

## **MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **MINUTES of a MEETING of the MANAGING THE ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held on 17 May 2016 at 2.00 pm**

#### **Present Councillors**

R F Radford, D R Coren, Mrs C P Daw,  
R Evans, Mrs E J Slade, J D Squire,  
R Wright, J L Smith and F W Letch

#### **Also Present Councillor(s)**

N V Davey, C J Eginton and R L Stanley

#### **Also Present Officer(s):**

Andrew Jarrett (Head of Finance), Andrew Busby (Estates Manager), Adrian Cook (Bereavement and Open Spaces Advisor), Stuart Noyce (Waste and Transport Manager), Suzanne Kingdom (Auditor) and Julia Stuckey (Member Services Officer)

#### **1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

**RESOLVED** that Cllr R F Radford be elected Chairman of the Group for the municipal year 2016/17.

Cllr Radford then took the Chair.

#### **2 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

**RESOLVED** that Cllr D R Coren be elected Vice Chairman of the Group for the municipal year 2016/17.

#### **3 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

There were no apologies.

#### **4 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no members of the public in attendance.

#### **5 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the last meeting were approved as a true record.

#### **6 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman welcomed the new Members to the Group.

## 7 PERFORMANCE AND RISK 00.04.00

The Group had before and **NOTED** it a report \* from the Head of Communities and Governance providing Members with an update on performance against the corporate plan and local service targets for 2015-16 as well as providing an update on the key business risks.

The Internal Auditor outlined the contents of the report.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Higher utility spends at the leisure centres due to increased usage;
- Residual waste to landfill;
- Performance figures for brown bin sales;
- The value of recyclable materials;
- Compulsory recycling and the work being undertaken by the District Officers which included letters to those found to be not recycling.

Note:- \* Report previously circulated and attached to signed Minutes.

## 8 MEETING MANAGEMENT

The Chairman indicated that he intended to take item 11 on the agenda prior to agenda item 8.

## 9 DEPOT MOVE

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a briefing paper \* from the Head of Finance updating it regarding progress on the relocation of the Waste Service operation.

The Officer explained in late January 2016 the authority had been given notice from the landlord of Unit 16, Foundry Estate (the current Recycling depot). This notice period would effectively end in mid-June 2016.

Due to the short/medium term tenure of this premise the Property Services Manager, Waste & Transport Manager and the Head of Finance had for the past 12-18 months been investigating other suitable locations within the District. However, due to the very specific requirements of the operation, a site that would ideally suit all the technical, size, staffing and location demands had proved to be a significant challenge.

When Unit 3, Carlu Close, Hitchcock's Business Park, Uffculme was considered, due to the location and size of this unit, it was possible to consider whether to simply re-locate the Recycling part of the Waste service, or make a more strategic decision to merge all of the Waste/Street-Scene operations under one roof. After a number of meetings to consider these operational issues, officers felt that the advantages of providing a totally joined-up service would be far more beneficial in the medium/long term.

The Officer explained that Unit 3, Carlu Close was a large industrial unit with a significant concrete parking area. From an operational perspective it was effectively a "blank canvas" that would require a complete "fit out" in order to continue existing operations. This would require the re-location of operating equipment such as the bailer system, dog kennels, the fuel tanks, the bays (these were designed in such a way to make re-location relatively straightforward), the transfer of circa 90 operational staff from waste, recycling, cleansing and the District officers. In addition 9 porta cabins would be required to house all the staff and provide offices, washroom facilities, meeting space, dog kennels, etc.

The Head of Finance informed the Group that the total fit out costs were currently estimated at circa £310k and that Members should note that an estimate of £100k had been included in the 2016/17 revenue budget as a provision for the costs of a potential recycling depot move.

Operational service delivery would not be affected during the move and it was intended to commence operations from the new location from mid-June 2016.

The Officer concluded that entering into a 15 year lease to co-locate all of the Council's Street Scene operations under "one roof" was a crucial and long term strategic decision which would provide not only long term security of tenure for this key frontline service but would also help provide other operational and financial benefits to the service. Operating from one central base would allow for better supervision, a greater uniformity of operation, the ability to re-deploy resources more effectively and create a closer "team" culture.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Consultation that had taken place with staff;
- The official opening which would take place on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> July;
- Shared savings with Devon County Council;
- The rent was set for 5 years and would then be by annual review.

Members congratulated officers on the successful implementation on the new waste and recycling scheme.

Note:- Briefing paper \* previously circulated and attached to Minutes.

## 10 REVIEW OF GRASS CUTTING 00.36.51

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a report \* from the Head of Housing and Property Services which set out the Council's arrangements for 2016/17 in providing the grass cutting service on Devon County Council's highway verges.

The Estates Manager outlined the contents of the report, explaining that a budget of £15k income had been set prior to the results of the consultation process regarding parishes contributing to the maintenance of highway verges within their Parish.

The Officer explained that the value of the reduced area of highway grass verges for those town and parishes that did not wish to contribute had been estimated at £36k and that staffing levels had been reduced by one full time equivalent. The reduction would be agency staff so had not incurred redundancy costs. When adding contributions from town and parish councils the 2016/17 budget position had been improved by a further £34k.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The varying levels of contribution from Devon County Council;
- Closed church yards;
- The potential to generate income by taking on contracting work for areas such as parish playing fields;
- The need to rationalise equipment.

Note: - \* Report previously circulated and attached to Minutes.

## 11 NATIONAL ASSISTED BURIALS 00.49.52

The Group had before it a report \* from the Head of Housing and Property Services informing members of the Council's proposed procedure when dealing with a National Assistance burial.

The Bereavement and Open Spaces Advisor explained that National Assistance Burials had been arranged by the Bereavement Services section over a number of years without a written procedure but with an increase in the number of requests for funerals and with consideration to budgetary restrictions it was considered prudent to formalise the current procedure.

The Officer explained that National Assistance Burials were sometimes referred to as "Paupers" Funerals. Mid Devon may be informed by the Exeter Coroner's Office, a Nursing Home, Housing Association or a relative or friend when a resident of the district had died and there was no one prepared or able to make arrangements for the deceased's funeral.

The number of National Assistance burials carried out by Mid Devon had steadily increased over the past decade and there had been 17 since 2006.

Mid Devon had a statutory duty to 'cause to be buried or cremated the body of any person who has died or been found dead within the district where it appears to the authority that no suitable arrangements for the disposal of the body have been or are being made otherwise than by the authority'.

It was proposed that all National Assistance funerals arranged by Mid Devon be by interment in either Crediton or Tiverton Cemetery, unless specific instructions had been left by the deceased. Burial plots within these cemeteries were double depth and had the capacity for two coffins, this would result in unrelated persons being buried in the same grave.

The officer explained that a will may state the preference to be buried in a family plot and that this would be complied with as long as the difference in cost could be paid by a relative or if there were sufficient funds in the deceased's bank account. If a will stated a preference for cremation this would be complied with but only a 'non service service' would be provided.

The current funeral director employed by Mid Devon was Le Roy Funerals who had offices in Exeter and Crediton. Le Roy Funerals won the contract in open competition between all the undertakers on the council's approved contractors list.

The officer further explained that in advance of arranging a National Assistance Burial a genealogical search would always be carried out, this would ensure that any next of kin were aware of their relatives' death and that they were offered the opportunity to make the necessary funeral arrangements.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Family members in receipt of benefit could make a claim for financial assistance to help pay for the funeral of a family member;
- The most recent funeral paid for by the authority cost £1378 which included a cremation;
- If there was any residual money belonging to the deceased it was sent to the Treasury Solicitor.

It was **AGREED** that reference to individual employee names should be removed from the report and be replaced by post names and contact numbers and that reference to Devon County Council care homes should be removed.

It was **RECOMMENDED**, that subject to minor amendments to the report regarding contact names and numbers, Cabinet recommend that Council approve the National Assistance Burial Procedure.

(Proposed by Cllr R Wright and seconded by Cllr Mrs C P Daw)

The Chairman took this opportunity to thank Adrian Cook, Bereavement and Open Spaces Advisor, for the work he had undertaken with the Group over a number of years and wished him well for the future.

Note: - Report previously circulated and attached to Minutes.

## 12 **TREE POLICY 01.01.26**

The Group had before it a report \* from the Head of Housing and Property Services informing it of changes the current Tree Policy following a recent scheduled review.

The Bereavement and Open Spaces Advisor explained that there had been very few changes to the policy but that provision had been made regarding tree work to improve satellite TV reception and solar panel effectiveness.

The officer informed Members that a contractor had undertaken a survey of all trees on Mid Devon land and that this work was almost complete.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the Cabinet adopt the revised Tree Policy.

(Proposed by Cllr J L Smith and seconded by Cllr Mrs E J Slade)

Note: - Report \* previously circulated and attached to Minutes.

## 13 **START TIME OF MEETINGS**

It was **AGREED** that the start time for meetings remain at 2.00pm.

## 14 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

Gypsies and Travellers  
High Hedge Policy  
Financial Monitoring  
Performance and Risk  
Verbal Update on the Depot Move

(The meeting ended at 3.30 pm)

**CHAIRMAN**