

## **MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**MINUTES** of a **MEETING** of the **ECONOMY POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP** held on 8 August 2019 at 5.30 pm

### **Present**

#### **Councillors**

J M Downes (Chairman)  
N V Davey, R J Dolley, Mrs S Griggs,  
T G Hughes, D F Pugsley, R F Radford and  
A Wyer

### **Also Present**

#### **Councillor(s)**

R Evans and D J Knowles

### **Also Present**

#### **Officer(s):**

Andrew Jarrett (Deputy Chief Executive (S151)), Jenny Clifford (Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration), John Bodley-Scott (Economic Development Team Leader), Stuart Noyce (Group Manager for Street Scene and Open Spaces), Chris Shears (Economic Development Officer), Vicky Bowden (Environment and Enforcement Manager), Matt Auty (Communications Officer) and Sarah Lees (Member Services Officer)

## **15 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (00.00.47)**

There were no apologies for absence.

## **16 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (00.01.03)**

There were no interests declared under this item.

## **17 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (00.01.20)**

There were no members of the public present.

## **18 MINUTES (00.01.27)**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2019 were confirmed as a true and accurate record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

## **19 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (00.02.37)**

The Chairman had no announcements to make.

## 20 CAR PARKING WORKING GROUP REPORT (00.02.43)

The Group had before it a report \* from the Deputy Chief Executive and Group Manager for Street Scene & Open Spaces providing it with an update from the Car Parking Working Group on proposals for new Pay & Display charges.

The Chairman of the Working Group, Cllr R Evans, outlined the contents of the report and the approach that the working group had taken. This had been the first review of car parking charges in three years. He thanked the officers on behalf of the Working Group for their hard work in pulling together all of the relevant data.

He stated that car parking was an important income stream for the Council whilst also emphasising that significant consideration had been given to the effect upon Mid Devon residents and visitors. Maintaining consistency across the district had also been an important factor as well as considering the effect of any changes upon local businesses. The working group had considered at length 'the offer' in each town and associated car park charges. He explained further that many businesses had complained about the lack of 'dwell time' within each town as a result of the current 30 minutes free parking.

The Working Group had had lengthy discussions about the charges relating to the Multi Storey Car Park in Tiverton and had agreed at an early stage that there needed to be a different offer across long stay car parks. A recurring factor continually emerged throughout their discussions in that there was very little up take on the annual permits offered by the Council which provided a significant annual discount.

They had considered each individual car park in turn and reference was made to the subject of their discussions in the attached meeting notes to the report. A significant proportion of their considerations had been focussed on overnight parking in the car parks of each town. Residents in Cullompton particularly were finding it increasing problematic to park outside of their own properties because of the number of non-residents parking their cars on-street and not using nearby car parks. Because of this the Working Group had proposed to reduce the overnight parking permit to £100 as a one off annual payment, or payable by £10 a month for those people opting to pay by monthly direct debit. This equated to approximately 28p per day which was considered to be excellent value for money.

Therefore the Working Group felt that they had given significant thought to the businesses in each of the towns by potentially increasing dwell time whilst also considering the effect upon local residents and offering significant value for money especially when considering the charges made by other towns in the local area.

Discussion took place regarding:

- It was very difficult to predict what the take up of the newly priced permits would be. Advertising of the new permits would take place as it had done previously, for example, on the reverse of each Council Tax bill.
- A report was going to be presented to the Cabinet at its next meeting regarding the costs associated with the maintenance programme for the Multi-Storey Car Park (MSCP) in Tiverton, these costs were not insignificant. However, it was felt that these proposed charges in relation to the MSCP appeared to be out of kilter with those proposed for long stay car parks in

Crediton and Cullompton. It was explained however that the MSCP offered an undercover car park that would be well maintained with CCTV security. The associated costs of such a provision had to be factored into the cost of parking vehicles there. Again, the overriding wish of the Working Group was that regular users of the MSCP, such as workers within the town, would choose the option of the discounted permit to park their cars within the MSCP.

- The new proposed car parking charges would need to be advertised well in advance of being implemented and before that would need to go out for consultation. Businesses needed to encourage their employees to purchase annual permits.

**RECOMMENDED** to the Cabinet that:

- a) The proposed new tariffs for each of the council owned car parks in Mid Devon be approved as detailed in the annexe to the Working Group report;
- b) Overnight parking permits be altered to offer greater value for money for local residents and that the annual one off charge be set at £100. To also approve an option to pay by monthly direct debit at £10 per month with a one month cancellation period.

(Proposed by Cllr A Wyer and seconded by Cllr R F Radford)

Notes: (i) \* Report previously circulated; copy attached to the signed minutes.

(ii) A proposal to consider reducing the proposed fees in the MSCP was not supported.

(iii) Cllr N V Davey requested that his vote against the decision be recorded.

## 21 **MOTION 555 (CLLR F W LETCH - 8 APRIL 2019 (00.50.02))**

Having considered the previous item in relation to car parking charges, the Group considered the Motion which had been referred by Council in relation to offering free parking in the towns on Saturdays.

Cllr F Letch had been invited to attend the Car Parking Working Group to listen to their discussions and contribute where appropriate especially with regard to the subject matter of his Motion. He had commented that he had noticed the number of vehicles trying to find free or affordable parking within Crediton on market days was very significant and initially he had thought that offering free parking on Saturdays would be a way of helping both shoppers and local businesses. However, the council had recently signed up to the climate declaration and aimed to be carbon neutral by 2030. Cars were significant carbon emitters and therefore if the council were to support this Motion it would be seen as encouraging the use of cars.

The Group acknowledged that the Council had, in recent years, offered free parking in each of the towns on the four Saturdays in the run up to Christmas. However the Group felt that it would be worth contacting each of the town councils to ask if they would prefer these 'free days' to be at different times of the year when they might be holding events that attracted a greater number of visitors. It was requested that this

issue be placed on the agenda for the next meeting so that further discussion could take place.

It was therefore **RECOMMENDED** to Council that the Motion not be supported.

(Proposed by Cllr R Dolley and seconded by Cllr R F Radford)

## 22 **PERFORMANCE AND RISK FIRST QUARTER 2019/20 (00.58.40)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report \* from the Head of Planning & Economic Regeneration providing Members with an update on performance against the Corporate Plan and local service targets for 2019/20 as well as providing an update on the key business risks.

Consideration was given to:

- The fact that the shop vacancy rates were collated at the start of each quarter hence the figures for 'September' were populated already.
- The funding landscape was very unsure at the moment given the current political climate, however, finding funding streams was only part of the picture. The council could also look to entering into partnerships with other public sector organisations as well as commercial enterprises. A comprehensive approach was being undertaken exploring a range of opportunities. Risks and mitigations with regard to Brexit should be considered and closely monitored by this Policy Development Group and a report was requested to be brought to the next meeting detailing where the council stood with regard to this issue.

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

## 23 **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS UPDATE (01.11.38)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report from the Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration updating it on progress with Economic Development Service activities.

The contents of the newly formatted report were outlined with a particular request to the Group that it provide feedback on whether they liked the new format and whether or not they preferred less or more detail on each project.

Discussion took place with regard to:

- Mid Devon Business Awards were considered to be 'at risk' as there had been some reluctance from businesses to take part in the awards or sponsor them. It was possible that a scaled down version would be held.
- The Future 'High Street Fund' bid had been unsuccessful. This was due to an oversubscription of bids being made. Only 20 bids had been successful out of those submitted nationally.

It was **AGREED** that of the two project summary versions offered to the Group, the second, more detailed version, was the preferred option.

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

## 24 **REPORT ON THE HEART OF THE SOUTH WEST LOCAL INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY (01.22.17)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report \* from the Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration informing it about the Local Industrial Strategy being developed by the Heart of the South West LEP and how it related to Mid Devon focused activities.

The contents of the report were outlined with particular reference to the following:

- The draft strategy document was designed to demonstrate to central document how the Heart of the South West's (HOSW) business agenda was aligned with theirs.
- The focus was on areas of high productivity and there was also a strong theme on the Government's 'Clean Growth Strategy'. It was important for Mid Devon that the projects it wanted to focus on aligned with the ethos of the Local Industrial Strategy, especially if the council wanted to draw down funding.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The importance of the Local Industrial Strategy especially in terms of the 'Clean Growth Strategy' and any funding available to support local authority initiatives in this area given the council's recent decision to be carbon neutral by 2030. The HOSW had already identified some of these areas.
- The Economic Development team closely monitored and applied for funding whenever it was appropriate and became available.
- Regular reports and updates would be brought to the Group going forwards and the team would be looking to the Group for guidance.

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

## 25 **CONNECTING THE CULM PROJECT UPDATE (01.38.37)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report \* from the Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration informing it of progress with the Connecting the Culm Project.

The contents of the report were outlined and discussion took place regarding:

- The project was headed up by Steven Johnson and he would be providing regular updates, the first of which was attached to the report for this meeting.
- This was an analysis project designed to gather relevant data by and for relevant stakeholders of which the council was one. It was emphasised that this was not a delivery project. Various scenarios would be considered including the worst possible weather related incidents within the catchment.
- Ward Members concerns would be collated by the Economic Development team and would be submitted and discussed by the steering group. Relevant Ward Members, whose wards were situated along the River Culm catchment,

had been informed as stakeholders and would be able to contribute to discussions.

- Public engagement would start next year.
- Regular updates would be brought to this Group.
- Understandably Members were taking a keen interest in this issue which very much overlapped with the aspirations of the Culm Garden Village. The council needed to be an active stakeholder, contributing where it could.

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

## 26 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (01.48.15)

The Group noted the items already listed for the next meeting but requested that only the current or 'more pressing' issues come forward. In addition to this, it was requested that a report on the Brexit implications for this council be presented as well as the issue of free parking on the four Saturdays leading up to Christmas and whether towns would prefer this to be offered at different times of the year.

It was also **AGREED** that a special meeting of the Group be held to focus on the Tiverton Pannier Market. The date of this meeting to be confirmed.

(The meeting ended at 7.25 pm)

**CHAIRMAN**