

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP**
held on 8 January 2019 at 2.00 pm

Present

Councillors

R F Radford (Chairman)
D R Coren, R M Deed, R Evans, Mrs E J Slade, J D Squire
and R Wright

Apologies

Councillor(s)

Mrs C P Daw and D J Knowles

Also Present

Councillor(s)

C J Eginton

Present

Officer(s):

Andrew Jarrett (Deputy Chief Executive (S151)), Andrew Pritchard (Director of Operations), Stuart Noyce (Group Manager for Street Scene and Open Spaces), Catherine Yandle (Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security), Vicky Bowden (Environment and Enforcement Manager) and Carole Oliphant (Member Services Officer)

41 Apologies and Substitute Members (00.01.35)

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs C P Daw and Cllr D J Knowles.

42 Declarations Under the Code of Conduct (00.01.35)

No declarations were made.

43 Public Question Time (00.01.53)

The Chairman of Willand Parish Council asked the following questions:

These questions relate to the report at item 5 on your agenda.

In Paragraph 2.1 reference is made to the recording of District Officer activity and gradings given as the result of their inspections.

Are those gradings and records of activity in respect of a Parish or Town available to Ward Members or the respective Parish or Town Council please?

Under Paragraph 2.1 duties are outlined as statutory, mandatory or discretionary. It is noted that under mandatory car parking enforcement is listed as if not undertaken it could lead to a loss of income. Under discretionary it lists 'activity which the authority can choose how much or little it wants to do. The list of examples includes dog fouling patrols.

Does this not give the impression that making money from car parking enforcement is more important to MDDC than protecting the health of residents, particularly children, by enforcing their own legislation in relation to dog fouling – namely fouling of land by dogs (Mid Devon) Order 2012?

You are recommended at the beginning of the report to feed back areas of concern to Cabinet. Is this mandatory and discretionary policy an area which concerns this Group and should be referred to Cabinet?

The Group Manager for Street Scene and Open Spaces responded by saying that he would make the information regarding district officer activity available to the public. He would respond to the second question during his report.

44 Minutes of the Previous Meeting (00.04.30)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6th November 2018 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

45 Chairman's Announcements (00.05.13)

The Chairman had no announcements to make.

46 Meeting Management (00.05.23)

The Chairman proposed that item 9 on the agenda, Performance and Risk be moved to item 5 and this was agreed.

47 Performance and Risk (00.05.55)

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a *report from the Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security providing Members with an update on performance against the Corporate Plan and local service targets as well as providing an update on the key business risks.

Discussion took place regarding the amount of recycling collected that was actually recycled and Members were concerned about press reports that some recycling was sent abroad to landfill.

The Group Manager for Street Scene and Open Spaces stated that MDDC did kerbside sorting of recycling and that this minimised the risk that items collected would not be recycled. He confirmed that any items found by the crews to have been incorrectly placed into recycling bins were left at the kerbside with a card and not sent to the processors.

He explained that all of MDDC recycling waste was currently sent to UK processors who had a statutory obligation to report back the end destination of the material ..

He was confident that material sent to the processors and declared as recycled was actually recycled as this was a legal requirement.

Note: * Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

48 **Update on the Street Scene Education and Enforcement Service (00.16.04)**

The Group received and **NOTED** a *report outlining the performance of the Street Scene Education and Enforcement service from the Group Manager for Street Scene and Open Spaces.

He outlined the contents of the report and stated that this was the second update since the review of the service in 2016/2017.

Referring to public questions asked he stated he would be happy to release the figures for street cleansing inspections. He explained that the inspections were completed by ward not by parish and that 400 inspections a year were completed over all of the wards in the district. He further explained that street inspections were not planned for after the area had been cleaned and that the inspections were independent to the street cleaning service. He stated that any inspections that came out at C or D were acted upon immediately and the street cleaning team was dispatched.

He stated that the discretionary and statutory headings in the report did not reflect the importance of the activity, the report stated what activities had to be done or not by the local authority. He explained that dog fouling patrols were shown not very cost effective without intelligence from the public and that dog fouling usually took place when nobody was looking.

The Group Manager for Street Scene and Open Spaces said that the report would be brought back to the Group at the end of the year and Group could at that time decide on the allocation of discretionary time.

There was a general discussion on the numbers of abandoned cars in the district and officers explained that MDDC's contractor did not charge the authority to remove them currently. It was difficult to trace the culprits as the registered keeper was not legally responsible but the registered owner was, and this information was not easily available.

Note: *Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

49 **Bulky Waste and Garden Waste Charges (00.30.21)**

The Group received a verbal report by the Group Manager for Street Scene and Open Spaces providing members with analysis of the current charges for bulky waste and garden waste bins and an alternative charging structure as requested at the last meeting.

He explained that the authority's charging structure for bulky waste was in line with other authorities in Devon but the current charging structure of fixed price items meant that some users were paying less for more items being removed.

He further explained that if the fixed price item charge was removed then users would pay more for the more items they had removed. He explained that the increase in income to the Council for removing this charge would be less than £1k per annum.

It was therefore **RECOMMENDED** to Cabinet to abolish the Fixed Price Items charge of £27.00

(Proposed by Cllr D Coren and Seconded by Cllr E J Slade)

50 **Financial Monitoring (00.33.24)**

The Group **NOTED** a verbal report from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) presenting financial monitoring information for the income and expenditure to date.

He explained that the report had been presented to Cabinet in January 2019 and that the Council's position had improved by £75k, although the savings had not been in the area's within the remit of the Environment PDG.

51 **Draft Budget Update (00.35.11)**

The Group had before it and **NOTED** an update on the budget * from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) setting out the revised draft budget changes identified.

Consideration was given to the fact that the Council's position had changed positively since last reported to the Group and that the budget gap was down from £662k to £253k. He explained that the Revenue Support Grant was consistent with what was budgeted for in the draft budget.

The Government's settlement confirmed the level of increase to Council Tax which was allowed and that MDDC's council tax could be increased by up to 3%. The settlement also gave assurance that there would be no changes to New Homes Bonus in 2019/2020 but no assurances were given after this date.

He explained the vehicle sinking fund and that the Council had a long term policy for a sinking fund to replace all vehicles which was greater for refuse and recycling vehicles. Officers had been looking to take vehicles on contract hire instead of buying them outright and this should save £150k for 2019/2020 and the sinking fund already accumulated would no longer be required.

Members asked how much was held in the existing sinking fund and what this would now be spent on if it was not required to purchase new vehicles. The Deputy Chief Executive Officer (S151) said he would bring a report on the details to the next meeting

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

52 **Identification of Items for Future Meetings (00.53.01)**

The Group was given an overview of the Government's Resource and Waste Strategy for England by the Group Manager of Street Scene and Open Spaces. He reported the key facts of the report and advised the Group that he would provide a update on the Strategy and what this would mean for the Council as and when required.

The following items were proposed for future meetings:

- Electric Car Charging Points
- Vehicle Sinking Fund

(The meeting ended at 3.15 pm)

CHAIRMAN