

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **COMMUNITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP**
held on 31 January 2017 at 2.15 pm

Present Councillors

Mrs E J Slade, Mrs J B Binks,
Mrs H Bainbridge, Mrs G Doe and
F W Letch

Apologies Councillor(s)

Mrs E M Andrews, Mrs A R Berry, B A Moore and
R J Dolley

Also Present Councillor(s)

C R Slade and Mrs M E Squires

Also Present Officer(s):

Andrew Jarrett (Director of Finance, Assets and Resources), Liz Reeves (Head of Customer Services), Lee Chester (Leisure Manager), Simon Newcombe (Public Health and Professional Services Manager), Nick Sanderson (Head of Housing and Property Services) and Julia Stuckey (Member Services Officer)

58 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs E M Andrews, Mrs A R Berry, B A Moore and R J Dolley. Cllr Moore was substituted by Cllr Mrs J Binks. (Cllr Mrs Slade took the Chair).

59 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no members of the public present.

60 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the Meeting were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

61 **CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman had no announcements to make.

62 **BUDGET**

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a report * from the Director of Finance, Assets and Resources outlining options available in order for the Council to move towards a balanced budget for 2017/18.

The Director outlined the contents of the report explaining that the formula grant had been confirmed shortly before Christmas and that it confirmed a four year settlement. The Council Tax referendum limit had been set at 2% as in previous years but District Councils could increase band D by up to £5, which was around 3%.

Changes had been made to the New Homes Bonus grant which now stipulated that Councils must build a baseline number of properties before they would become eligible to receive the bonus. In Mid Devon this was likely to mean that a claim could only be made after the completion of 130 – 140 new homes. The New Homes Bonus was currently paid as a dowry for 6 years but this was reducing to 5 years and then to 4 years.

The budget gap had improved from the figure within the report to just under £90k from a balanced position. Since issuing the report the Director had held further meetings with service managers and the gap had subsequently been reduced. These savings had been generated by Devon-wide Business Rate revenues, better prices and increased tonnages for recycling, investment income, rental for Station Yard and some staffing reductions among others.

The Director highlighted areas for savings that had been identified by the Community PDG Budget Working Group such as an increase to the level of summons costs charged for non paying of Council Tax and Business Rates and changing the policy for single occupiers who failed to notify of a change in circumstance and who would in future receive a small penalty. The Head of Planning and Regeneration had identified some extra income from the levy of Section 106 monies and pre-application advice. The Director reported that the working group had proved a useful exercise in helping to move towards a balanced budget. It was **AGREED** that a working group be put in place to look at the budget for 2018-19, which would meet in the spring. The membership of the group would be agreed at the next meeting.

The Director informed the Group that a report to Cabinet was recommending that the budget gap be met by use of the New Homes Bonus for this year.

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

63 LEISURE PRICING

The Group had before it a report * from the Leisure Manager – Development & Performance advising Members of the proposed leisure pricing strategy for 2017/18.

The officer outlined the contents of the report, explaining that it identified the four income streams; front of house, wetside, health and fitness and dryside. The report proposed an indicative increase on current fees and prices per area, ranging from 3 to 5%, following a benchmarking comparison with local like-for-like providers.

It was proposed that concessionary memberships, which were currently restricted to using facilities before 5.00pm, be changed to allow unrestricted access, rewarding members for their loyalty and attracting new custom from people that may be disadvantaged by the existing time restrictions.

Auto-renewal of annual memberships would be available next year which would make it easier for customers to renew at the end of their subscription. They would receive correspondence to advise them that the payment would be taken.

Officers were engaging with local businesses to encourage corporate relationships and arrangements. Following a review of business size in Mid Devon, corporate deals would be offered to all organisations rather than only those with a minimum of 10 employees which was the current criteria. Local businesses would also be offered training in areas such as health and nutrition, business management and team development.

Discussion took place regarding employers being shown the importance of having a healthy workforce and that local accommodation providers could be asked to promote the centres, or incentivised to do so.

Due to the date of the meeting of the Group there would not be time for the report to go to Cabinet and then an appropriate amount of time for consultation with customers be put in place before the new financial year. Therefore it was **RECOMMENDED** that the Cabinet Member agree the strategy and price increases proposed as a delegated decision.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Note: Report * previously circulated and attached to Minutes.

64 **PERFORMANCE AND RISK**

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a report * from the Audit Team Leader providing Members with an update on performance against the corporate plan and local service targets for 2016-17 as well as providing an update on the key business risks.

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

65 **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The Group had before it a report * from the Head of Customer Services and ICT updating Members on progress made with the Community Engagement Action Plan (2015-17).

The officer explained that following reorganisation there was no longer a dedicated officer for community engagement and that the work had been embedded within services. The report contained an action plan for moving forward and it was the responsibility of service managers to ensure that when changes were being implemented, such as digital forms, customers were made aware and that feedback was received.

The Citizens Panel had reduced in effectiveness as it had become more difficult to get people to engage and responses from them had reduced. It was therefore necessary to look into different ways of engaging and it was proposed that Gov.Delivery would provide a simple means of customer engagement.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Not all members of the public had access or wanted to use digital services;
- Digital communications were the cheapest form of communication for customers;
- Gov.Delivery and the services it could provide.

It was **RECOMMENDED** to Cabinet:

- a) That the work taking place to engage with a wide range of Mid Devon residents and stakeholders be noted.
- b) That Cabinet note and agree the revised action plan and timetable for review of the Community Engagement Strategy.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

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

66 **ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR STATISTICS**

The Group had before it and **NOTED** information * regarding anti-social behaviour statistics for 2016-17.

The Head of Housing and Property Services explained that these figures only related to matters dealt with by the Community Safety Team and did not include any statutory nuisances dealt with by Environmental Health or anti social behaviour by housing tenants which was dealt with by Housing Services.

Note: - Information * previously circulated and attached to the Minutes.

67 **PUBLIC HEALTH SIX MONTHLY UPDATE**

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a report* from Public Health and Professional Services Manager providing an update on progress of the Public Health Plan.

The Officer explained that Public Health was working to a programme that did not have a budget associated with it and it had to work to encourage projects to become self sustaining. Walking football for example had achieved this with members paying a small subscription which covered the cost of renting facilities.

The officer also highlighted the GP Exercise Referral Programme which had started ahead of schedule and had already received 12 referrals. This scheme was developed to encourage people to get into the habit of physical activity with the longer term aim that they would become regular users of Mid Devon leisure.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Concessionary memberships and the changes to times of day that they could be used and the intention that this would increase usage;
- The availability of funding to encourage target groups to take up exercise;
- The success of the walking football programme;
- The benefits of exercise such as health and overcoming loneliness;

- Food safety the fact that almost 95% of food premises in Mid Devon achieved level 4 or above.
- Proposals to support the Dementia Alliance.

Note: Report previously circulated and attached to Minutes.

68 AIR QUALITY

The Public Health Manager explained that he had hoped to be able to update Members regarding the joint (Exeter, Teignbridge, East Devon, Mid Devon) Air Quality bids that had been submitted to DEFRA Air Quality Grants 2016/17. Unfortunately the outcome of the bids had been delayed and he did not expect to hear for another week.

The Officer confirmed that a review of the Air Quality Strategy was taking place and a project plan and time line had been put in place with a view to a report going to Cabinet in October. Updates would be provided to all meetings of the Group.

69 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

Gypsy and Traveller Policy
 Air Quality
 CCTV annual update
 Financial Monitoring
 Performance and Risk
 Aging Well
 Leisure update
 Health and Safety Policy
 Budget Working Group Membership

(The meeting ended at 3.30 pm)

CHAIRMAN