

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP**
held on 30 January 2020 at 4.00 pm

Present

Councillors

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

Also Present

Councillor(s)

D J Knowles, L D Taylor and Ms E J Wainwright

Also Present

Officer(s):

Joanne Nacey (Group Manager for Financial Services) and
Carole Oliphant (Member Services Officer)

64 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (00.00.29)**

There were no apologies

65 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (00.00.34)**

No Interests were declared under this item.

66 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (00.01.27)**

There were no members of the public present

67 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (00.01.31)**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 14th January 2020 were agreed as a true record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

68 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (00.04.40)**

The Chairman informed the Group that the Street Scene enforcement officers had issued a fixed penalty notice to an individual for fly tipping.

69 **DRAFT BUDGET (00.05.39)**

The Group had before it the *draft budget report from the Deputy Chief Executive S151 presented by the Group Manager for Financial Services.

She explained that the budget gap was currently calculated at £234k and that it had risen due to the changes to the car parking charges proposals made by the Cabinet which would see a £57k reduction in projected income.

Members discussed the implications of the proposed revision of the General Reserves (General Fund) limit to £2m. The Group Manager for Financial Services

explained that it was proposed that £500k was moved from the General Reserves (unallocated reserves) to Earmarked Reserves (allocated reserves).

She explained to the Group that by law the Council had to produce a balanced budget and that with a projected budget gap for 2020/2021 of £234k the default position was that the budget gap would need to be found from the reserves (either the General Fund reserve or earmarked reserves) unless significant savings could be found.

Members questioned how budget gaps had been dealt with in previous years and she explained that previously the gaps had been plugged by New Homes Bonus and underspend on the agreed budgets. She explained that the New Homes Bonus revenues had significantly reduced due to changes in Government funding with further reductions proposed which would see the Grant disappear completely. It was therefore no longer the “go to” reserve to close the budget gap

The Group Manager for Finance gave further detail on the following:

- Budget proposals for 2020/2021 and the Capital Programme
- Advance payment of the next 3 years pension deficit
- The revised Medium Term Plan
- The proposed revision of the minimum General Reserves (General Fund) limit to £2m

The Group gave consideration to the following:

- The process for agreeing the budget through the Cabinet and Full Council
- The SWEEG annual subscription of £5k
- The proposed saving to remove the budget for the weed team. It was felt that the parishes in particular made use of this service and the appearance of the district was important to a great many people. The Chairman informed the Group that some parishes paid for their own weed team. The removal of this saving would add c£53k to the budget gap.
- The proposed arrangement for emptying bins on the Canal and the change of funding to DCC
- Committed expenditure due from the Tiverton Town Centre regeneration plan being postponed. The Group Manager for Financial Services confirmed that this would be an in-year cost rather than something which would be a pressure in the 2020/21 Budget.

The Group then considered the recommendations of the report individually:

- 1) The Group considered the updated budget proposal for 2020/2021 and discussed the removal of the weed team and it was explained that the Homes PDG had made a recommendation to the Cabinet that the proposed savings identified in relation to the weed team be removed and that the budget in this area be retained. The Group **AGREED** to endorse the recommendation of the Homes PDG.

(Proposed by the Cllr R L Stanley and seconded by Cllr W Burke)

- 2) The Group considered the proposal to make a payment in advance of the next 3 years pension deficit and **AGREED** to the proposal.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

- 3) The Group **NOTED** the Medium Term Financial Plan.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

- 4) The Group considered the proposed revision of the minimum General Reserves (General Fund Limit) to £2m and **AGREED** to the proposal.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Note:

- i) Councillors R L Stanley and E J Berry requested that their abstention from voting for the proposed revision of the minimum General Reserves (General Fund Limit) to £2m be recorded.
- ii) *draft budget previously circulated; copy attached to the minutes.

70 **NET ZERO WORKING GROUP (01.21.04)**

The Chairman explained that since Cllr Ms E J Wainwright's move onto the Cabinet the Net Zero Working Group and the PDG were down one member and he asked the Group for volunteers to sit on the working group.

The Group discussed the progress of the DCC Climate Change Taskforce and the link to the Devon wide plan. Members felt that the working group should await some outcomes from the Devon wide plan before moving forward with specific standalone plans for carbon reduction in the District.

The Group **AGREED** to postpone the next meeting of the working group and to determine the membership until after the next ordinary meeting of the Group on 10th March 2020 when the replacement of Cllr Wainwright on the PDG was known and there would be more information available on progress of the DCC taskforce.

(Proposed by the Chairman).

71 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS (01.27.39)**

No items were identified.

(The meeting ended at 5.30 pm)

CHAIRMAN

