

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **CABINET** held on 8 January 2015 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors C J Eginton (Chairman)
R J Chesterton, N V Davey, P H D Hare-Scott,
Mrs B M Hull, C R Slade and R L Stanley

Also Present

Councillors Mrs H Bainbridge and K D Wilson

Present

Officers: Kevin Finan (Chief Executive), Andrew Jarrett (Head of Finance), Liz Reeves (Head of Customer Services) and Sally Gabriel (Principal Member Services Officer)

86. **Apologies**

There were no apologies.

87. **Public Question Time**

There were no members of the public present.

88. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting (00-01-07)**

Subject to the inclusion of the minute numbers in the declaration of interest box, the minutes of the meeting of 11 December 2014 were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

89. **Recommendation from the Decent and Affordable Homes Policy Development Group 25 November 2014 (00-02-09)**

Arising from a report of the Devon Home Choice Working Group presenting a summary of their work as well as their conclusions and recommendations, the PDG had recommended that there was a need to:

Revisit the suggestion in 12 month's time once:

- (a) Evidence has been gathered from Exeter City Council, Teignbridge District Council and Torbay Council regarding the effect on numbers in the waiting list, the impact upon resources and the effect on the relationship with Devon Home Choice.
- (b) Costs have been ascertained as to any necessary changes to the IT software that would be incurred if Band E was removed.

The Council seeks the opinion of the Scrutiny Improvement Group.

Investigate whether the adverts on the Devon Home Choice website could be amended to show:

- (a) The precise location of a property by the insertion of a map or a postcode. (*Mr Warren subsequently confirmed that adverts already contain a map and street view*)
- (b) More photographs of the properties themselves.

The 'Band E' name be changed to better reflect the realities of being placed in this Band e.g. 'No housing need'. (*The Housing Options Manager has already instructed the team to amend the website and relevant letter templates to take account of this*)

Consideration be given to amending the criteria for Band E for the following reasons:

- (a) Should income thresholds be reduced, for example, is it right that families with an income of over £60k are allocated to this band?
- (b) Should people who have been on Devon Home Choice for a number of years but have never bid on anything be allowed to remain in the band?

More work should be done at the verification stage to manage people's expectations when placed in Band E.

If Members of the PDG were minded not to register housing applicants in Band E going forward, then consideration should be given to adding a new band D2 for those people who live in private sector accommodation where there are affordability issues.

Discussion took place regarding the work of the Working Group and the need for some clear recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet; it was therefore

RESOLVED that the matter be referred to the Head of Housing and Property Services for review and then returned to the Decent and Affordable Homes Policy Development Group for further consideration.

(Proposed by Cllr R L Stanley and seconded by Cllr N V Davey)

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

90. **Financial Monitoring (00-07-44)**

The Cabinet received a verbal update from the Head of Finance with regard to the income and expenditure so far in the year. He reported that the accounts showed an overspend of £249k which included the restructuring costs of £174k, he suggested that there would be an overspend on the General Fund of £75k for the year. He highlighted the fact that Development Control had seen an increase in fees received and that the projected figure for year-end would be in the region of £100k better than budget, he also reported that new recycling vehicles were expected in January, savings would therefore be made on maintenance costs.

Discussion took place regarding the new recycling vehicles and a possible market for the old vehicles.

91. **Budget Update (00-12-50)**

The Cabinet had before it and **NOTED** a report * of the Head of Finance requesting the Cabinet to consider options available for the Council to move toward a balanced budget for 2015/16. The Cabinet Member for Finance outlined the contents of the report stating that the formal confirmation of Formula Grant settlement had been received prior to Christmas, which had been £83k more than expected; therefore the budget gap was now projected to be £99k.

Discussion followed with regard to the investments made in the Leisure Service and the fact that the service was achieving its budget targets.

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

92. **Council Tax Base Calculation 2015/16**

The Cabinet had before it a report * of the Head of Finance detailing the statutory calculations necessary to determine the Tax Base for the Council Tax. This was a statutory function and a legal requirement, the Council would set its budget using Council Tax information as at 30 November each year in accordance with The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012 calculating the relevant amount by applying the formula set out in the above regulations.

RESOLVED that

1. The calculation of the Council's Tax Base for 2015/16 be approved in accordance with The Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012 at **27,289.76** as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report.
2. The criteria contained in the Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme for the forthcoming year 2015/16 to remain the same as the previous financial year 2014/15.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

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

93. **Revenues and Benefits Performance (00-15-47)**

The Cabinet had before it and **NOTED** a report* of the Head of Finance regarding Council Tax, Non Domestic Rates and Housing Benefit performance for the first 6 months of 2013/14.

The Cabinet Member for Finance outlined the contents of the report stating that the performance of both the Revenues and Housing Benefits Teams was outstanding compared to the performance of authorities elsewhere in the country.

The Cabinet recorded its congratulations to both teams.

94. **Digital Transformation (00-18-14)**

The Cabinet had before it a report* of the Head of Customer Services informing Members of the digital transformation plans for Mid Devon District Council and the programme of work needed to ensure the authority continued to provide services for customers that were appropriate and efficient within a reduced budget.

The Cabinet Member for Support Services and the Working Environment outlined the contents of the report stating that there was a need to streamline processes to make working practices as efficient as possible. She outlined the process for change and discussion took place regarding the new website that was being created and its functionality.

Discussion took place regarding the need to have systems available that could be accessed by mobile devices, improved and integrated on-line forms to enable self-service and reduce back office administration. It was agreed that there was a need to supply services that would be fit for all the community.

RECOMMENDED that:

- a) the Channel Access Strategy 2014-2017 be approved;
- b) An additional one-off expenditure, shown in appendix 2, for the digital transformation programme 2014-2017 be approved

(Proposed by the Chairman)

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

95. **Peoples Park Recreation Ground and Trust Committee (00-30-25)**

The Cabinet had before it and **NOTED** a report * of a meeting of the above Trust Committee held on 18 November 2014.

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

96. **Notification of Key Decisions (00-30-50)**

The Cabinet had before it, and **NOTED**, its rolling plan * for February 2015 containing future key decisions.

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

(The meeting ended at 2.47 pm)

CHAIRMAN