

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **COMMUNITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP**
held on 10 December 2019 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors

C R Slade (Chairman)
W Burke, Mrs C P Daw, J M Downes,
R Evans, E G Luxton and L J Cruwys

Apologies

Councillor(s)

B Holdman and Mrs M E Squires

Also Present

Officer(s):

Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Lee Chester (Leisure Manager), Dean Emery (Group Manager for Revenues and Benefits), Joanne Nacey (Group Manager for Financial Services), Catherine Yandle (Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security), Rob Fish (Principal Accountant), Jo Tulk (Benefit Supervisor) and Carole Oliphant (Member Services Officer)

40 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (00.45)

Apologies were received from Cllr B Holdman.

Apologies were also received from Cllr Mrs M E Squires who was substituted by Cllr R Evans.

The Chairman asked for a Member to act as Vice Chairman for the meeting and Cllr L Cruwys was nominated to the role for the meeting.

41 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (01.27)

There were no declarations.

42 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (01.39)

There were no members of the public present.

43 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (01.47)

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 8th October 2019 were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

44 CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS (02.32)

The Chairman welcomed Cllr L Cruwys as a member of the Group and thanked Tiverton Town Council for setting up the meeting room.

45 **CORPORATE PLAN (03.07)**

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 had been presented to all 4 PDG's 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.

He explained that Members had indicated that the four key priorities which were aligned to the PDG's should be retained and that new priorities were emerging around the climate change declaration adopted by the Council.

Members considered the following:

- Pleased to see that health and healthier living were part of the plan
- ANOB for Exe Valley to be included
- The need to understand what the Council could lobby others on and what could be directly influenced
- The welcome change in emphasis due to the climate change declaration

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 **COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME (15.29)**

The Group had before it the *Council Tax Reduction Scheme and the revised *Exceptional Hardship Policy.

The Group Manager for Revenues and Benefits explained that this was a new way of assessing the council tax reduction and was more aligned to council tax instead of benefits. The reduction had always been calculated in line with the benefits that claimants received but was now calculated on household income. He further explained that the changes would see some households lose their council tax reduction but that they could apply for hardship relief.

In response to questions he explained that the hardship policy was an interim measure to transition people onto the new council tax levels and that net income was calculated for the whole household. The policy will be used to help customers bridge the loss of reduction in year one of the new scheme, applications will be required. It should be noted that the policy will be available in subsequent years, however the level of reduction may not be as generous when compared to year one.

He further explained that many of the neighbouring authorities had adopted the same approach and that claimants could now go on line to see if they were eligible.

Members requested details of the other criteria, apart from income, where people could get a reduction.

The Group therefore:

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that:

1. The Council Tax Reduction (banded) scheme be adopted; and
2. The updated Exceptional Hardship Policy (revised) be adopted.

(Proposed by Cllr R Evans and seconded by Cllr Mrs C P Daw)

Note: *Council Tax Reduction Scheme and the revised *Exceptional Hardship Policy previously circulated and attached to the minutes.

47 **CORPORATE HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY (23.21)**

The Group received and **NOTED** the annual *review of the Corporate Health & Safety Policy from the Director of Corporate Affairs and Business Transformation.

The Group Manager for Performance Governance and Data Security explained that the policy was reviewed annually and that it had been identified that there were no amendments necessary at this time.

The Group therefore **RECOMMENDED** to the Cabinet that:

It **NOTE** that the Health and Safety Policy had been approved by the JNCC on 4th September 2018, following subsequent review by the Health and Safety Committee and representatives from the union, there were no changes to be made to the current policy.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Note: *Review previously circulated and attached to the minutes.

48 **FINANCIAL MONITORING (24.43)**

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 Financial Services 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.

She explained that the Council had not taken out any new borrowing this year so was unaffected by the recent rise in interest rates.

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

49 **DRAFT BUDGET (29.35)**

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 Financial Services 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 and there was doubt over whether the Provisional Settlement would be received from Central Government by the New Year. 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.

Members considered the following:

- Was the projected increase in business rates realistic
- The number of appeals going back to 2010 and effect on the budget if all of these were successful
- The forecast for the planning department

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

50 **PERFORMANCE & RISK (43.51)**

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a *report from the Director of Corporate Affairs and Business Transformation 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 report included figures up to the end of October and requested that Members may like to make suggestions for additional measures to be included within future reports.

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

51 **ACCESS TO INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC (46.29)**

Prior to considering the following item, discussion took place as to whether it was necessary to pass the following resolution to exclude the press and public having reflected on Article 15 15.02(d) (a presumption in favour of openness) of the Constitution. The Committee decided that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

It was therefore:

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the next item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 respectively of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

(Proposed by the Chairman)

52 **6 MONTH LEISURE UPDATE**

The Leisure Manager gave Members an update on the service by way of a presentation.

53 **LEISURE PRICING**

The Leisure Manager provided Members with a report on the updated pricing structure and explained the changes included.

The Group discussed the Leisure Pricing Policy and:

RESOLVED that the report be **NOTED** and that the decision for Leisure fees and charges be made by the Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing as a delegated decision.

(Proposed by the Chairman).

After the discussion the meeting moved back into open session.

54 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR A FUTURE MEETING (46.58)**

Members requested that the Leisure Manager attend a future meeting with estimated costings to provide private showers at Lords Meadow Leisure centre.

(The meeting ended at 3.59 pm)

CHAIRMAN