

## MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

**MINUTES** of a **MEETING** of the **ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP**  
held on 26 November 2019 at 5.30 pm

### **Present**

**Councillors** B G J Warren (Chairman)  
E J Berry, W Burke, D R Coren,  
R F Radford, R L Stanley,  
Ms E J Wainwright and J Wright

### **Apologies**

**Councillor(s)** B Holdman

### **Also Present**

**Councillor(s)** R M Deed and R Evans

### **Also Present**

**Officer(s):** Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Andrew Pritchard (Director of Operations), Andrew Busby (Group Manager for Corporate Property and Commercial Assets), Joanne Nacey (Group Manager for Financial Services), Stuart Noyce (Group Manager for Street Scene and Open Spaces), Catherine Yandle (Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security), Tristan Peat (Forward Planning Team Leader), Clare Robathan (Scrutiny Officer) and Carole Oliphant (Member Services Officer)

## 39 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (00.00.55)**

Apologies were received from Cllr B Holdman.

## 40 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (00.01.32)**

There were no declarations made.

## 41 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (00.01.40)**

There were no members of the public present for this item.

## 42 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (00.01.48)**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> September were **AGREED** as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

## 43 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (00.03.01)**

The Chairman announced that this was the last meeting of the Group that the Director of Operations would attend and he thanked the officer for what he had achieved and wished him well for the future.

#### 44 **MOTION 559 (COUNCILLOR R EVANS - 22 OCTOBER 2019) (00.04.39)**

The Group had before it Motion 559 (Councillor R Evans – 22 October 2019) that had been forwarded from the Council to the Policy Development Group for consideration and report:

It is well known that the planting of trees has an extremely positive effect in the fight against reducing carbon within the atmosphere, each trees sequestration process is known to benefit carbon reduction as each individual tree can absorb as much as 48 pounds of carbon dioxide per year and can sequester 1 ton of carbon dioxide by the time it reaches 40 years old. Given the above and the climate crisis declared by this council and its stated ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030 I ask that the following motion be supported by all members.

This council agrees to use any and all land within the ownership of the authority that is not suitable for development, for the planting of native British trees.

This council agrees to undertake an area wide audit with the assistance of members and land owners to identify suitable sites both within MDDC ownership and private ownership to maximise opportunities for such activity, to be completed within no more than twelve months from the date of this motion , if approved.

This council agrees to work alongside community groups and schools whenever possible to encourage community ownership and sense of place and wellbeing within our communities.

This council agrees that any and all opportunities should be sought to obtain trees from organisations such as government agencies and relevant charitable organisations. (Woodland Trust, Plant Life, DEFRA / Forestry Commission seeking any funding that may be available).

Cllr R Evans explained that the motion was put forward as he had a plot of MDDC owned land in his ward which they didn't know what to do with and that the motion supported the environmental aims of the Council.

The Group discussed the Motion and considered:

- Planting of 'suitable trees'
- The fit with the Council's Open Spaces Policy
- Land not suitable for development – what did this mean

The Chief Executive explained that there were some concerns about the statement of 'any and all Council owned land not suitable for development' as this was a fairly unequivocal statement and could be misinterpreted in future as potentially including land not suitable for development, but where the Council clearly wouldn't wish to see the land completely covered in trees - existing Council owned play area's for example.

The Group suggested, and Cllr R Evans agreed that the wording of the Motion should be amended to reflect that only suitable Council owned land would be included and only suitable native trees would be planted.

The Group **RECOMMENDED** to Council that the Motion should be supported and that the wording would be adjusted to reflect the Group's suggestions.

(Proposed by Cllr R L Stanley and seconded by Cllr Ms E J Wainwright)

#### 45 **CORPORATE PLAN (00.17.37)**

The Group had before it and **NOTED** the draft \*Corporate Plan. The Chief Executive explained that the current Corporate Plan ran until 2020 and now was the time to start to look at renewing and refreshing the plan for 2020 onwards. He explained that the draft plan included the thoughts and ideas of the Members who had contributed during an away day in September 2019.

He stated that the draft plan would be presented to all 4 PDG's over the coming weeks so that additional thoughts and comments from all Members could be included within the final version. He asked the Group their initial thoughts on the draft plan.

Members discussed the draft plan and considered the following:

- Car park pricing mechanism – how would that be seen to be helping our town centres if the Council was also encouraging outside business parks like J27
- Concern that the plan was a 4 year programme and that there were too many things to achieve in that timescale
- Right to Buy – this is a Government Policy and should not be included
- Promote sustainable farming practices – Some Members felt that this was down to DEFRA and others thought that it should be kept in the plan as an aspiration for farming communities to network and share good practice.
- Emissions from cattle and food production.
- Community Land Trusts.

The Chief Executive explained to Members that the Corporate Plan was designed to balance the different viewpoints of the membership and the competing demands of the Council. It was to show the public what the council would be trying to achieve with competing resources. He explained that the Plan was not a definitive list of practical things that the Council would achieve but what the aspirations of the membership was in the 4 overarching main themes, Environment, Homes, Economy and Community.

He informed the Group that the Plan was stating what the membership aspired to achieve and that the Leadership Team would need to adjust and amend working practices to align operational activities to the aims of the Members. He explained that with each budgetary cycle everything the Council did and every decision Members were asked to make would be aligned to the Corporate Plan. Alongside the top line of the Corporate Plan there would be a list of priority activities published on an annual basis, as currently.

The Leader informed the Group that the draft Plan would be presented to all 4 PDG's and that all Members should respond and contribute their thoughts so that these could be taken into consideration when the final Corporate Plan was presented to the Cabinet.

The Group were requested to contribute their thoughts and add their comments to the draft Corporate Plan by way of notification to the Chief Executive via the Committee Clerk.

Note: \*Corporate Plan previously circulated and attached to the minutes.

#### 46 **NET ZERO WORKING GROUP UPDATE (00.47.21)**

The Group had before it and **NOTED** the \*Terms of Reference for the Net Zero Working Group and the Chair of the group, Cllr Ms E Wainwright, explained that the project outline was dynamic and that it would be adapted as the Climate Change situation progressed.

She explained that the Working Group had two main themes, the first being establish how the Authority could reduce its own emissions and secondly how the Authority could facilitate net zero carbon initiatives information across the district.

She informed the PDG that the Working Group were looking at getting Net Zero Carbon information onto a shared platform and that a new webpage on the Council's website had been commissioned to signpost public and community groups. She explained that Members should be encouraging residents to engage with the DCC Taskforce call for evidence and that when that evidence was presented the Authority could look at ideas which directly affected Mid Devon. The next stages would be a press release early in the New Year explaining what the Council had already achieved to reduce its carbon footprint and to conduct a mapping exercise to connect all the community groups together.

She explained that the Group would meet again in the New Year.

The Group **AGREED** that Cllr E J Berry be formally adopted onto the Working Group.

(Proposed by the Chairman).

Note: \*Terms of Reference previously circulated and attached to the minutes.

#### 47 **GOVERNMENT SCHEME FOR FUNDING OF STREET ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING POINTS (00.56.53)**

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a \*report from the Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration providing Devon County Council's (DCC) Policy for signing up to the Office for Low Emission Vehicles Government Funding for the provision of on street electric vehicle charging points.

The Forward Planning Team Leader explained that the question had been asked by a member of the public and that MDDC could not sign up to the scheme in its own right as it was not responsible for highways and it would need the support of DCC. He explained that DCC had taken the decision not to sign up to the scheme due to financial pressures and issues with evolving technologies.

The Group Manager for Corporate Property and Commercial Assets explained to the Group that the Council's Electric Vehicle Charging Partner, Instavolt, had installed rapid chargers in the leisure centres. He explained that these had worked well as

people had something to do whilst the vehicle was charging but suppliers were reluctant to site them in other locations where there was no alternative activity that users could utilise whilst charging their vehicles. He explained that 2 additional charging points were to be fitted at the Premier Inn in Tiverton. He informed the Group of the electric infrastructure required to install electric vehicle charging points and the reluctance of suppliers to install additional units.

Note: \*Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes.

#### 48 **CLIMATE CHANGE FOOTPRINT BASELINE CALCULATION (01.05.32)**

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a \*report from the Group Manager for Corporate Property and Commercial Assets updating Members on progress made with establishing a Carbon Footprint for the Council's operational activities.

He outlined the content of the report and explained that there were 5 stages required to define the Council's carbon baseline and that officers were at stage 5, report writing. A draft report had been received from the University of Exeter and that this was currently being verified and would be presented to Cabinet on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2019.

He explained that MDDC had joined other District Councils to have a consistent approach on the scope of establishing a baseline and that MDDC were the first of this group to have obtained a draft figure.

Note: \*Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes.

#### 49 **SINGLE USE PLASTICS (01.07.59)**

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a \*report from the Policy and Research Officer updating Members on the Council's progress on the reduction of single use plastic (SUP). She outlined the contents of the report and explained that this was an update on a report presented to the Group in March 2019.

She explained that the Council was looking to get its own house in order and to work with suppliers. She informed the Group that most of the suppliers that the Council worked with either had or intended to introduce a policy on the use of SUP's.

She explained that although there was a limited response from suppliers when they were initially asked to provide details of their policy that the Council were looking at the policies of individual suppliers when their contracts came up for renewal.

Members felt that procurement needed to be looked at more generally and how the Council could encourage positive social and environmental impacts whilst looking to reduce its own environmental impact.

The Director of Operations asked the Group to consider how they wanted to discuss SUP's and what that actually meant as there was no official definition of a single use plastic.

Cllr R Evans, who tabled the original motion, stated that this was a good start but he would like the PDG to look at introducing targeted measurable results. He stated that if procurement was an area that could be looked at then this should be done.

Note: \*Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes.

## 50 **ENVIRONMENT EDUCATIONAL AND ENFORCEMENT TEAM UPDATE (01.21.38)**

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a \*report from the Group Manager of Street Scene and Open Spaces updating Members on the performance of the Street Scene Education and Enforcement Team.

He outlined the contents of the report and explained to Members that this was an update on the changes made to the service in April 2017. He explained that officers had a combined 300 hours of discretionary time per annum and the amount of time spent on tasks performed had been agreed by the previous PDG.

He explained that the discretionary time had previously concentrated on litter patrols and recycling and that this was working well. He explained that the rise in abandoned vehicles could be directly linked to the scrap values and as this was lower it caused an increase in this type of offence.

He informed the Group that the Enforcement Policies were due to be presented to the Group at the next meeting and this meant that Members could set increased fine rates for fixed penalty notices including littering from cars following changes to national legislation.

In response to a question about the training provided to district officers for evidence gathering and investigations, the Director of Operations explained that the Enforcement Policies would cover this aspect. He explained that currently the Council would not be able to use covert surveillance methods as they would need to apply for RIPA.

The Group **AGREED** to retain the current discretionary times and tasks.

Note: \*Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes.

## 51 **FINANCIAL MONITORING (01.32.43)**

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a \*report from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) presenting the financial monitoring information for the income and expenditure for the six months to 30 September 2019 and the projected outturn position.

The Group Manager for Finance outlined the content of the report and explained that this was the second formal report for the year and there was a big differential from quarter 1, now showing a surplus of £29k. A number of factors had contributed to this including waste savings and the receipt of a significant planning application.

In response to a question asked about 3 Rivers Developments Ltd she explained that this was a loan which was made without the need for additional borrowing and that the report had highlighted that there was a risk of it not being repaid within the initial

timeframes. The forecast was based on the figures that had been provided by 3 Rivers Developments Ltd.

Note: \*Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes.

## 52 **DRAFT BUDGET (01.42.45)**

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a \*report from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) presenting the draft budget proposals for 2020/2021.

The Group Manager for Finance outlined the content of the report and explained to Members that the report would be presented to Cabinet with the information available at the time and that the settlement from Central Government was for 1 year instead of the 4 expected. She explained that the Council had been very vocal about the absence of the Fair Funding Review there was doubt over whether the Provisional Settlement would be received from Central Government by Christmas. This delay would cause further uncertainty.

She informed the Group that the Council had gone out to public consultation on the budget and had so far received 408 responses. Officers were currently looking at those to help inform the budget setting process.

She explained that the Vehicle Contract set up had come from the Ear Marked Reserve created from the sinking fund initially established to replace the Council's vehicle stock.

Note: \*Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes.

## 53 **PERFORMANCE AND RISK (01.54.38)**

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a \*report from the Director of Operations providing Members with an update on performance against the corporate plan and the local service targets for 2019-2020.

The Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security explained that the results were from September and detailed the performance against the current corporate plan.

She stated new targets would be aligned with the new corporate plan when this had been agreed.

Note: \*Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes.

## 54 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS (01.57.28)**

No items were identified.

(The meeting ended at 7.29 pm)

**CHAIRMAN**