

MINUTES of a MEETING of the SERVICE DELIVERY & CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held on 10 March 2025 at 5.30pm

Present

Councillors

M Fletcher (Chair)
C Connor, M Farrell, A Glover, M Jenkins
and S Robinson

Apologies

Councillors

B Fish and C Harrower

Also Present

Councillor

J Wright

Also Present

Officers

Matthew Page (Head of People, Performance & Waste),
Dean Emery (Head of Revenues, Benefits & Leisure), Lisa
Lewis (Head of Digital Transformation & Customer
Engagement), Andy Mackie (Leisure Services Manager)
and Sarah Lees (Democratic Services Officer)

Councillors

Online

E Buczkowski, J Buczkowski, S Keable and J Lock

Officers Online

D Beer (Operations Manager for Street Scene and Open
Spaces) and Ben Snow (Leisure Centre Manager)

46 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Cllr B Fish and Cllr C Harrower who was substituted by Cllr S Robinson.

47 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

48 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT

No interests were declared under this item.

49 MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 2nd December 2024 were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chair.

50 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair had the following announcements to make:

- He apologised to those attending the meeting either in person or online for the delay in the start of the meeting. The meeting had been inquorate for the first 10 minutes after the official start time.
- He reminded the Group that an invitation had been sent out to the Group to visit one or all of the Leisure Centres on 18th, 19th and 20th March.
- He also reminded the Group that a workshop was planned for the Policy Development Group on 31 March 2025 at which the service leads would provide relevant information for each of their service areas so that the PDG had a better understanding of the areas reporting to it for the coming year. This would be an in person only workshop. All were encouraged to attend.

51 PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD Q3 (00:03:00)

The Group were presented with, and **NOTED**, a slide * showing performance information in the Service Delivery & Continuous Improvement area.

The following was referred to:

- There were amber ratings in relation to household waste collected per household, staff turnover, missed bin collections, the Council Tax collection rate and households on chargeable garden waste. However, performance was only very slightly behind the predicted position for quarter 3 and in some cases the targets set were very challenging. The pressure on resident's household finances due to current economic circumstances might also be a factor in relation to Council Tax collection rates.
- There were red ratings in relation to the public survey engagement rate, agency spend against budget and capital slippage of projects. It was explained that in relation to agency spend there had been a requirement to manage the demands of the waste collection service by using agency staff but overall the requirement to do this had dramatically reduced over the last two years.

A brief discussion took place regarding missing data in relation to 'Leisure cost per visit'. It was requested that this data be provided for future reports.

Note: * Slide previously circulated.

52 **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE POLICY (00:08:00)**

The Group had before it a report * from The Head of Digital Transformation & Customer Engagement proposing a policy to govern and monitor the use of artificial intelligence (AI) within the organisation.

The following was highlighted in the report:

- The purpose of the proposed new policy was to ensure that users were aware of AI methods, the importance of information security, AI's growing influence and to identify key roles and responsibilities.
- The policy also set out the acceptable uses of AI.
- There would need to be data protection assessments for certain AI uses and a need to ensure users were transparent in their use of AI.
- Checks and balances would need to be in place.
- A key issue needed to be factoring out biases, ensuring accuracy and maintaining human oversight.
- As part of the policy there would need to be a number of follow up actions including staff training, regular risk reviews, the issuing of acceptable use guidance, equality impact assessments and ensuring the Council met the strict guidelines of procurement.
- The policy itself would also need a review every six months to ensure methods were being used safely. Due to this frequency, it was likely this would be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive (S151).
- AI presented a lot of risk but also a lot of opportunity.

Discussion took place regarding:

- A Member briefing would be organised to update and inform Members, however, the key focus in the initial stages would be to provide training to staff as the primary users.
- The proposed policy was thought to provide a very useful framework moving forwards.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that it recommends to full Council the adoption of the Artificial Intelligence Policy.

(Proposed by the Chair)

Reason for the decision

In appropriate or unauthorised use of AI may expose MDDC to risks such as data breaches, copyright infringement, or biased decision making, potentially resulting in legal proceedings.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

53 **LEISURE SERVICE - VERBAL UPDATE (00:19:00)**

The Group received, and **NOTED**, a verbal update from the Operations Manager for Leisure Services regarding current activity with the Leisure Services area.

This included summary information in relation to the following:

- A staffing restructure to allow for clearer reporting lines and divisions of responsibility.
- A digital transformation project affording far more accurate data and a smoother customer journey.
- The service was being rebranded to 'Active Mid Devon'. This would help to position the leisure service as one that other local authorities aspire to.
- The service was currently working towards the UK Active Standard which was designed to help instil customer confidence in the safety and inclusivity of the Council's fitness and leisure facilities.
- Working with Devon libraries focussing on the benefits of being physically active.
- Progress with the planned 'Wellbeing Walks'.
- Park runs – two areas had now been secured for Junior Parkruns, Westexe in Tiverton and CCA fields in Cullompton. Volunteers to facilitate these events were now being sought.
- Training sessions in relation to Menopause awareness had been and will continue to be delivered.
- The Culm Valley Sports Centre had hosted a Community Open Day and the feedback had been very positive with new memberships secured.
- The PDG were invited to tour the leisure centres on several dates in March.
- Changing room refurbishments had commenced at Lords Meadow.
- Social Value - at the end of 2024 the leisure service had commissioned a social value report to look at the wider impact of the service being delivered. The work leisure did went far beyond getting people mentally and physically healthier and even beyond teaching valuable life skills such as swimming. Leisure had had its best year yet and by measuring social value in addition to revenue and participation the service could now see that Mid Devon sat proudly in the top 25% in the country for the social value contribution, benchmarked against over 2500 other providers using the same methodology.

Discussion took place with regard to:

- It was felt to be a good idea to bring the libraries and leisure centres together for the benefit of residents.
- It would be a great community asset if it was possible to succeed in setting up park run/s.
- Leisure centre open days were a really good initiative and had proven to lead to visitors signing up for memberships.

The Chair thanked the officer for this useful update.

54 **ENVIRONMENT & ENFORCEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT Q3 (00:35:00)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Head of Performance, People and Waste and the Environment and Enforcement Manager providing a quarterly update on key environment enforcement performance data including fly tipping, littering, Public Space Protection Orders and the Issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices. It also gave a brief summary of the Councils Car Parking performance and the issuing of Penalty Charge Notices.

The following was highlighted within the report:

- A key focus had been on interacting with residents and landlords which had helped to support compliance work around Bin-It 123 and ensuring greater levels of recycling.
- The service had successfully gained accreditation for the CSAS (Community Safety Accreditation Scheme). The scheme was operated by Devon and Cornwall Police and provided accredited officers with additional powers, most notably the power to request names and addresses of individuals involved in enviro crime. Failure to provide a CSAS accredited officer with these details was an offence in itself.
- Fly Tipping reports regularly fluctuated by small amounts against comparative years. Quarter three had seen a small overall decrease in fly tipping reports received. Residents were encouraged to report instances of fly tipping.
- The Council had been shortlisted in recognition of its work to increase recycling rates and reduce fly tipping and littering. It was one of nine local authorities selected for the Local Government Chronicle's (LGC) Environment Services Award. The nomination highlighted the success of the Council's Bin-It 123 initiative, which introduced three weekly bin collections in October 2022. Since its implementation, Mid Devon had achieved a 5% increase in recycling rates, bringing the total to nearly 60% and significantly reducing residual waste. This Process had placed Mid Devon District Council among the top 10% of authorities nationally.
- The waste service was also in the process of instigating the pilot schemes in relation to pots and pans recycling and nappies.
- The communication approach would be a key focus moving forwards making sure it was as effective as possible with extra recycling guidance, health and safety advice and active enforcement. The balance between education and enforcement needed to be got right.

A brief discussion took place with regard to there being issues where residents had to leave waste in communal areas such as the leaving of material which could and should have been recycled but because the area was communal it could be easily hid and unattributed. It was confirmed that the service would be looking at this in the near future to see how this could be better managed.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

55 CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2024/2025 (00:44:00)

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, the Chair's annual report * for 2024/2025.

The Chair highlighted the following:

- The commendable work of the Waste and Recycling teams, particularly with regard to the pilot schemes for pots and pans and nappy recycling. He was happy that the Group had helped to push these pilots 'across the line'.

- He encouraged the Group to visit the Leisure Centres for a tour.
- He was excited for the policy shaping workshop that was planned for the Group on 31st March. He hoped the Group could work collaboratively with the officers to dig a bit deeper into the service areas that they had responsibility for. He reiterated a request that all Members of the Group attend in person on this date.

It was **NOTED** that this report along with all other Chair's reports for 2024/2025 would be presented at full Council on 23rd April 2025.

56 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (00:47:00)**

The items already listed in the work programme for the next meeting were **NOTED**.

(The meeting ended at 6.28 pm)

CHAIR