

Community PDG Annual Chairman's Report 2019/20

The year kicked off with our first meeting in June, during which we discussed whether Parish and Town Councils should be able to recommend that a street be named after an individual whilst they were still alive. It was agreed that this should be allowed. It was subsequently approved by Council and our recommended wording was placed in the Street Naming and Numbering procedure.



The Council continues to support local charitable organisations, and the Group heard a presentation from the Churches Housing Action Team (CHAT) on the work they are doing in the District. The Group also reviewed the level of grant funding for external agencies under the Community Strategic Grants Programme for the period 2020 to 2023. We agreed to set up a Working Group to review the level of funding to individual strategic grant recipients in light of the reduced level of council funding.



The Group continues to hear regular updates from the Leisure Manager, outlining the health and wellbeing activities in the three leisure facilities at Exe Valley, Culm Valley and Lords Meadow. We have been pleased with the partnership work and wellbeing initiatives in facilities, as well as the refurbishment work that has taken place. During the year the Group also reviewed the Leisure Pricing Policy and delegated the decision for Leisure fees and charges to the Cabinet Member for Community Well Being.

An important part of the yearly activity is to review routine reports and receive regular financial updates, including performance and risk and the revenue and capital outturn figures. This year the Group focussed on the underspend on the Capital Programme and in particular which projects had slipped and when they would be progressed. We also discussed the draft budget for 2020/21, notably endorsing a recommendation from the Homes PDG that the weed team be retained.

As ever, the Group received a number of regular standing items, including: the annual review of Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA); the annual review of the Corporate Health and Safety Policy; and the Single Equalities Policy and Equality Objective 2019-2021. We also have a standing item on community engagement, as part of which we considered the internal auditor's recommendation that a Customer Engagement Champion is introduced by the Council. Members felt that the idea was good but felt that the Leader, the Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing and the Chairman of the Audit Committee would be best placed to make that decision.

A key policy discussion of note this year was on CCTV, and in particular the viability of installing mobile CCTV cameras for enforcement purposes. We heard from the Director of Operations that the Council would need to ensure it had a Policy on the deployment of cameras that was compliant with data protection legislation and the

latest guidance. The Group therefore agreed that a 'Use of CCTV' policy should be developed, detailing the governance around the use of mobile cameras and compliance with the latest guidance. This will be brought to the Group to review in June 2020.

During an update from the Cabinet Member for Community Well Being, the Group discussed representation at the Police and Crime Panel in Plymouth. In response to requests from Members, he confirmed that he would raise the issues of rural crime, county lines and the large area that Mid Devon Police had to cover at the next meeting of the Panel.

Given that poor air quality is one of the largest environmental risks to public health, an important discussion took place on the adopted Air Quality Action Plan for Crediton and the Cullompton. The Group discussed progress on the plan, as well as the air quality issues outside of schools, and heard how the Council is working with Devon County Council on the local transport plan and looking at any gaps in the strategic approach.

The Group also discussed the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and the revised Exceptional Hardship Policy. The hardship policy is an interim measure to transition people onto the new council tax levels and that net income was calculated for the whole household. We discussed how the new policy will be used to help customers bridge the loss of reduction in year one of the new scheme. Members requested details of the other criteria, apart from income, where people could get a reduction. The Group therefore recommended to the Cabinet that both were adopted.

This has been my first year as Chair of the Community PDG, having come to it following five years as Cabinet Member for Community Well Being up to 2019. This year the Group has made progress in promoting the health, safety and wellbeing of people within the District, and as we go into the next municipal year we will continue to focus on these important issues. Alongside the issues we have discussed this year, the Group plans to also look at community engagement in the next year, notably how we can better engage members of the public in decision making. I would like to thank the Members and Officers for their contributions, as well as our Clerk, Carole Oliphant, for keeping us on track.

Cllr Colin Slade