

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **COUNCIL** held on 23 April 2025 at 6.00 pm

**Present
Councillors**

G Czapiewski (Vice-Chair), C Adcock,
D Broom, E Buczkowski, J Buczkowski,
S Chenore, S J Clist, L J Cruwys,
G Cochran, C Connor, F J Colthorpe,
A Cuddy, G Duchesne, J M Downes,
M Farrell, B Fish, M Fletcher, A Glover,
C Harrower, B Holdman, M Jenkins,
S Keable, L Knight, N Letch, J Lock,
J Poynton, S Robinson, A Stirling, L Taylor,
H Tuffin, G Westcott, A White, J Wright and
D Wulff

**Apologies
Councillor(s)**

M D Binks, N Bradshaw, J Cairney, R Roberts and
N Woollatt

**Also Present
Officer(s):**

Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Andrew Jarrett (Deputy
Chief Executive (S151)), Maria De Leiburne (Director of
Legal, People & Governance (Monitoring Officer)), Richard
Marsh (Director of Place & Economy), James Hamblin
(Operations Manager for People Services) and Matthew
Page (Head of People, Performance & Waste)Laura Woon
(Democratic Services Manager) and Sarah Lees
(Democratic Services Officer)

**Councillors
Online**

L G J Kennedy

Officers Online

Paul Deal (Head of Finance, Property & Climate
Resilience), Dean Emery (Head of Revenues, Benefits &
Leisure), Carole Oliphant (Housing Policy Officer), Tristan
Peat (Forward Planning Team Leader)

296 COUNCILLOR MR FRANK LETCH MBE

The following tributes were made in Remembrance of Councillor Frank Letch MBE:

Cllr Luke Taylor

The first thing Frank would have done at a time like this, would have been to remind the speaker that they only had 3 minutes and for the next speaker to be lined up ready, "Some people have to get back to Crediton, don't you know". Well we are sorry Frank, we cannot guarantee just 3 minutes for you tonight. I speak on behalf of all the Liberal Democrat Group this evening to remember a truly remarkable man, Councillor, and a friend to many.

In the 2015 election Frank and I were elected to this Council for the first time, it was a bittersweet result after a big blow to our Liberal Democrat colleagues across the country in the aftermath of the coalition but we were both eager to get started. We attended many of the induction sessions together and I remember Frank always being the centre of attention - he spoke to everyone with warmth and was always welcoming - though sometimes he would add a bit of Welsh in there too. He never seemed fazed.

Frank was a loyal servant to the people of Crediton, serving many, many years consecutively as Mayor. Crediton meant so much to him. He would often tell us of the history of the Church and that the steeple was just a centimetre short for a Cathedral and that they must have measured it wrong as they did not want Devon to have 3 cities. Perhaps now is the time to re-measure that steeple to be sure.

Frank served Crediton as a Town, District and County Councillor serving Crediton diligently and respectfully and I know he was absolutely thrilled when his wife Natalia joined him on this Council.

Frank served on several committees during his 10 years on this Council, notably as Scrutiny Chair and of course the last two years as our dear Chairman. He absolutely loved the pomp and ceremony of the role and the chance to showcase and represent all the good in our communities. Natalia shared a reel on Facebook last week of them both walking down Exeter High Street in a procession - you could tell by his face how much it meant to him. He represented the Council well at all times and respected the position and trust that was given to him. He never took it for granted.

Frank was a champion to many, and none more so than young people. He introduced the Young Carers of Devon charity to this Council and I know he was thrilled when we introduced free leisure access to our young carers in Mid Devon. He was a hero in his own right, being born without arms, he never let it get the better of him and we were genuinely amazed what he still managed to do, driving, eating or signing his name away with his feet to hold the pen. He embodied the very best of the human spirit to overcome his challenges and to selflessly use his experience and inspiration to better enrich the lives of other people. He was rightly awarded an MBE for his charitable work in standing up for and helping others.

Frank was a popular Member of this Council amongst both Members and officers past and current and he never let his adversities get the better of him. Even when he knew his time was nearing the end, he still insisted on carrying out his duties as Chair of the Council. A role he loved.

At his Civic Service in Tiverton, he was advised to take it easy and had originally planned not to attend, but we all knew that was never going to happen and whilst the procession was too much he was still there and was proud as punch when his young

granddaughter gave an excellent reading. You could easily see how much the role meant to him but also how much his family did too. He often spoke fondly of them at any chance he could.

Frank was a friend to all and will be sorely missed by all who met him. This Council will be a quieter place without him here. I share my sincere condolences to his family and loving wife Natalia, and want you to know that your Liberal Democrat and wider Council family are here for you and will help you in any way they could.

Frank would never be forgotten, he has touched too many lives and will live long in everyone's memories.

I will end with a small comment sent to me by Cllr Fish in advance of tonight's meeting which I think sums up Frank brilliantly: "For those of us new to the Council, Frank was a fantastic role model. He always began with an insightful or amusing insight that served to add a lighter note to the proceedings. He was kind and witty, and always so full of knowledge. He was always professional and courteous, even to those who disagreed with him. His politics were fair and straightforward, about doing things sensible and efficiently. He was a brilliant Chairman to Mid Devon and he will be very much missed, especially his incredible ability to sign documents with his feet, his legend would live on'.

Cllr Gill Westcott

I remember at Cheriton Bishop Parish Council when Frank became their County Councillor, from the very beginning he made an enormous impression not least because of his complete naturalness, his lack of self-pity and the way he had done everything he did without the need for fingers.

Frank held surgeries which no District or County Council had done before in the village, he made himself available, even if they were held in a bus shelter, so that people could come and speak with him.

As we have seen he imparted serious consideration to the issues being discussed and a light touch of humour and he was very much appreciated in a way we had not expected and were delighted with the care he gave to his constituents.

He was an inspiring person in many dimensions and we are so sorry that he is not here with us, the impression he has made will last for a very long time with those that have known him in his time. He has left us with much to cherish and to appreciate. I know I will be speaking about him to people in years to come. Thank you Frank for all your gifts.

Mrs Polly Colthorpe

Frank has been well known ever since he first came to Crediton, At QE Crediton Lower School, he regularly took part in the assembly programme, giving young pupils an insight into how it was living and coping with his physical problems. Members of my Group including me, maintained long standing friendships with Frank, you could discuss anything with Frank because he was interested in everything and everybody. He could ignore the political differences and we supported each other whenever

necessary. As a keen gardener, Frank tried to support local gardeners in the Crediton area.

Frank really was all about returning, with interest, as much as he could to the community that he lived in. A remarkable man but because of his amazing success in dealing with and managing his physical difficulties he was a truly extraordinary human being. He will be missed very much, not only here amongst us but all those living in this part of Devon.

Cllr Gordon Czapiewski

Frank will be remembered for many things, such as his wit, his resilience, his humanity and his ability to focus, in particular through the example he set to others. He demonstrated to me the art of leading a group by judicious intervention rather than an expectation of leadership.

Those in attendance observed a minute silence in memory of Councillor Frank Letch MBE.

Books of Condolence had been opened in reception and online for those who wished to leave messages in due course.

297 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors: N Bradshaw, M Binks, J Cairney, L G J Kennedy (online), R Roberts and N Woollatt.

298 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Mr Peter Drew

Just before Easter the Local Government Ombudsman made a finding of maladministration against the Lib Dem run Mid Devon District Council and so I am here to obtain the apology that is due to me on behalf of the residents of Sampford Peverell.

The facts are that various footpaths were supposed to be opened prior to the first occupiers of the Edenstone housing estate moving into their homes so that pedestrians could walk to the school, and access other services and facilities, in Sampford Peverell. The first dwelling was occupied in February 2024 but the footpaths were not opened until approximately one year later. During that period residents were forced to either drive their children to school, which is ironic for a site that the Council falsely claimed was the most sustainable in the entire District, or risk their lives on roads that the Council itself recorded to be 'dangerous' in its own sustainability assessment.

The facts are that the Highway Authority agreed in a statement of common ground with the land promoter ahead of the Public Inquiry that the 30-mph zone should be extended onto all of the roads around the perimeter of the housing site. When granting outline planning permission the Planning Inspector found that the s106 to secure the funding to deliver the speed limit met all of the relevant legal tests. However when dealing with a subsequent variation of condition application the District Council produced what it called a 'supplemental agreement' and in the

process 'deleted' the s106 that the Inspector had endorsed as being necessary. The practical effect is that no speed limit has been delivered. The Council has never offered any reason why the speed limit was written out of the legal agreement and local residents have never been consulted about the change.

The road north of Battens Cross from which the estate road is constructed remains derestricted, such that vehicles can lawfully drive at 60-mph when the Inspector agreed with the Highway Authority that it should be 30-mph. This country lane has no pavement and no street lights yet residents were forced to walk on the road because the District Council failed to respond expeditiously to my complaint. Even now the crossing point on Turnpike, which the response to my freedom of information request sent to the Highway Authority shows was designed for a 30-mph zone, is located on a stretch of road where the most recent speed survey records actual speeds of around 45 mph.

When I last addressed the Full Council in December you could not answer a simple question as to why the Council applied the same statutory test differently 30 years apart. You haven't communicated with me at any stage about the so-called Conservation Area consultation. Your Cabinet Member for Community Engagement doesn't acknowledge my emails even though she said in the Halberton Parish Magazine that she preferred that method of communication. Lib Dem election propaganda claims that you have 'strengthened protection for our canal' when the reality is that tens of thousands of trees are no longer within the conservation area and so are not protected. I made you aware that you had allowed silt and effluent to pour into the canal for months. There is a fine line between spin and lies, which the Lib Dems have blatantly crossed in this case.

Question 1:

Why did the Council covertly revise the s106 to delete the speed limit and then make residents walk on dangerous roads for 12 months?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration:

Mr Drew, thank you for your question which really took the form of a politicised statement. As this was received after this Bank Holiday and after the deadline for submission you would receive a written response.

In part your question related to the Local Government Ombudsman decision on a complaint made by yourself. The inaccuracy of your statement in this public forum needed to be called out before unnecessary stress to local residents. It had a clear political bias, taking full advantage of the election timing.

The Ombudsman's final summary was: Mr X complained the Council failed to take appropriate action to enforce a breach of planning control relating to the provision of footpaths on a residential development. We found fault by the Council due to delay which caused Mr X frustration. We consider the agreed action of an apology and commitment to keep Mr X advised as appropriate of progress provides a suitable remedy.

The Ombudsman's ruling was issued 15 April 2025 and within 3-working days an apology for the delay in any response was issued in writing by this Council. There has been no malpractice and Officers will keep you informed.

The Grand Western Canal Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Plan, adopted by this Council at the end of 2024, now protected the canal, in better ways than ever before. This was evidenced by the recent Planning Inspector Inquiry where a significant Planning Appeal was rejected and in doing so the Inspector made reference to that decision, of the Council to adopt the Canal Management Plan. Further, this Council was actively pursuing two other initiatives that would enhance the conservation of areas beyond the current Plan.

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

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

Cllr A Glover referred to the Willand Neighbourhood Plan in the Cabinet report and declared that she was a Parish Councillor.

300 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2025 and 12 March 2025 were **AGREED** as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

301 **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair had the following announcements to make:

- On the 28 March he had attended the High Sheriff's Declaration of Office at Exeter Cathedral.
- On the 6 April he had attended the Devon County Council Civic Service Ceremony.

302 **PETITIONS**

None received.

303 **NOTICES OF MOTIONS**

None received.

304 **CABINET- REPORTS OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON THE 4 MARCH AND 1 APRIL 2025**

The Leader presented the reports of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 4 March 2025 and 1 April 2025.

1. Policy Framework Report

The Leader **MOVED** and seconded by Cllr L Cruwys:

That the recommendation of Cabinet as set out in minute 141 be **APPROVED**.

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

2. Pay Policy Report

The Leader **MOVED** and seconded by Cllr J Lock:

That the recommendation of Cabinet as set out in minute 142 be **APPROVED**.

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

3. Mid Devon Housing (MDH) Right to Buy Policy

The Leader **MOVED** and seconded by Cllr S Robinson:

That the recommendation of Cabinet as set out in minute 145 be **APPROVED**.

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

Those **ABSTAINING** from voting were Councillor M Jenkins.

4. Mid Devon Housing (MDH) Safeguarding Adults, Children and Young People Policy.

The Leader **MOVED** and seconded by Cllr S Clist:

That the recommendation of Cabinet as set out in minute 146 be **APPROVED**.

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

5. Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

The Leader **MOVED** and seconded by Cllr D Wulff:

That the recommendation of Cabinet as set out in minute 160 be **APPROVED**.

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

6. Willand Neighbourhood Plan

The Leader **MOVED** and seconded by Cllr S Clist:

That the recommendation of Cabinet as set out in minute 165 be **APPROVED**.

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

Those **ABSTAINING** from voting were Councillor A Glover.

Note: * All reports previously circulated.

305 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE- REPORTS OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 17 FEBRUARY AND 17 MARCH 2025

The Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Committee presented the report of the meetings held on 17 February 2025 and 17 March 2025.

306 AUDIT COMMITTEE- REPORT OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 MARCH 2025

The Chair of the Audit Committee presented the report of the meeting held on the 25 March 2025.

1. Review and Revisions of the Financial Regulations.

The Chair of the Audit Committee **MOVED**, seconded by Cllr S Robinson.

THAT the recommendation of the Audit Committee as set out in Minute 51 be **APPROVED**

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

Note: * Report previously circulated.

307 COMMUNITY, PEOPLE AND EQUALITIES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP - REPORT OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 MARCH 2025

The Chair of the Community, People and Equalities Policy Development Group presented the report of the meeting held on the 25 March 2025.

308 ECONOMY AND ASSETS POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP- REPORT OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 MARCH 2025

The Chair of the Economy and Asset Policy Development Group presented the report of the meeting held on 6 March 2025.

309 HOMES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP- REPORT OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 MARCH 2025

The Chair of the meeting of the Homes Policy Development Group presented the report of the meeting held on 18 March 2025.

310 PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP- REPORT OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 MARCH 2025

The Chair of the Planning, Environment and Sustainability Group presented the report of the meeting held on 11 March 2025.

311 SERVICE DELIVERY AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP- REPORT OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 MARCH 2025

The Chair of the meeting of Service Delivery and Continuous Improvement Policy Development Group presented the report of the meeting held on 10 March 2025.

312 PLANNING COMMITTEE- REPORT OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 MARCH

The Chair of the Planning Committee presented the report of the meeting held on 12 March 2025.

313 ANNUAL REPORTS OF AUDIT COMMITTEE, SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND THE POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUPS

The Chairs of the Audit Committee, Scrutiny Committee and the Chairs of the Planning, Environment and Sustainability; Homes; Community, People and Equalities; Economy and Assets; and Service Delivery and Continuous Improvement Policy Development Groups presented their Annual Reports* to the Council.

Note: *Reports previously circulated.

314 QUESTIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROCEDURE RULE 11

There were no questions raised which were pursuant to Procedure Rule 11 and which had not already been dealt with during the relevant Committee reports.

315 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.

316 QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS

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

317 MEMBERS BUSINESS

The Chair informed the meeting that there were no Members Business.

(The meeting ended at 6.45pm)

CHAIR