

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **CABINET** held on 23 November 2017 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors C J Eginton (Leader)
R J Chesterton, P H D Hare-Scott,
C R Slade, Mrs M E Squires and
R L Stanley

Also Present

Councillor(s) R F Radford

Also Present

Officer(s): Andrew Jarrett (Director of Finance, Assets and Resources), Andrew Pritchard (Director of Operations), Jill May (Director of Corporate Affairs and Business Transformation), Kathryn Tebbey (Group Manager for Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), Jane Cottrell (Group Manager for Human Resources), Catherine Yandle (Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security) and Sally Gabriel (Member Services Manager)

74. **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies from Members of the Cabinet, although it was noted that Cllrs: F J Rosamond and Mrs J Roach had apologised for not being able to attend the meeting.

75. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

Mr Vanderwolfe, Clerk to Tiverton Town Council, referring to Item 5 (Grounds Maintenance – Grass Cutting) on the agenda, stated that he understood from the report that invoices to Town and Parish Councils would confirm the number of cuts etc, he had not received any complaints about grass cutting and he understood that with rain and sunshine, the grass would grow, the Town Council paid for 6 cuts per year and referred to the calculation in paragraph 3.2 of the report which gave an hourly charge out rate of £35.09 per person per task. He asked how much the Town Council was going to be charged and the number of cuts it would receive. He requested a quarterly update so that he could inform his Council.

Honorary Alderman Lucas referring to Item 4 (10 Year Management Plan for Open Spaces) on the agenda stated that he certainly agreed with the recommendations from the Policy Development Group, however, he voiced concern with regard to the removal of trees in paragraph 6.1 of the report and stated that he would not like to see a repeat of what had happened in Sheffield and would like to see safeguards in place to conserve the trees in parks. Referring to the built environment in parks and open spaces he requested that Town and Parishes Councils be kept informed of any changes that would impact on them. He also referred to the Tree Charter and wondered if such a policy could be progressed within the District Council?

Cllr Burke (Mayor of Tiverton) referring to Item 5 (Grounds Maintenance – Grass Cutting) on the agenda stated that he had heard that the Grounds Maintenance Team would be moving to Willand, would the additional travelling time add to the cost of cutting grass for the Town Council?

The Chairman indicated that answers to the questions would be provided when the items were discussed.

76. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (00-07-49)

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 26 October 2017 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

77. 10 YEAR MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR OPEN SPACES (00-08-46)

Arising from a * report of the Director of Operations, the Environment Policy Development Group had recommended that the following be recommended to Council: subject to the changes identified below the Parks and Open Spaces, 10 year Management Plans and Design Principles be approved:

- a) The Council should look to increase the volume of wild flower, natural grassland meadows and slow growing grasses in its open spaces.
- b) Where shrub beds have become overgrown, a new style of specimen planting will be used to replace traditional shrub bed areas.
- c) The management of tree stock will be set in the context of the 10 year management plan for that open space. There should be a presumption on the use of native trees as the prominent choice within any landscape design.
- d) *Subject to the addition of the word 'replace' at 7.2.3: When considering maintenance of the built environment the Remove – Reduce – Repair approach outlined in paragraphs 7.2.1 to 7.2.4 above should be applied.*
- e) Play England – Making Space for Play should be adopted by Mid Devon District Council as its formal reference for best practice in the design and management of play areas.
- f) *Subject to the addition of the wording 'or a suitable barrier provided' after the word 'fence' Play areas must be fenced where fencing is the most appropriate means to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of children. E.g. to physically separate play areas from roads and/or cycle paths.*
- g) When work is undertaken to remove fences or other items, such as benches, the work must be undertaken in a safe manner ensuring no residual hazards.
- h) Headstone runners should be used to define and structure new burial plots.
- i) *Subject to the removal of the sentence: 'Environmental areas should be generated in the old sections of the Council's cemeteries and biodiversity actively promoted in naturalised habitats.'* At all times War Graves shall be tended and maintained with clear access routes made available.

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment outlined the contents of the report stating that the Policy Development Group had fully discussed the contents of the report and that 9 recommendations as amended (*in italics*) had been put forward as recommendations to the Cabinet.

Consideration was given to:

- The Play England – Making Space for Play document and that it contained very useful guidance which should be adopted
- Wild flowers and slow growing grasses
- The maintenance of shrubberies on roundabouts
- The need to protect trees in open spaces

The Director of Operations provided answers to questions posed in public question time and issues raised during discussions: he stated that with regard to the Tree Charter, he would discuss this further with the Planning Department; healthy trees would only be removed in the context of the tree management plan by replacing one for one. The grassland issue was a subjective opinion, the introduction of wild flower areas had been very positive and slow growing grass areas would be maintained. The roundabouts at the entrance to Tiverton were Devon County Council owned land and were seen as high speed areas, therefore health and safety issues had to be considered when it came to maintenance of those areas, he therefore wished to bring forward a proposal that was pleasing to the eye but that would not require road closures for maintenance purposes.

RECOMMENDED to Council that subject to the changes identified, the Parks and Open Spaces, 10 Year Management Plans and Design Principles be approved.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Note: Report previously copy attached to minutes.

78. **GROUNDS MAINTENANCE - GRASS CUTTING (00-22-21)**

Following consideration of Motion 538 (Cllr Mrs J Roach - 1 June 2017) and a *report of the Director of Operations regarding grass cutting issues in Mid Devon, the Environment Policy Development Group had recommended that invoices to Town and Parish Councils regarding grass cutting should confirm the number of cuts undertaken with dates.

The Leader and Cabinet Member for the Environment outlined the discussion that had taken place at the Policy Development Group meeting and added that in addition to the above, he would like the clients to receive notification when their grass had been cut.

The Director of Operations provided answers to questions posed in public question time: he stated that the report had been specifically focussed on Silverton and supplied answers to questions posed originally by Cllr Mrs Roach; however the current charge was per square metre and not on individual man hours. A working group of the Policy Development Group had been formed to look at budget issues and the Town and Parish Councils would be notified in good time to allow for

precepts to be set. With regard to the possibility of the Grounds Maintenance Team moving to Willand, there had been security issues at Park Road and he wished to encourage closer working between the Grounds Maintenance and Street Scene Teams; so yes he was looking at combining the team at Carlu Close, the recharge cost for grass-cutting would be calculated accordingly.

Consideration was given to:

- The consultation process that was taking place with staff
- The need to make savings.

RESOLVED that notification to Town and Parish Councils regarding grass cutting should confirm the number of cuts undertaken with dates; this notification should take place on a monthly basis or as applicable if no cuts occurred during a month.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Note: Report previously copy attached to minutes.

79. **HEART OF THE SOUTH WEST - JOINT COMMITTEE (00-32-28)**

The Cabinet had before it a *report of the Chief Executive requesting consideration and approval of the establishment of a Joint Committee for the Heart of the South West and the arrangements to support its future working.

The Leader outlined the contents of the report highlighting the proposed recommendations, the key functions of the joint committee and the supplementary amendment that had been added with regard to the publication of press releases and/or public documentation. All constituent authorities would consider the same report prior to January 2018.

Consideration was given to:

- Concerns regarding the possibility of the formation of a unitary authority – it was confirmed that no discussions along these lines had taken place.
- The fact that the Chancellor's budget had highlighted the role of an Elected Mayor – it was confirmed that the HoSW Leaders would not be seeking an Elected Mayor

RECOMMENDED to Council that:

1. the recommendation of the HotSW Leaders (meeting as a shadow Joint Committee) to form a Joint Committee for the Heart of the South West be approved;
2. the Arrangements and Inter-Authority Agreement documents set out in appendices A and B for the establishment of the Joint Committee with the commencement date of Monday 22nd January 2018 be approved;

3. the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration be appointed as the Council's named representative and substitute named representative on the Joint Committee;
4. Somerset County Council be appointed as the Administering Authority for the Joint Committee for a 2 year period commencing 22nd January 2018;
5. the transfer of the remaining joint devolution budget to meet the support costs of the Joint Committee for the remainder of 2017/18 financial year be approved subject to approval of any expenditure by the Administering Authority;
6. an initial contribution of £1,400 for 2018/19 to fund the administration be approved and the work programme of the Joint Committee, noting that any expenditure will be subject to the approval of the Administering Authority;
7. it agrees that the key function of the Joint Committee is to approve the Productivity Strategy (it is intended to bring the Strategy to the Joint Committee for approval by February 2018);
8. the initial work programme of the Joint Committee aimed at the successful delivery of the Productivity Strategy be authorised; and
9. It agrees the proposed meeting arrangements for the Joint Committee including the timetable of meetings for the Joint Committee as proposed in para 2.14 of the attached Background Report.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Note: *Report previously circulated, copy attached to minutes.

80. **GENDER PAY GAP (00-36-55)**

The Cabinet had before it a * report of the Group Manager for HR advising the Cabinet (and Council) of the Pay Gap between male and female employees as at 31 March 2017.

- The Cabinet Member for the Working Environment and Support Services outlined the contents of the report stating that from 6 April 2017 employers in Great Britain with more than 250 staff would be required by law to publish the following four types of figures annually on their own website and on a government website by 30 March 2018.
- Gender pay gap (mean and median averages)
- Gender bonus gap (mean and median averages) - not applicable
- Proportion of men and women receiving bonuses - as above
- Proportion of men and women in each quartile of the organisation's pay structure

Consideration was given to the four quartiles outlined in the report and that the Council's median gender pay gap was significantly lower than the national average.

RECOMMENDED to Council that the report be **NOTED**

(Proposed by Cllr Mrs M E Squires and seconded by Cllr C R Slade)

Note: *Report previously circulated, copy attached to minutes.

81. **TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY MID YEAR REVIEW REPORT (00-40-59)**

The Cabinet had before it a * report of Director of Finance, Assets and Resources informing the Cabinet (and Council) of the treasury performance during the first six months of 2017/18, requesting agreement of the ongoing deposit strategy for the remainder of 2017/18 and a review of compliance with Treasury and Prudential Limits for 2017/18 (Appendix 1).

The Cabinet Member for Finance outlined the contents of the report stating that the UK bank interest rates still remained low; however the investment in the CCLA (Churches, Charities and Local Authorities) had proved beneficial with a 4.65% return for the first two quarters of the financial year.

Consideration was given to the slight increase in interest rates, both on short term and long term investments.

RECOMMENDED to **COUNCIL** that a continuation of the current policy outlined in paragraph 6.1 be agreed.

(Proposed by Cllr P H D Hare-Scott and seconded by Cllr R J Chesterton)

Notes:

- (i) Cllr C J Eginton declared a personal interest as he received a pension from the Lloyds Banking Group;
- (ii) *Report previously circulated, copy attached to minutes.

82. **FINANCIAL MONITORING (00-43-00)**

The Cabinet Member for Finance provided a verbal update on the income and expenditure for the financial year to date. He reported that there had been little change since the previous month although there had been an increase in the income from the garden waste scheme and that car parking income had slipped, it was felt that the closure of Canal Hill had had some impact on this.

Consideration was given to the impact of the Chancellor's budget the previous day, the Director of Finance, Assets and Resources stated that the devil would be in the detail and that he would update Members when he had more information. The doubling of the infrastructure funding was acknowledged which may be favourable to the authority.

83. **PERFORMANCE AND RISK (00-46-14)**

The Cabinet had before it and **NOTED** a * report of the Director of Corporate Affairs and Business Transformation providing Members with an update on the performance against the Corporate Plan and local service targets.

The Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security outlined the contents of the report highlighting the threads within the Corporate Plan that of: “Environment” - that the transfer station was now up and running; “Homes” - that the number of empty homes had exceeded its annual target; “Economy” - that there were a couple of new businesses in the area; “Corporate”, the working days lost to sickness was a little below target. She also drew attention to the recent Landlord Networking event that had taken place earlier in the month.

Note: *Report previously circulated, copy attached to minutes.

84. **SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS (00-48-58)**

The Cabinet had before it a * draft schedule of meetings for 2018/19

RECOMMENDED that the schedule of meetings for 2018/19 be approved.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Note: *Report previously circulated, copy attached to minutes.

85. **ASBESTOS SURVEYING - LICENSED AND UNLICENSED REMOVAL 2017-2021 (00-50-47)**

The Cabinet had before it a * report of the Director of Operations advising the Cabinet of the outcome of the recent tender of Asbestos Surveying and removal of Licensed and Unlicensed asbestos for the period 2018 – 2021.

The Cabinet Member for Housing outlined the contents of the report stating that this was the first contract established on a corporate basis scoping both the Council owned homes and corporate properties and explained the tender process that had taken place.

RESOLVED that the following tenders be awarded:

- a) Lot 1, Licensed Work, to **Supplier L** with a forecast annual budget of £100,000
- b) Lot 2, Unlicensed Work to **Supplier N** with a forecast annual budget of £100,000.

Proposed by Cllr R L Stanley and seconded by Cllr C R Slade)

Note: *Report previously circulated, copy attached to minutes.

86. **CABINET MEMBER DECISION (00-54-03)**

The Cabinet **NOTED** that the Cabinet Member for Finance has made the following * decision:

To give free car parking for three Saturdays in December leading up to Christmas (9th, 16th and 23rd) plus a fourth day coinciding with each town's Christmas light switch-on event (Saturday 25th November for Crediton and Cullompton and Saturday 2nd December for Tiverton) in the long stay car parks of:

Multi-Storey Car Park, Tiverton

Station Road Car Park, Cullompton

St Saviour's Way Car Park, Crediton

Free parking will apply all day; from 00:00 to 23:59 on the dates listed above (subject to car park opening hours).

Reason: To boost footfall and enhance trade in the market towns in the run up to Christmas and support local Christmas programmes.

This decision directly supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan and Economy and improving and regenerating our town centres. Free parking for the Saturdays in the run up to Christmas with the aim of increasing footfall, dwell time and spend in our town centres. This will benefit local traders by supporting businesses in the town centres.

Notes:

- (i) Cllr C J Eginton declared a personal interest as he had a business in the town;
- (ii) *Decision previously circulated, copy attached to minutes.

87. NOTIFICATION OF KEY DECISIONS (00-54-45)

The Cabinet had before it, and **NOTED**, its rolling plan * for December/January containing future key decisions.

Note: * Plan previously circulated; copy attached to the signed Minutes.

(The meeting ended at 3.12 pm)

CHAIRMAN