

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **COUNCIL** held on 30 October 2024 at 6.00 pm

**Present
Councillors**

G Czapiewski (Vice-Chair), C Adcock,
M D Binks, D Broom, E Buczkowski,
J Buczkowski, J Cairney, S J Clist,
L J Cruwys, G Cochran, C Connor,
F J Colthorpe, A Cuddy, J M Downes,
M Farrell, B Fish, M Fletcher, B Holdman,
S Keable, L G J Kennedy, L Knight, J Lock,
J Poynton, R Roberts, S Robinson,
A Stirling, L Taylor, H Tuffin, N Woollatt,
G Westcott, A White, J Wright and D Wulff

**Apologies
Councillor(s)**

N Bradshaw, G Duchesne and R Gilmour

**Also Present
Officer(s):**

Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Andrew Jarrett (Deputy Chief Executive (S151)) and Maria De Leiburne (Director of Legal, People & Governance (Monitoring Officer)) Laura Woon (Democratic Services Manager), Angie Howell (Democratic Services Officer) and David Parker (Democratic Services and Policy Research Officer)

**Councillors
Online**

S Chenore, A Glover, C Harrower, M Jenkins, F W Letch,
and N Letch

Officers Online

Dean Emery (Head of Revenue and Benefits) Simon Newcombe (Head of Housing and Health) and Carole Oliphant (Housing Policy Officer)

221 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors: N Bradshaw, G DuChesne and R Gilmour

222 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Goff Welchman

Question 1: Has a final decision been reached regarding the use for St George's Court?

Cabinet Member for Housing, Property and Assets:

Yes. St George's Court had been sold to the Council's Housing Service, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for specific use as social housing within the Council housing stock. Please refer to minute 43 of the August 2023 Cabinet meeting <https://democracy.middevon.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=18034>

Question 2: What further work on that site is being or will be carried out?

Cabinet Member for Housing, Property and Assets:

External works to complete the final drainage connections, highways access, garden/other landscaping and additional works to ensure St George's Court was ready to let. Some internal works were to be completed to bathrooms within the blocks of flats and riverside fencing to meet Housing Revenue Account (HRA) adaptability/safety requirements and the local lettings plan for the development.

Question 3: What was the cost of that further work, and how would it be funded?

Cabinet Member for Housing, Property and Assets:

As some works were still ongoing a final cost for all the further work was not currently available. All works to complete the site and achieve a lettable standard were being met by the Council's general fund as a requirement of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) acquisition of the site. The internal adaption works and fencing costs were being met the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

Nick Quinn

Question 1: Had the Leisure VAT refund from HMRC, referred to in Council Motion 593, and been received yet?

Question 2: If so:

- a) When was this received?
- b) How much was received?

Cabinet Member for Service Delivery and Continuous Improvement gave a single answer to all his questions:

The Council had received the payments, the total of £3,149,619.03 paid in three instalments and included interest and the final payment was made in 31/08/2023.

Barry Warren

At Cabinet on 15 October 2024 the Medium Term Financial Plan in paragraph 2.6 were the words "Two further lines had possibly lowered in terms of deliverability – lines 25 and 31. Both relate to securing contribution from the Town or Parish Councils. To date, no proposals had been received but discussions were ongoing." In the table which follows the combined figures amount to £110 thousand pounds.

Question 1: What discussions were ongoing and with whom?

Statement:

There was a stated intention of this administration for a closer relationship with the Town and Parish Councils and the public. £6,000.00 had been allocated each year to appoint a Cabinet Member with a portfolio to achieve this.

There was a Town and Parish Charter which sets out apparent agreements. My own Parish Council raised issues with it which in the main were ignored or rejected. A meeting between Councillor DuChesne, myself and the Parish Clerk again raised issues some of which were turned down by the Monitoring Officer. Another issue over a planning application was raised and the response back from a Planning Officer was dismissive to say the least. There were other issues raised and in spite of the Cabinet Member and her supporting Officer taking them away no response had been received to all of them. These included incorrect invoices for services, including a red final demand. This had been repeated yet again this month. Incorrect information in a consultation document to name but a few. There was little or no enforcement been evidenced within the Parish.

Since the change of administration attendance by Ward Councillors at Parish Council Meetings was sparse, if at all, one of the Councillors was also a Parish Councillor but had a poor attendance record. We were not alone in this experience as we had heard from another Council this week who had not seen a Ward Councillor since the changes.

We had charges for play equipment inspections increased. Now we had been advised that some areas would be split into sections and the full charges made for each area rather than the whole field area. We had taken on responsibility for 6 of the Council play/recreational areas which were being refurbished in spite of only having 25 year leases. If the Council were trying to reduce their commitments they could transfer these areas over to the Parish totally.

Question 2: Was there a genuine commitment by this administration to engage?

A written response would be provided within 10 working days.

Paul Elstone

Question 1: Are Council Members aware that ZED PODs had never constructed or installed a modular development they had always subcontracted, which may go some way in explaining the grossly excessive cost being paid by this Council?

Question 2: Are members aware that it had so far cost the Council over £444,000 solely for the design and planning work for just one of the ZED POD's projects?

Question 3: Was the Council aware that the company who previously fabricated modules for ZED PODs entered administration last year, and with multi million pound debt. That the Administrator was attempting to recover substantial funds from the ZED POD shareholders?

Question 4 : Can it be fully explained why this Council had allowed the ZED POD to build the Shapland Place development in non-compliance with more than one of its own planning conditions?

Question 5: Given that Mr Elstone had the opportunity to examine drawings also take physical measurements of completed modules. Can it be fully explained how

this Council had allowed the ZED POD to build modular home developments, which fail to fully comply with the Government Nationally Described Space Standards?

If the Cabinet Member for Housing, Asset and Property wishes to challenge on this, Mr Elstone would be happy to visit, with him and Officers, to Shapland Place and St Andrews in order to validate my statement.

Question 6: Much had been made about the ZED POD modular build durability and Build offsite Property Assurance Scheme (BOPAS) Accreditation. A new company was now building modules for ZED PODs, in exactly the same location as the previous fabricator. Is this Council aware that there was evidence available to suggest that this company, who built the Shapland Place modules, was not BOPAS approved at the time?

Question 7: This Council had stated that the ZED POD's modules can be as good as or even better than conventional builds and have a lifespan of up to 120 years. However, the ZED POD BOPAS durability certificate is only for 60 years. It should be noted that probably one of the most important components of the build, the cladding, only had a warranty of 15 years.

Will the statement that the ZED POD's Modules can have a life of 120 years also that they can be better and more cost effective than equally energy efficient conventional build homes be fully validated?

Question 8: Given the serious nature of the questions in respect of this Council's partnership arrangement with ZED POD's, I believe there are compelling reasons for the Audit and/or Scrutiny Committee to undertake a root and branch investigation – Will they do just that?

Tim Bridger

Statement

The Leisure Centre pricing, the substantial price rises would be implemented from January as yet leisure centre members had not been informed how much, but going up significantly. Last year vulnerable members of the community who use the facilities were hit with a 13% increase in charges whereas other members were given a 6% increase. As a country in the grip of an obesity crisis where diseases are affecting normal people disproportionately, these are also impacting people from lower income and deprived groups. This Council had an opportunity to lower prices to make sure that many people as possible can use the facilities but instead raising the prices and in doing so families would be unable to afford the leisure centres because it would cost too much. Other services in the area were significantly less in membership fees and this Council is meant to be providing a public service.

Question 1: Why is this Council not providing this public service and working collaboratively with NHS in particular for those people who need the facilities and access them.

In relation to the drop in centre in the market place, community groups had tried to make progress for what it was designed as a space for community groups.

Question 2: Has any progress been made on this and would the Council retain it as a community asset.

Question 3: This Council are the land owners of where the area for the Boxing Day hunt event uses and would the Council be taking necessary measures of health and safety of those who would be attending? And would this Council be ensuring this event does not go ahead and comply with the Council standards?

The Chair advised that the questions would be answered in writing within 10 working days.

223 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

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

(All Members of the Council had been granted a dispensation to allow them to speak and vote in any debate on this matter by virtue of being in receipt of or affected by any changes to the motions:- Women on State Pension Inequality and the Winter Fuel Allowance)

224 **PREVIOUS MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 04 SEPTEMBER 2024**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4th September 2024 were **AGREED** as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

225 **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair had the following announcements to make:

- On the 29 September the Vice-Chair of the Council attended Exeter Cathedral and had a wonderful walk around.
- On the 13 October he attended the Mayor's Civic service.
- On the 20 October he attended his Civic service at St Paul's Church, it was a magnificent event and raised over £400 for Devon Young Carers and had received thanks from the Lord High Sheriff and members of the public for the event.

The Chair of Council invited the Vice Chair Cllr G Czapiewski to chair the meeting.

226 **PETITIONS**

Mr Bridger presented a petition with over 4000 signatures to the Chair of the Council and outlined the basis for the petition, stating:

The Grand Western Canal is the jewel in the crown of Mid Devon. It offers unique access to our beautiful countryside and is a haven for wildlife and nature. The canal route has been protected from development or encroachment for the past 30 years, and the tranquillity and biodiversity of this part of Devon has benefitted enormously.

Our elected Councillors at Mid Devon District Council want to end the protection for parts of the canal area, and to open the door for protected woodlands and open

areas to be developed for housing. A developer has already submitted plans for large-scale housing right next to the canal around Tidcombe Hall. These plans have previously failed due in large part to the Conservation Area designation.

Development here would hugely damage the biodiversity of the area, and impact tourism, health and well-being, and access to nature. We need our District Council to preserve the existing Grand Western Canal Conservation Area, and improve the biodiversity of the lands, not damage our beautiful countryside.

The residents of Tiverton and Mid Devon do not want to see the Grand Western Canal Conservation area altered or reduced.

The Council had claimed the intention was for a positive step in terms of safeguarding and protecting the canal. The Conservation area was an area that was protected by a series of buildings and planning restrictions to ensure the original character was either retained or improved and its importance to protect and to conserve its integrity.

The guidance was clear that conservation areas must be protected and enhanced by any review process and any review must be community led reflecting the importance of the area to the community and its uniqueness. The specialness was judged against local and regional criteria not national criteria. Locals and visitors were aghast at the idea that the Council, tasked to preserve the heritage assets for future generations, was seeking to undermine its protection rightly given to it all those years ago. Quoting legalisation to justify it was disingenuous and perverse, local authorities had a duty to review conservation areas from time to time but this should be done with a view to enhancing those areas.

Section 71 of the legalisation also states that the view of the public must be heard and that local authorities shall have regard to those views. Throughout the legislation, preservation and enhancement were the watch words. The guidance was clear that well managed conservation areas were a community asset; a good understanding of what makes them special, and active management once they were designated were key to their ongoing success.

It was clear to those using the areas slated for removal, Snakes Wood and Tidcombe Hall that this conservation area had been a success. The fields and woods forming the designated area made it special to locals, tourists and businesses.

The guidance also states that the historical aspect should not require a detailed account of the area's history but focus on what makes the area special and the impact of the history on its current character and appearance, there is emphasis on the sensory contribution to the character of the place and an aspect that many of the petitioners had reflected on. It also states that opportunities for greater public benefits, such as the improvement of public open spaces or community facilities should be delivered through the conservation of the area by expansion and not reduction.

The sole area that was mentioned in the guidance was where designated areas may no longer be justified through degradation of all or part of the conservation area. The special interest of areas may now be so eroded by piecemeal change or by single examples of poorly designed development, however, this was clearly not the case

here as the preservation of these areas from development had increased the special interest thanks for the flourishing flora and the opportunities for locals and visitors to visit the canal area and the nature it supports.

The timing of the review was curious, the reason that the Council had given for the justification of the review to the conservation area, was the Council claimed, that without a review, they would open the door to speculative applications of planners and developers to challenge. The petitioner had researched reviews of conservation areas and there were no similar challenges.

In summary of the 4000 plus signatures, the key point was, what was the point of declaring a conservation area and un declaring it, when it became inconvenient for an out of town property developer? It's an area of tranquillity, people use the land on a daily basis and he hoped that the Council would leave the canal conservation area in place.

The Leader of the Council responded:

The leader thanked Mr Bridger for presenting this to the Council this evening and for giving our committee officers advance notice of this and congratulated him for obtaining over 4000 signatures, however the officers had not had the time to validate all of the signatures as Mid Devon residents due to the late filing of the petition.

The Leader believed he could speak on behalf of every Member of this Council to say that at no point was the Council thinking about scrapping the Conservation Area. The title of the petition to 'Save the Grand Western Canal Conservation Area' was therefore misleading at best. In seeking to gain signatures, the petition used provocative and inaccurate phrases like 'opening up woodlands and open areas to be developed for housing'. So to that end, the Leader felt to clarify for the benefit of all those people who may have been convinced to sign this petition, a few facts that were conveniently omitted from the petition details:

- It was in fact a requirement in law that the Council reviewed its Conservation Areas, something that the petition organiser really ought to have been aware of.
- It was the Local Plan that allocated land use, not Conservation Areas, again something the petition organiser must surely have been aware of as the Town Council website listed him as sitting on their Planning Committee.
- The petition also sought to stoke fear and division in the community by referencing a controversial planning application that was in fact refused by this Council's Planning Committee, just as an earlier one had been 3 years ago. Although perhaps that reference to whip up support was not surprising since the petition was created before the Planning Committee had taken place, before the Grand Western Canal Joint Advisory Committee had met to discuss the Conservation Area review, before the two separate public drop-in events were held, and before the consultation was completed. Still, why let the facts get in the way of a good petition.
- From the feedback that had been received, both at the public drop-in events and through the discussion at the Grand Western Canal Joint Advisory Committee, the Council had heard multiple comments commending the openness and transparency around this process, and the clarity and explanation that has been provided. The Leader stated that he would like to

take this opportunity to thank all those who participated or got in touch with the Council as a part of this process.

- Nevertheless, despite the many misleading or inaccurate aspects put forward to try and gain support, he recognised this petition as securing a considerable number of signatures and therefore the Cabinet would of course consider the merits of this when the item came before Cabinet in November 2024. He thanked the organisers for presenting it to the Council at this time and would remind all Members that they were very welcome to attend the Cabinet meeting in November should they wish as could any members of the public.
- Petitions were encouraged, and the response now, should in no way to deter members of the public wishing to carry out their own for an issue that they were passionate about, but the Leader asked that full and accurate details were included in future petitions to allow the residents the opportunity to have the full details before adding their names.

Consideration was given to:

- It was the previous government who decided that all areas would be examined to see if they were still viable which was what had happened.

227 NOTICES OF MOTIONS

1. Motion 606 (Cllr S Robinson)

The Council had before it a **MOTION** submitted for the first time.

Motion: Women against State Pension Inequality (WASPI)

Council was asked to note that:

- In the 1995 Pensions Act, the Government increased State Pension age for women from 60 to 65, with a further increase to 66 in the 2011 Pensions Act.
- The change was not properly communicated to 3.8 million women born in the 1950s until 2012, giving some only 1 year's notice of a 6 year increase in their anticipated retirement age. 14,350 of the affected women lived in our own authority area.
- The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) had found the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to have committed maladministration through its failure to adequately communicate State Pension age increases to women born in the 1950s.
- The PHSO had concluded the DWP should apologise to women affected and pay compensation as a result.
- The DWP had refused to accept the findings of the PHSO, which had now led the independent watchdog to lay its findings before Parliament, encouraging MPs to intervene to deliver a remedy to affected women.
- The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on State Pension Inequality for Women had concluded that "the impact of DWP maladministration on 1950s-born women had been as devastating as it was widespread. The APPG believed that the case for category 6 injustice (£10,000) was overwhelming

and clear. Women have had their emotional, physical, and mental circumstances totally obliterated by a lack of reasonable notice.”

- As of April 2024, more than 275,000 women had died waiting for justice since the WASPI campaign began in 2015.

Council was asked to consider that this injustice had not only had a profound affect on the individuals involved, but on the wider community in Mid Devon and on local government, not least because:

- Women who would have looked after older relatives or partners were unable to afford to do so, with a knock-on impact on local social care.
- Women who would have retired and engaged in caring responsibilities for grandchildren were having to continue working, increasing the childcare burden on the state locally.
- Women who have been left in poverty were struggling to meet their housing costs, with a knock-on impact on local housing stock.
- There was a broader impact on voluntary services of all kinds locally, which were missing out on able, active volunteers who would otherwise have been able to retire from full-time work as planned.
- Our local economy was negatively affected by the reduced spending power and disposable income that the uncommunicated State Pension Age changes had brought about among women born in the 1950s.
- Local tourism had suffered as a result, with affected women unable to travel to the area for holidays.

Council was asked to support:

- A swift resolution to this ongoing injustice before more and more women died waiting for compensation.
- The conclusion of the All Party Parliamentary Group on State Pension Inequality that women born in the 1950s had suffered a gross injustice, affecting their emotional, physical and mental circumstances in addition to causing financial hardship.
- The WASPI campaign and All Party Parliamentary Group’s called for an immediate one-off compensation payment at category 6 injustice on the PHSO’s financial remedy scale (£10,000) to those affected.
- The PHSO’s recommendation for the DWP to issue a formal apology to those affected and provide an opportunity for MPs to urgently debate the APPG’s recommendations, and any others, in Parliament.

We therefore ask:

The Leader of the Council to write to the 3 local Members of Parliament, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and the Leader of the House of Commons to outline the effects of the injustice on a significant number of women born in the 1950s in Mid Devon and to seek the following:

- Urgent delivery of proposals from the DWP, outlining how they would deliver compensation for affected women, to include the value of compensation and a timeline for the delivery of said compensation.

- For all MPs to be given an opportunity to debate and vote on these proposals.

Consideration was given to:

- Acknowledged the challenges of the changes for women and families.
- Concern that the motion as presented was not in the interest of Mid Devon residents.
- There were errors in the motion, and the contained facts and figures were misleading at best, and without careful consideration, it risked being generic and serving little purpose to our residents.
- It was the Council's duty to ensure that any motion passed genuinely represented the Council's residents, improved their lives and was factually accurate. To achieve this, and rather than rejecting it outright, it was proposed to refer the motion to the Community, People & Equalities Policy Development Group for refinement, allowing them to make the necessary adjustments so that it could truly be bespoke to our community. This would be in accordance with procedure rules.
- This was a national issue and not one that the Council could control here and it was important to remember that the pension reforms were introduced to ensure fairness and sustainability.
- The equalisation of the state pension age was essential, not only for balancing public finances and to protect the viability of the state pension system, but also to reflect equality—a principle the Council was committed to.
- Additionally, there was the matter of the potential financial cost of compensation demanded, which could exceed a staggering £36 billion, this would have a substantial impact on the public purse, which may ultimately detract from local essential services that benefit all residents.
- A similar motion had previously come to a Council meeting and was currently still an issue.
- Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) had been found guilty of maladministration over 3 years ago.
- The motion was important and would support the notice of motion to ensure the Council had this correct.
- Support the notice of motion to go to the Community, People and Equalities Policy Development Group to ensure the motion was right for the residents of the Council.

The **MOTION** was **MOVED** by Councillor S Robinson seconded by Councillor G Westcott.

Cllr J Buczkowski **MOVED** seconded by Cllr L Kennedy a **NOTICE WITHOUT MOTION** to appoint the Community, People and Equalities Policy Development Group (PDG) to consider this motion before it came back to Full Council.

Upon a vote being taken, the **MOTION WITHOUT NOTICE** was declared to have **CARRIED**.

Those voting **AGAINST** the **MOTION**: Cllr L Cruwys, Cllr S Robinson, Cllr H Tuffin, Cllr N Woollatt

Those **ABSTAINING** from voting: Cllr B Holdman

2. Motion 607 (Cllr B Fish)

The Council had before it a **MOTION** submitted for the first time.

Motion: Changes to the Winter Fuel Allowance; Protecting and Relieving Pensioners from Fuel Poverty

This Council noted with great concern the recent decision by the Labour Government to restrict the Winter Fuel Payment (WFP) to pensioners who were in receipt of Pension Credit (PC). Age UK has estimated that this change will result in 2 million pensioners, who were in critical need of the payment (to stay warm this winter), losing this allowance.

WFPs have been an essential support for many older residents across the UK, including those in Mid Devon, to afford sufficient heating during the coldest months, to prevent 'heat or eat' dilemma and to safeguard health. Charities such as Age UK, The Countryside Alliance, CHAT and other stakeholders had voiced significant concerns regarding the social injustice and health risks associated with this sudden and unexpected change. This change came about without adequate notice of this Government's intent to deprive so many of our pensioners of a warm home this winter. This seemingly 'snap decision' to means test WFPs was unfair and deeply goes counter to the financial contribution that pensioners have made to our Economy throughout their long and productive lives.

This Council believed that the Labour Government had set the threshold at which our pensioners did not qualify for WFPs far too low. Only those currently receiving a pension of less than £218.15 per week (or £332.95 for couples) were eligible for Pension Credit (PC). This was significantly less than the Living Wage of £457.60. Moreover, our fuel and food costs continued to rise.

This Council was concerned by the low take-up of PC, with only 63% of those eligible, nationwide, receiving it, and over 880,000 not receiving it. Administrative barriers and stigma may prevent many eligible pensioners from claiming PC, leaving them without the financial support they desperately need.

This Council further noted that the Energy Price Gap has risen by 10% in October 2024, which, combined with the removal of WFPs, would push thousands more pensioners into fuel poverty this winter.

This Council recognised that:

- The WFP has been a crucial lifeline for many older people across the UK and restricting it only to those on Pension Credit risked leaving many pensioners in serious financial hardship.
- Whilst some pensioners in receipt of the payment may not be in financial need, many others, particularly those just above the threshold, would lose this essential support. This method of selection appeared ill conceived and needed urgent reconsideration. Being just £10 over the PC limit would subject a pensioner to a loss of £290 and would make it likely that they would enter fuel poverty over this winter, whilst, for someone whose income was £10 under the PC limit this winter would retain the £300. This seemed morally wrong.
- Another consideration of great importance to this Council was that, without heat, warmth and/or good nutrition through the winter months, there would be a big increase in hospital admissions, most likely due to chest infections,

pneumonia, etc. This would put even more strain on our NHS, in what was the busiest time of their year. This surely would adversely impact Government expenditure.

This Council was currently undertaking the following:

1. Launching a Council led awareness campaign to ensure that those eligible for Pension Credits were made aware of the benefit, including access to Winter Fuel Payments, and to encourage take-up of their entitlement. Strengthening local efforts to promote Pension Credit uptake through Council services and partnerships with local Charities and community organisations, ensuring that all eligible pensioners in Mid Devon were supported in claiming their entitlement. We were proud of MDDCs efforts to date, which were already in process.
2. Promoting and supporting the NHS vaccination programme, taking due notice of the health and welfare of our elderly.

This Council resolved to:

1. Request that the Leader of the Council write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, calling for the policy of linking Winter Fuel Payments to Pension Credit receipt to be immediately paused. This should enable time for the introduction of a new and honourable financial threshold, used to determine eligibility for Pension Credit.
2. Requested that the Leader write to all MPs covering Mid Devon, asking them to give their formal support to halting the changes to the Winter Fuel Payment eligibility, certainly for this winter, whilst further solutions were explored ready for implementation next year (winter 2025).
3. Investigate whether Mid Devon's public buildings could be used as part of the 'Warm Spaces' initiative for Winter 2024/5, ensuring that vulnerable residents had access to heated spaces during the colder months, and encouraged Town and Parish Councils to participate.

Consideration was given to:

- It was a prime responsibility of governments, both national and local, to protect their most vulnerable residents, and whilst the current government undoubtedly inherited a financial mess from the chaotic and incompetent Conservative government, they also, in the Prime Minister's own words, inherited appalling poverty.
- The wholesale removal of the winter fuel allowance by the Labour Government was a total dereliction of the responsibility and an utter betrayal to those who relied on this payment to keep their homes warm through the winter.
- The support of this motion, which aimed to show the strength of feeling of this Council, and of the residents it represented, along with it identifying pragmatic ways to further support our vulnerable residents and those in need.
- The Council had sought to protect the vulnerable residents within the district that had been affected by the withdrawal of the winter fuel allowance and had taken urgent and decisive action to protect the residents
- Utilising the Household Support fund the Council had offered a direct award, meaning no application, to 325 pensioners that had been identified as likely to be at risk of hardship due to the loss of the winter fuel allowance, this award was by way of energy vouchers of £250 for single persons and £300 for couples.
- In addition to the direct award, the Household support scheme could offer up to £400 of vouchers for either food, energy or a combination of both – Applications needed to be made for the main scheme and it was means tested

to ensure and support the most vulnerable households. Households receiving a direct award could also apply to the full scheme for additional support.

- The team at Mid Devon had ramped up publicity of the scheme, and pension credit eligibility and claims process, the Council had issued 600 letters encouraging people to apply for pension credit.
- The Council's Customer First Team would be ready to help where they could on both the Household Support Fund (HSF) and Pension Credit Claims, the Council had worked closely with external partners CHAT and Navigate to ensure that support was accessible and close to our communities.
- Members commended the work of the Council to raise awareness and claim pension credit.
- This winter would see higher numbers of illness and death through living in cold and damp conditions.
- The use of the word honourable financial threshold.

The **MOTION** was **MOVED** by Councillor B Fish seconded by Councillor S Robinson Upon a vote being taken, the **MOTION** was declared to have **CARRIED**.

(All Members of the Council had been granted a dispensation to allow them to speak and vote in any debate on this matter by virtue of being in receipt of or affected by any changes to the motions:- Women on State Pension Inequality and the Winter Fuel Allowance)

228 **CABINET- REPORTS OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD BETWEEN 17 SEPTEMBER AND 15 OCTOBER 2024**

The Leader presented the reports of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 17 September and 15 October 2024

1. Mid Devon Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy (Minute 73)

The Leader **MOVED**:

That the recommendations of the Cabinet as set out in minute 73 be **APPROVED**.

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

229 **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE- REPORT OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9TH SEPTEMBER 2024**

The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee presented the report of the meeting held on 9 September 2024.

230 **COMMUNITY, PEOPLE AND EQUALITIES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP- REPORT OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24TH SEPTEMBER 2024**

The Chair of the Community, People and Equalities Policy Development Group presented the report held on the 24 September 2024.

231 **ECONOMY AND ASSETS POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP- REPORT OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19TH SEPTEMBER 2024**

The Chair of the Economy and Asset Policy Development Group presented the report held on 19 September 2024.

232 **HOMES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP- REPORT OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10TH SEPTEMBER 2024**

The Chair of the Homes Policy Development Group presented the report held on 10 September 2024.

233 **PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP- REPORT OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3RD SEPTEMBER 2024**

The Chair of the meeting of Planning, Environment and Sustainability Group presented the report held on 3 September 2024.

234 **SERVICE DELIVERY AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENTS POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP- REPORT OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23RD SEPTEMBER 2024**

The Chair of the meeting of Service Delivery and Continuous Improvements Policy Development Group presented the report held on 23 September 2024.

235 **PLANNING COMMITTEE- REPORTS OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 28TH AUGUST, 11TH SEPTEMBER AND 9TH OCTOBER 2024**

The Chair of the Planning Committee held presented the reports of the meetings held on 28th August, 11th September and 9th October 2024.

236 **LICENSING COMMITTEE- REPORTS OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 2ND OCTOBER 2024.**

The Chair of the Licensing Committee presented the report of the meeting held on 2 October.

1. Gambling Act Statement of Principles (Minute 14)

The Chair of Licensing Committee **MOVED**, seconded by Cllr J Buczkowski

That the recommendation of the Licensing Committee as set out in Minute 14 be **ADOPTED**.

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

2. Statement of Licensing Policy (Minute 15)

The Chair of Licensing Committee **MOVED**, seconded by Cllr L Taylor

That the recommendation of the Licensing Committee as set out in Minute 15 be **ADOPTED**.

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

237 REGULATORY COMMITTEE- REPORT OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 2ND OCTOBER 2024

The Chair of the Regulatory Committee presented the report of the meeting held on 2 October.

1. Hackney Carriage and Private Hire (Taxi) Policy (Minute 14)

The Chair of Regulatory Committee **MOVED**, seconded by Cllr J Downes

That the recommendation of the Regulatory Committee as set out in Minute 14 be **ADOPTED**.

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

238 APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

The following appointments to Outside Bodies were **AGREED**.

Cllr G Czapiewski to be appointed to Council for the Police and Crime Panel for Devon and Cornwall.

Cllr L Kennedy **MOVED** seconded by Cllr L Cruwys:

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

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Property Services be appointed to the Devon and Torbay Housing Advisory Group.

The Chair **MOVED**

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

239 QUESTIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROCEDURE RULE 11

To deal with any questions raised pursuant to Procedure Rule 11 not already dealt with during the relevant Committee reports.

There were no questions.

240 SPECIAL URGENCY DECISIONS

With regard to any decisions taken under Rule 16 (of the Constitution) Special Urgency taken since the last meeting. The Chair informed the meeting that no such decisions had been taken in that period.

241 QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS

The Chair informed the meeting that no were no questions to Cabinet Members.

242 MEMBERS BUSINESS

- Cllr J Wright thanked Leisure Services for their actions that related to a number of recent incidents where customers or members of the public had collapsed in a centre. The leisure centre staff acted swiftly and had been praised by the relatives of both individuals and the ability of well trained staff to administer first aid when required. All those that used the excellent leisure centres could be confident in the support that was available should they find themselves in difficulty.
- Cllr S Clist thanked two members of the housing team for a similar situation to the leisure centre and would be emailing those individuals to give his personal thanks.
- Cllr S Clist attended a harvest thanksgiving in Exeter, it was a great pleasure to see the younger generation, keen and interested in agriculture. The cathedral was beautifully decorated.
- Cllr L Taylor highlighted to Members that the Cullompton Town Centre Relief Road had taken another major step towards delivery, as Tesco had confirmed its willingness to sell a key piece of land required to deliver the relief road. He thanked all Members and officers for their work on this.
- Cllr S Keable highlighted the commencement of the relocation of Cullompton Cricket Pitch, this latest announcement marked the achievement of another key milestone and paved the way for the delivery of the long-awaited relief road.
- Cllr S Keable highlighted that the Prosperity Fund had successfully been granted another year of funding, and that he considered this programme was vital to support the continued growth of jobs and wealth in the district.

(The meeting ended at 7.44pm)

CHAIR