

## Community PDG Chairman's Report 2018-19

It has now been 3 years since I took over as Chairman of the Community PDG. By way of reminder its specific areas of interest are Community Leadership, Leisure Centres, Community Consultation / Development / Participation, Community Planning, and Town Centre Improvements. This is a broad remit. In my opinion the committee has continued to make positive progress in pursuing its objective of active promotion, within its powers, of community benefit.

Much of the work of the PDG has continued to be centred around checks and balances based on regular reports from officers and outside organisations. Some of these have been routine from financial monitoring, risk reviews through to public health plan performance and anti-social behaviour statistics. Concentrating on areas on interest rather than the mundane, the PDG continues to embrace active debate on important elements of reports received.

Less routine reports have included presentations from some of the charities that MDDC supports including Citizens Advice, Mid-Devon Mobility (formerly Tiverton and District Community Transport Association) and the Tiverton Museum of Mid-Devon Life. Much good work is done for the community by these and others. Whilst the PDG sought to increase levels of financial support this proved impossible due to overall funding constraints.

Feedback was sought on some of the initiatives taken in 2017-18. It was reported that the extension to the Exe Valley Leisure Centre had resulted in a very positive outcome in customer take-up. Improvements in Lords Meadow should lead to similar community benefits. In addition, leisure-service price strategy had been implemented with little negative feedback. In a similar vein the PDG has taken a keen interest in the implementation of the district's first Trim Trail. Sited in Tiverton this was opened to the public at end February 2019.

Some policies and plans require regular review to ensure currency against current legislation and guidance. The Air Quality Action Plan was introduced in 2017-18 with positive progress being reported a year later. A new, necessary and comprehensive policy addressing the sensitive topic of Unauthorised Encampment was reviewed and eventually adopted by full Council.

As in 2017-18 the budget was a challenge with further reductions in government funding to the District. Most of the activity for which the PDG is responsible is mandatory with economies already taken such that further reductions in staffing would be counter-productive. Where possible, charging regimes will be optimised as far as government rules permit (eg planning) or in line with market benchmarks (eg leisure services).

Perhaps the most stimulating event of the year was a CPDG-promoted Member Briefing on the current topic of Diet and Nutrition. With 3 engaging guest speakers the committee as well as other Councillors were encouraged actively to promote healthy initiatives such as Sugar Smart through MDDC to the benefit of the community. Hopefully this theme will be continued into next year.

This report marks the last in the 4-year term for the currently-elected Members of the CPDG. It has been my privilege to lead this committee for much of that time. I'd like to thank the Members and Officers for their thoughtful and at times challenging but always constructive contributions. In addition, I would like to thank Carole Oliphant our Clerk for keeping us in order in the past year.