

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **ECONOMY POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP** held on 12 July 2018 at 5.30 pm

Present

Councillors

Mrs B M Hull (Chairman)
Mrs A R Berry, Mrs C Collis, J M Downes,
S G Flaws, Mrs S Griggs, F J Rosamond
and Mrs N Woollatt

Apologies

Councillor

A Bush

Also Present

Councillor

R J Chesterton

Also Present

Officers

Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Adrian Welsh (Group Manager for Growth, Economy and Delivery), Joanne Nacey (Group Manager for Finance), John Bodley-Scott (Economic Development Team Leader), Chris Shears (Economic Development Officer) and Sarah Lees (Member Services Officer)

14 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Apologies were received from Councillor A J Bush.

15 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

There were no declarations of interest given.

16 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no members of the public present.

17 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 May 2018 were confirmed as a true and accurate record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

18 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman had the following announcements to make:

- She reminded the Group that the London based consultants who had been appointed by TCAT (Tiverton Community Arts Theatre) to progress their plans for the arts facility at the college were making a presentation following the meeting of this Group. All PDG Members were invited to attend as were a number of other interested stakeholders.

- There would be another informal workshop on Thursday 26th July at 5.30pm to which all members of the Group were encouraged to attend.

19 REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN 2017/18

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Director of Finance, Assets & Resources presenting the revenue and capital outturn figures for the financial year 2017/18.

The Group Manager for Financial Services outlined the contents of the report with particular reference to:

- The overall underspend on the General Fund which was £159k aided to some degree by the receipt of additional funds in relation to the Garden Village and the benefits of 'pooling' Business rates.
- There was a net surplus on the Housing Revenue Account of £255k
- The net income for the year in relation to the Market Walk and Fore Street shops in Tiverton was £62k.

The Group Manager confirmed that detailed discussions took place with budget holders throughout the year with regard to individual budgets and the treatment of any under or over spends.

20 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS UPDATE

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Chief Executive and Director for Growth updating Members on progress with key Economic Development Service priorities.

Consideration was given to the following areas:

Devon Hydro and Smart Grid Project ('Mills Project')

It was reported that the team had received reports back from the master's students from Exeter University looking at smarter technologies. The reports were positive and included findings in relation to ecological impacts. It was hoped that a summary of the findings could be sent to members of this Group.

A report had also been received from the Hydromatch company although these were still being analysed. This would set out a clear path to progress the Tiverton Weir Project. Discussions would need to be had with the Environment Agency but the whole project was beginning to gather momentum again.

The Economic Development Officer and representatives from the University of Exeter and Hydromatch had pulled together a bid to the Heritage Enterprise Fund for £5m.

The team were working with South West Water at an officer level, it was hoped a discussion at a more senior level would be advantageous going forwards and current work was seen as moving in a positive direction.

Note: Cllr Mrs N Woollatt declared a personal interest as a mill owner.

Enquiries & Investments

It was explained that there was great demand for employment sites within the district at the current time. However, the GED team were continuing to be proactive by having discussions with every land owner who had an employment land allocation in the Local Plan to assist in bringing them forward.

Cullompton Heritage Project

At the end of May the team heard that the Council's bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund's Townscape Heritage Programme was once again unsuccessful. This was extremely disappointing as a great deal of hard work had taken place over three years with various partners. However, since then positive discussions had taken place with Historic England about how to proceed with a formal partnership under their 'Partnership Scheme in Conservation Areas'. It might be possible to submit a bid having worked up a delivery plan with Historic England.

Connecting the Culm Project

The team had been working with partners to develop a bid to seek European Funding. The focus would be on flood mitigation. The benefits of this project were that the whole of the Culm was being looked at, as well as seeking to improve water quality and engaging with communities to understand the river and its needs. The bid had now reached the second round of the application process, with a full bid to be submitted in August. If successful, this project would be able to supplement schemes to mitigate flooding, green infrastructure and the development of a country park for the Culm Garden Village.

A brief discussion took place regarding the need for more to be done in terms addressing possible periods of droughts.

Work in this area was complementary to that being done around the Mills project.

Masterplanning

A report on the results of the Tiverton Masterplan consultation would be presented to this Group in September. It was reported that generally feedback had been positive, however, there was still a journey to be undertaken with businesses and the wider community. A briefing on the Grimsey Review, concerning the repurposing of town centres, would be presented to the next meeting of the Group alongside the Tiverton Masterplan consultation and it was hoped it would be possible to see an alignment between the two.

A number of options were available in order to support businesses, for example the shop front scheme thereby improving the visual appearance of the town. A town centre partnership had been formed and 2 meetings had been held already. These had both been well attended. An understanding of how businesses wished to progress needed to be achieved.

The Culm Garden Village masterplanning process had begun with workshops later this month and a wider consultation in the autumn.

Masterplanning for Crediton had been agreed in principle and would be taken forward in the next financial year.

EHOD Economic Strategy

The EHOD Economic Strategy identified areas of joint working where value could be added to economic initiatives by working together with colleagues in the Greater Exeter area. The Economic Development Officers from the four Councils had recently reviewed the current strategy and considered that the policy direction and priorities were still fit for purpose, but that many of the actions identified had now been completed or superceded. It has therefore been agreed that a new action plan be developed to take the four themes forward.

Mid Devon was taking a leading role in Business Transformation but this was by no means an exclusive role, the partnership was drawing upon the strengths of individual authorities across the four themes. The focus was on joint initiatives and where value could be added.

More needed to be done in the area business support and the streamlining of planning processes to make it easier for businesses to progress. This would feature as a part of the revised action plan with some of this work taking place through GESP.

Consideration was given to:

- Special events needing to be done well otherwise there was a risk that they could have a detrimental effect upon a town.
- The potential railway between Cullompton and Taunton. The Group were informed about the Devon Metro Group which met regularly with all the relevant partners. It was **AGREED** that an update on discussions in this area be brought to the PDG in November.

It was explained that EHOD was specifically looking at Economic Development, whilst GESP was looking at much wider planning aspects. The Chief Executive and Director for Growth reassured the Group that there was a joined up approach with economic development being one thread that sat beneath an overarching umbrella of activity with full visibility. It was suggested that a structure chart be provided for the next meeting illustrating this to aid the Groups understanding.

21 **CAR PARKING WORKING GROUP**

At its meeting on 11 January 2018 the Economy PDG resolved that an item be brought back to this meeting to consider the establishment of a car parking working group.

It was **AGREED** that a car parking working group be established and that it comprise of Councillors Mrs A R Berry, Mrs B M Hull and Mrs N Woollatt. Appointments to attend the first meeting would be sent out in due course. It was expected that any discussions from this group would feed into the budget setting process for 2019/20.

22 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

The following was requested to be on an agenda for the next meeting:

- Feedback from the Tiverton Town Centre Masterplan consultation
- Grimsey Review briefing
- Exe Valley AONB (for information only as the recommendation would be made by the Environment PDG)
- Funding stream opportunities
- Chart showing the teams EHOD/GESP activities and their interconnection

(The meeting ended at 6.31 pm)

CHAIRMAN