matters which could have implications on land use, community development and environmental / enhancement initiatives, etc. This will include the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents and Conservation Area Appraisals.
20. The Council will consult with and take into account all views received from Town & Parish Councils in the preparation and review of the [Development Plan documents \(e.g. Local Plan\)](#) in accordance with details set out in the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The current Local Plan and Local Development Scheme are available on the Councils web site, [www.middevon.gov.uk](http://www.middevon.gov.uk)

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21. Copies of the [Mid Devon Local Plan 2013-2033](#) are available for purchase. Again, please see the web site noted above.

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22. The Planning Team will continually review the information it holds on its web pages to improve access to information by all its customers including Town and Parish Councils. This includes its Planning Handbook, formal Supplementary Planning Documents, and informal advice leaflets. We are also looking to extend this to include other relevant information.

23. Should Town and Parish Council's have any suggestions for items which could be introduced on to the web site or as new leaflets / information sheet then please do not hesitate to feed this back to the Planning Section.

### Contacting Us:

If visiting, the Reception is on the Ground Floor, and Development Control is on the First Floor of Phoenix House.

Our postal address is:

Mid Devon District Council, Development Control, Phoenix House, Phoenix Lane, Tiverton, Devon EX16 6PP ☎ 01884 255255

**Direct Line(s) into Planning Section 01884 234260 / 01884 234262**

**Generic email address: [devcon@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:devcon@middevon.gov.uk)**

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## MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL - PLANNING SECTION

### GUIDANCE NOTE 1 (Ver 1.1)

#### *Treatment of Town and Parish Council Responses on Planning Applications*

Schedule 1 (paragraph 8) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) states that Parish Councils (or Town Councils) may request District Councils to send them details of planning applications for their areas. Mid Devon District Council aim to work closely with the community and will formally consult the appropriate Town and Parish Council on all applications that require consultation as per the Act.

The Planning Team will use its best efforts to ensure that consultations are carried out within three working days of validation of the application.

The Planning Team is continually trying to develop the delivery of its service. To this end, we will consider ways of improving electronic access to information by Town and Parish Council's through e-mail and its web site [www.middevon.gov.uk](http://www.middevon.gov.uk), in addition to officers attending council meetings (if necessary) to advise on procedures and developments, etc.

Article 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 states that District Councils do not make a decision on a planning application until after twenty-one days have elapsed from the date of notification to Town and Parish Councils. The twenty-one day period starts from the date of consultation with Town and Parish Council's as recorded on the application file and electronic planning application database.

Town and Parish Councils are encouraged to discuss applications with the Case Officer who will be pleased to clarify any details necessary.

The Planning Team will consider any reasonable requests for additional information for Town and Parish Council's whilst having regard to the statutory fifty-six day period for determining planning applications.

The twenty-one day period ends on receipt of post on day twenty-two (to enable any last minute responses to be cleared).

A written response via the Public Access system or by telephone message; e-mail to [devcon@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:devcon@middevon.gov.uk) will all be considered as a valid consultation response. All consultation responses are posted on our website (Public Access) in line with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 which requires that such correspondence be available for public inspection.

If the application is not a Delegated item (can be processed without the need for Committee approval), all Town and Parish Councils responses will be noted on the application file and reported to the Councils Planning Committee

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Deleted: or verbal communication

Deleted: In the case of verbal and e-mail responses, the officer in receipt of the message will note the respondent, date, time and the response and place this information on the application file.

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## Scheme of Delegation to the Development Management Manager

To exercise all the powers of the Council as Local Planning Authority (including the conduct of appeals and enquiries) under the Planning Acts, (unless expressly delegated to another officer) except where:

### In the case of all Applications:

1. In the opinion of the Development Management Manager or the Area Planning Officer, the application is of a significant controversial or sensitive nature;
2. The application has been submitted by or on behalf of the Council;
3. The application is from an Elected Member or Officer;
4. The application is accompanied by an Environment Impact Assessment (EIA);
5. The application is a significant or major departure and is recommended for approval;
6. The Ward Member; Chairman or Vice-Chairman of Planning Committee requires that the Committee consider an application having given clear planning reasons;
7. Applications will be delegated to the Development Management Manager to refuse if Section 106 Agreements are not signed and completed within 8 or 13 week time-scale.

### In the case of re-negotiations on a planning obligation (S106 Agreements and Undertakings):

1. The Ward Member, Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Planning Committee and Cabinet Member for Housing (the latter in the case of amendments to affordable housing only) requires that the Committee consider the proposed changes having given clear planning reasons;
2. In the case of renegotiations on another planning obligation issue the Ward Member, Chair and Vice Chair of Planning requires that the Committee consider the proposed changes having given clear planning reasons, otherwise they be delegated to the Development Management Manager.

### In the case of Formal Enforcement action:

1. In the opinion of the Development Management Manager, the proposed enforcement action raises matters of significant public interest and /or significant cost to the Council for which there is no budget and/or would prevent a person from residing or continuing to reside on land within the district;

**Deleted:** Formal enforcement action is proposed other than a Breach of Condition Notice or in the case where urgent action is required to commence enforcement proceedings, consisting of the service of a Temporary Stop Notice, Enforcement Notice, Stop Notice or commence Injunction proceedings. These proceedings to only be instigated in consultation with one or more of the following: Planning Chairman, Vice Chairman, Ward Member.

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2. [The action relates to land in which the Council, a Member or an Officer has an interest;](#)
3. [The action is the issue of an enforcement notice, stop notice, temporary stop notice or legal proceedings, in which case the notice or proceedings will be issued by the District Solicitor \(Monitoring Officer\) or a solicitor employed by the Council, in consultation with the Head of Planning Economy and Regeneration or the Group Manager for Development.](#)

(Note: Formal action does not include the service of a Planning Contravention Notice or Section 330 requisition for information)

**In the case of Conservation:**

1. It requires the issue of repair and urgent work notices;
2. It involves the submission of funding bids or schemes that have budgetary implications

**In the case of the Local Plan:**

Local Plan proposal's and policies with reasoned justification for publication and consultation or adoption at the following stages

(other than where minor modifications and other minor changes are made).

- Local Plan options consultation
- Publication and consultation of the 'submission' Local Plan
- Local Plan adoption

(or the equivalent stages of processes of successors to Local Plans).

- **In the case of Planning [Guidance or other strategic development plans](#), strategic [development](#) plans and policies at a larger than district scale [will be consulted on](#).**
- Supplementary Planning Documents dealing with Mid Devon wide guidance and sites/areas for publication prior to consultation and for adoption (other than where minor modifications and other changes are made).

**Notes**

The above procedure should be read alongside the Town and Parish Council Charter which is available from the Planning Team.

Training workshops in the operation of the Planning System will continue to be offered to Town and Parish Councils.

**Deleted:** Other than in consultation with the Legal Services Manager prosecution proceedings regarding any unauthorised advertising/fly posting.

**Deleted: In the case of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations (CIL) and associated enforcement**

¶

<#>Formal CIL enforcement action comprising CIL Stop Notice or in the case where urgent action is required to commence enforcement proceedings consisting of the service of a CIL Stop Notice or commence CIL Injunction proceedings. These proceedings only to be instigated in consultation with one or more of the following: Planning Chairman, Vice Chairman, Ward Member.¶

**Deleted:** Representations to

**Deleted:** are to be made

**Deleted:** ¶

(Not including updating contributions sought through S106 Agreements to reflect changes in the cost of provision of facilities).¶

¶

**BUILDING CONTROL AND SAFETY:¶**

To exercise all the Council's powers under the Building Act 1984 or regulations made there under except where:¶

¶

In the case of charges¶

¶

<#>The annual review of charge results in increases greater than the rate of inflation.¶

¶

**OTHER PROVISIONS¶**

¶

<#>To authorise caravan rallies in accordance with the requirements of CS and C of DA 1960.¶

¶

<#>To place officers within the Building Control team at the disposal of North Devon Council in accordance with section 113 Local Government Act 1972. ¶

¶

<#>To make representations where appropriate and with the agreement of the Chairman and/or Vice Chairman of the Committee and Ward Member's (as appropriate) in respect of new Applications for Goods Vehicles Operators' Licenses, or when a significant variation of an existing licence is proposed.¶

¶

4. To caution offender where there was evidence of a criminal offence and the offender admitted the commission of the offence but the public interest did not require a prosecution.¶

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**Report for: Community PDG**

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|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Date of Meeting:     | 23 January 2024   |
| <b>Subject:</b>      | <b>Customer Care Policy</b>   |
| Cabinet Member:      | Cllr Jane Lock, Working Environment   |
| Responsible Officer: | Lisa Lewis, Corporate Manager for Business Transformation & Customer Engagement |
| Exempt:              | N/A   |
| Wards Affected:      | All   |
| Enclosures:          | Appendices 1-3  |

## **Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)**

Review of the Customer Care Policy and Customer Standards of Mid Devon District Council (MDDC).

### **Recommendation(s):**

**To recommend to the Cabinet the content of the reviewed Customer Care Policy and Standards**

#### **1.0 Introduction/Background**

- 1.1 The Customer Care Policy was last reviewed in [November 2021](#). The key requirements for providing a good customer service remain unchanged; however, the policy has been amended to ensure ease of understanding around customer vulnerability and MDDC's approach. A separate document created to establish expected Standards of Customer Service across the council is at Appendix 1.

- 1.2 The provision of good customer service is important for every employee of Mid Devon District Council to understand. It is not service specific and applies across all services and posts.
- 1.3 This report and the revised policy at Appendix 2 covers general customer service across the council and is not solely focussed on the Customer Services team who staff the contact centre and enquiries desk.
- 1.4 This policy and associated standards sets out the approach to customer service that customers can expect from us when using the contact method of their choice.
- 1.5 Appendix 1 shows the adopted standards.
- 1.6 Appendix 3 includes the Equalities Impact Assessment accompanying the revised policy. One of the aims of the policy is to ensure residents are not excluded or disadvantaged by our approach to customer service.

## **2.0 Customer Service and recent Officer/Member activities**

- 2.1 MDDC is committed to frequently reviewing our service provision and Members are actively participating in various groups to shape how we improve services. Details of recent activities are included below.
- 2.2 The Single Equalities Scheme was approved by Cabinet on 4 April 2023. After the May 2023 elections, new Members have joined the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Group to focus on continuing work to ensure effective access to council services. Included in this work has been a review of our Equalities action plan and a new Equality Impact Assessment form to accompany policy decisions, an example of which can be seen at Appendix 3.
- 2.3 The Community PDG currently has a working group looking at the impact of access to Phoenix House for vulnerable residents due to the reduced opening hours of Phoenix House. Outcomes of this group will be reported back to Community PDG via the Chair. Additionally at the Community PDG of [22 August 2023](#) a statement around Vulnerability was agreed and is published on the MDDC [website](#).
- 2.4 Care Leavers – With a focus on Corporate Parenting MDDC has recently implemented a discounted Leisure membership and Council Tax exemption for care leavers. This follows on from a previous decision to discount Leisure membership for Carers. All of which improves service access to vulnerable or disadvantaged groups.
- 2.5 The new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) self-service portal has now gone live with 24/7 access for requesting Clinical Waste collections. Assisted Waste collection requests will shortly follow. These services are also

available for customers to request in person or via the contact centre. This is a major project with a significant transition timeline. Whilst we are focussed on improving our digital access for customers, members should be reassured that we are not intending to limit access via other communication channels.

- 2.6 MDDC's Customer and Digital Services are currently transitioning the Customer Feedback system onto the new CRM platform and is expecting to deliver this early in 2024. As part of this migration, we are aiming to improve our monitoring of customer feedback to assist us with service and performance improvements.
- 2.7 Access to council services for non-digital residents. We continue to offer access to customers via telephone 9.00 until 5.00 Mon-Fri. Appointments can be made for face-to-face enquiries with Customer Services during morning opening hours. Afternoon appointments are also available upon request if customers are unable to attend during our published opening hours.
- 3.0 **Customer Care Policy**
- 3.1 Our Customer Care Standards will be available in our reception area at Phoenix House and published on our website. The standards will set out what customers can expect from us.

**Financial Implications – None**

**Legal Implications –** To ensure that all staff are aware of data protection requirements, along with their duties under the Equality Act 2010.

**Risk Assessment – None**

**Impact on Climate Change – None**

**Equalities Impact Assessment –** An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed to accompany the reviewed policy as an example of the new EIA referred to in the covering report.

**Relationship to Corporate Plan -** The policy underpins the core values of Mid Devon District Council as stated in the Corporate Plan around People, Performance, Pride and Partnership.

### **Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks**

**Statutory Officer:** Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151

**Date:** 09 Jan 2024

**Statutory Officer:** Philip Langdon

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

**Date:** 15 Jan 2024

**Chief Officer:** Stephen Walford

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

**Date:** 09 Jan 2024

**Performance and risk:** Steve Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

**Date:** 03 Jan 2023

**Cabinet member notified:** yes

### **Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

**Contact:** Lisa Lewis, Group Manager for Business Transformation and Customer Engagement

Email: llewis@middevon.gov.uk

Telephone: 01884 234981

**Background papers:** Customer Care Standards



# Customer Care Standards



# Introduction

## Our Vision

An organisation that provides consistently high-quality customer services, which add value to the customer and to the Council

## Strategy

The standard of service a customer receives when they contact the Council will influence their view of the Council and potentially the area it serves. At a time when customer expectations are continually changing, and councils are striving to make efficiencies.

- We aim to address these challenges by making the best use of technology to deliver cost effective services to customers.
- Prevent valuable resources being wasted on providing poor customer service.
- Transform services to make them simple to deliver and easy for customers to access, whilst making use of social media and other methods of communications.

## We work to: -

- Transform services to make them streamlined and easy for you to access and for us to deliver.
- Embed a culture of good practice across the Authority where staff and customers are clear about the standards of service they can expect to receive.

## Council Values

**People** - a people focused business

**Performance** - as individuals and a collective

**Pride** - in our work and outcomes achieved

**Partnership** - delivering outcomes through partnership

“We are a progressive council committed to creating an environment where people can flourish and to providing quality services to those who live and work in the district. Equally as important to the ‘what’ we are trying to achieve, is the ‘how’ the organisation operates and conducts itself. To that end we have introduced an increased focus on values within the organisation to try and ensure that, whatever type of service is being provided, our colleagues all have a shared understanding of the values that are important. We use these within the organisation to help guide discussions around behaviours, culture, and performance but at its heart we are simply reflecting how we can apply these values to best deliver the quality service and outcomes that the Council and our residents expect.”

Chief Executive: Stephen Walford - Corporate Plan 2020-2024

# Outcome

We aim to get it right first time to promote high regard and trust in the Council. We will keep you informed on progress of your enquiry.

**When you contact us, you can expect us to:**

- Achieve targets and service delivery
- Aim to get it right first time to promote high regard and trust in the Council
- Keep customers informed on progress or delays
- Achieve high satisfaction ratings
- Acknowledge and learn from mistakes
- Have a robust Complaints Policy and Procedure

# Choice

Our intention is to make it easy for you to contact us and to provide a friendly and professional service at all times.

- We aim to provide access to services 24/7 via on-line and digital channels whilst retaining choices including telephone, email, post and in person visits during office hours
- During office hours, we will offer an appointment service to achieve mutual convenience, either face to face or virtually

- We will offer telephone interpretation services where English is not your first language to make it easier for you to understand and communicate with us
- We will support services including Type Talk for hearing impaired customers
- If you need a private space to talk to someone, we will arrange that for you, this may mean coming back later if there is no space available at the time
- We will provide an emergency service outside of our normal working hours

# Quality

We will offer a service which reflect the core values of the council, ensuring that the focus remains on you, the customer.

**When you contact us, you can expect us to:**

- Resolve your enquiry wherever possible at the first point of contact
- Offer a range of access options including interpretation service for other languages
- Identify and address any special needs with sensitivity
- Clearly define timescales for service delivery
- We will aim to avoid unnecessary further contact

# Speed

We aim to resolve queries at the first point of contact. If this is not possible, we will find the right person who can help\*

## **When you use social media**

- We will monitor our main twitter and Facebook accounts during normal working hours (except bank holidays and public holidays)
- If you contact us via these channels during these times we will respond as soon as possible. There could be delays whilst we investigate but we will keep you updated or log a request for assistance with the appropriate service

## **When you use our online forms**

- We will acknowledge your email within 3 working days
- We will provide the name of the service you have contacted
- We will normally provide a full response to your query in 10 working days
- If we are unable to answer your query in 10 working days, we will keep you informed (this does not include service requests where there are statutory deadlines for responses i.e. Planning Applications)

## **When you email us**

- We will acknowledge your email within 3 working days
- We will provide our name and the name of the service you have contacted
- We will normally provide a full response to your email in 10 working days
- If we are unable to answer your query in 10 working days, we will keep you informed (this does not include service requests where there are statutory deadlines for responses i.e. Planning Applications)

## **When you telephone us**

- We will answer your call in a friendly and professional manner

- We will aim to answer your call quickly, although at busy times there may be a short wait
- If we need to transfer your call, we will explain the nature of your call to the person you need to speak to. If their voicemail is on, we will retrieve the call and offer to transfer you to the voicemail, or offer to take a message for the person to contact you
- Occasionally you may get through to an officer's voicemail, these will be checked regularly, messages will be up to date and confirm officer availability and alternative contacts if available

#### **When you write to us by post**

- We will acknowledge your letter within 5 working days
- We will normally provide a full response within 10 working days of receipt
- If we are unable to fully respond within 10 working days, we will tell you within those 10 days when you can expect a full response

#### **When you visit Customer Services**

- We will provide 15-minute appointments to deal with your enquiries face to face
- If you require assistance from an officer from a service, e.g. Planning or Housing, we will assist you understanding how that can be arranged
- If you have an appointment, you will normally be seen on time
- If you do not have an appointment, we will make one with you for the next available slot

\*Some services have statutory response times which may differ from those identified in these standards. Service specific details are provided on our web pages where applicable.

# Behaviour

You can expect our staff to have a professional, helpful, courteous attitude whilst observing the councils values.

**When you contact us, you can expect us to:**

- Have a professional, helpful, and courteous attitude
- Maintain confidentiality
- Listen to your enquiry
- Take ownership of the enquiry
- Explain what we can do to help or find someone who can help you

**When you visit us:**

- Staff will greet you in a polite, courteous, and professional manner
- Where possible we will assist you with use of public access computers to self-serve

**When you telephone us:**

- We will answer in a polite and courteous manner with a standard greeting
- We will provide you with a name and name of the service you have called

## Additional Support

Mid Devon District Council is responsible for delivering a range of services to the people who live, work, and visit and invest in the area. The Council are committed to equality and improving quality of life for everyone across the district.

**We recognise how important accessible information and buildings are:**

- We aim to ensure that our building is accessible for everyone who wants to visit us
- Our reception will be accessible, welcoming, and clean
- In our reception area and meeting rooms there are loop systems in place for customers with hearing loss
- We aim to publish information in plain language that is easy to understand, without jargon and unnecessary abbreviations
- If a customer who does not speak English contacts us, we will arrange for telephone interpretation services to assist with the enquiry



**Mid Devon District Council**

**Customer Care Policy**

**January 2024**

## Version Control Sheet

*Title:* **Customer Care Policy**

*Purpose:* **To detail the commitment of Mid Devon District Council to provide customer services that meet the varying needs of customers and to set the standards that can be expected from the Council and its officers to customers.**

*Owner:* **Corporate Manager for Digital Transformation and Customer Engagement**

*Email:* **[llewis@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:llewis@middevon.gov.uk)**

*Telephone number* **01884 234981**

*Date:* **December 2023**

*Version Number:* **4.0**

*Status:* **DRAFT**

*Review Frequency:* **Every 2 years or sooner if required.**

*Next review date:* **December 2025**

*Consultation* **This document was sent out for consultation to the following:**

Operational and Corporate Managers

Leadership Team

Cabinet Member

### Document History

This document obtained the following approvals.

| <b>Title</b>                             | <b>Date</b>     | <b>Version Approved</b> |
|--|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Operational and Corporate Managers       | <b>Jan 2024</b> |                         |
| Leadership Team                          | <b>Jan 2024</b> |                         |
| Portfolio Holder for Working Environment | <b>Jan 2024</b> |                         |
|  |                 |                         |
|  |                 |                         |
|  |                 |                         |

## **1. Introduction**

### **Vision**

Mid Devon District Council are committed to ensuring that customer service excellence is an integral part of planning, resourcing, and delivery of our services. Our vision is to be an organisation that provides consistently high-quality customer services, which add value to the customer and to the Council.

## **2. Strategy**

The standard of service a customer receives when they contact the Council will influence their view of the Council and potentially the area it serves. At a time when customer expectations are continually changing, and councils are striving to make efficiencies, we aim to address these challenges by

- Making the best use of technology to deliver cost effective services
- Preventing valuable resources being wasted on providing poor customer service by reviewing what we do and how we do it.
- Transform services to make them simple to deliver and easy for customers to access
- Consider alternative methods of communications such as social media

Whilst this policy is concerned with standards, the Council has a policy specifically for Compliments, Comments and Complaints which is available via the website or from the Customer Service Team. This policy guides customers through the process of making a compliment, comment, or complaint.

## **3. Scope**

This document applies to all Mid Devon residents and customers of the Council and all Council staff. Where third parties provide services on the Councils behalf, those third parties must be able to deliver a customer service which is broadly in line with this policy.

## **4. Related Documents**

- a. [Complaints Policy](#)
- b. [Customer Care Standards](#)
- c. [Equality Policy](#)
- d. Safeguarding

## **5. Customer Service Promise**

We will:

Have policies and procedures which support the right of all customers to expect excellent levels of service, and that meet the diverse needs of our customers.

Have policies and procedures which support our most vulnerable residents to ensure access to council services and their interactions with us.

Have staff that are polite and friendly to customers and understand our customer needs.

Advise our customers and potential customers about our customer care standards and what can be expected from our services in terms of timeliness and quality.

We aim to improve how we learn from customer feedback, both good and bad and use that to improve services.

We will also ensure staff have the skills and knowledge to support customers and resolve queries at the point of contact wherever possible.

## **6. Customer Service Standards**

We would like all customers to know the standards and behaviours they can expect from us. Customer Service Standards set out how we will behave, and how quickly we will respond.

What the responsibilities of customers are when contacting us by their chosen method.

We will ensure that standards consider our responsibility to deliver national and statutory standards and targets.

In addition to the standards set to support this policy, some services may also have standards and targets specific to their areas of work (e.g. Housing benefit applications, planning applications, social landlord function).

## **7. Measuring success**

Over time we aim to have customers involved in setting and monitoring customer service standards. The Council will develop ways of engaging with customers and encouraging customer feedback.

Performance will be monitored by self-assessment, comparisons with similar organisations, customer satisfaction ratings and sometimes feedback from external bodies.

As a Council we are developing ways of getting customer feedback and finding out whether our customers are satisfied with the standard of service they have received. Comments, compliments, and complaints are an important part of the continued improvement process and are needed for us to be a customer-focused organisation.

## **8. Staff training**

Standards will be included in induction for all new staff. All staff will be required to read and adopt this policy via Learning Management System (LMS) and to review annually. A programme of targeted training and workshops for all staff, to ensure they know what is expected of them within their role in behaviour and response to customers will be delivered. This will be supported by a staff guide, regular promotion of good customer service and useful resources via The Link weekly staff newsletter and other resources available. Appraisals will include discussion around customer focus and customer service, linked to the core competencies for the role.

## Equality Impact Assessment

### **Purpose of the Equality Impact Assessment process:**

The Equality Act (2010) introduced the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) (PSED) requiring public bodies to give due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations

Consideration must be given to the protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act (2010). Assessments should consider relevant evidence relating to persons with protected characteristics in relation to assessments of potential impact.

The purpose of an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is to ensure that policies, functions, plans or decisions (hereafter referred to as 'policy/ decision') do not create unnecessary barriers for people protected under the Act. Where negative impacts are identified these should be eliminated or minimised, and opportunities for positive impact should be maximised. An EIA is not required for a decision in relation to an individual.

Screening is a short exercise to determine whether a policy/ decision is relevant to equalities, and if so, whether a full EIA should be conducted.

## Section 1: Equality Impact Assessment Screening

|   |   |                                     |  |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|--|
| Title and description of the policy/ decision:  | Customer Care Policy  |                                     |  |
| Job title of the person(s) undertaking the assessment:  | Lisa Lewis, Corporate Manager Digital Transformation & Customer Engagement  |                                     |  |
| Council service:  | Corporate   |                                     |  |
| Date of assessment:   | 13/12/2023  |                                     |  |
| What are the aims, purposes, objectives and proposed outcomes of the policy/ decision?  |   |                                     |  |
| The aim of the policy is to set out the standards and approach to customer service/service delivery of Mid Devon District Council (MDDC). |   |                                     |  |
| Who may be affected by the policy/ decision?  | All residents   |                                     |  |
| How have stakeholders been involved in the development of the policy/ decision?<br>E.g. a consultation exercise                           | The policy is a pre-existing policy which has been reviewed. The policy has been minimally amended and will proceed through Corporate Management, Community PDG and ultimately Cabinet. |                                     |  |
| Will there be scope for prompt, independent reviews and appeals against decisions arising from the policy/ decision?                      | N/A   |                                     |  |
| To which part(s) of the Public Sector Equality Duties is the policy/ decision relevant:   |   |                                     |  |
|   | Yes   | No                                  | Details  |
| 1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/>            | The policy states our intention to provide excellent customer service and the standards which customers should expect from us. |
| 2. Advance equality of opportunity  | <input type="checkbox"/>  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |  |
| 3. Foster good relations between different groups   | <input type="checkbox"/>  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |  |

**Which of the protected characteristics is the policy/ decision relevant to?**

Tick and briefly describe any likely equalities impact (positive, negative, or neutral)

| Characteristic      | Positive                 | Negative                 | Neutral                             | Comments |
|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------|
| Sex                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |          |
| Age                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |          |
| Disability          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |          |
| Religion or Belief  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |          |
| Race                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |          |
| Sexual Orientation  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |          |
| Gender reassignment | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |          |

| Characteristic                  | Positive                 | Negative                 | Neutral                             | Comments |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------|
| Pregnancy/ maternity            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |          |
| Marriage and Civil partnership* | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |          |

\*Applies only to Employment and the duty to give regard to the elimination of discrimination.

**Decision by Corporate Manager to recommend this policy/ decision for an Equality Impact Assessment?**

**Yes**

**If the answer is “Yes”, please continue to the Section 2 and complete the Equality Impact Assessment. If the answer is “No”, please give a brief reason here.**

**EIA Screening Complete**

## Section 2: Equality Impact Assessment

### Evidence and Consultation

What existing sources of information have you gathered to help identify how people covered by the protected characteristics may be affected by this policy/ decision? E.g. consultations, national or local data and/or research, complaints or customer feedback. Please identify any gaps in the available information that might make it difficult to form an opinion about the effect of the policy on different groups.

**It is appropriate to review equalities impact of any new policy or revised policy as appropriate in line with the recently revised and agreed EIA form.**

**The Customer Care policy reflects council standards of general good practice around customer service. It is therefore the author's opinion that it should be assessed as 'neutral' in the context of protected characteristics.**

**Existing policies cover MDDC's responsibilities around protected characteristics. The following policies have been reviewed recently, or are shortly due to be reviewed within the coming months by officers and committee(s) and have been referred to in the context of the Customer Care policy to ensure that this policy remains relevant and presents best practice.**

#### **Single Equalities Scheme – agreed 2023**

**The Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy is due for review imminently and a member briefing on the subject was delivered to members on 6 December 2023.**

**The Complaints and Feedback policy is due to be reviewed 2024.**



Please complete this table for all the Protected Characteristics. If you have identified any negative impacts you will need to consider how these can be justified or where possible mitigated either to reduce or remove them. (Please add rows where needed)

| Potential Impacts/ Issues Identified/ Opportunities identified | Mitigation required (action) or Justification | Lead Officer and target completion date | What is the expected outcome from the action? |
|--|---|---|---|
| <b>Sex</b>   |   |   |   |
|  | N/A   |   |   |
| <b>Age</b>   |   |   |   |
|  | N/A   |   |   |
| <b>Disability</b>  |   |   |   |
|  | N/A   |   |   |
| <b>Religion or Belief</b>                                      |   |   |   |
|  | N/A   |   |   |
| <b>Race</b>  |   |   |   |
|  | N/A   |   |   |
| <b>Sexual Orientation</b>                                      |   |   |   |
|  | N/A   |   |   |
| <b>Gender Reassignment</b>                                     |   |   |   |

|   |     |  |  |
|---|-----|--|--|
|   | N/A |  |  |
| <b>Pregnancy/ maternity</b>   |     |  |  |
|   | N/A |  |  |
| <b>Marriage and Civil partnership</b> (Applies only to Employment and the duty to give regard to the elimination of discrimination) |     |  |  |
|   | N/A |  |  |

**Please provide details of arrangements to monitor and review the policy/ decision and any mitigating actions or actions to promote equality:**

**Please state where the EIA will be published (e.g. on the Mid Devon District Council website): MDDC website**

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**Equality Impact Assessment Sign off**

**For completion by Corporate Manager**

**Are you prepared to agree and sign off the EIA?**

**Yes**                       **No**

If "No", provide details of why and next steps:

**Name: Lisa Lewis**

**Job Title: Corporate Manager for Digital Transformation & Customer Engagement**

**Date: 14/12/2023**

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