

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **HOMES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP** held on 17 March 2020 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors

R J Dolley (Chairman)
D R Coren, L J Cruwys, Mrs C P Daw and F W Letch

Apologies

Councillors

Mrs E M Andrews, J Cairney, C J Eginton and S J Penny

Present

Officers

Jill May (Director of Corporate Affairs and Business Transformation), Helen Carty (Neighbourhood Team Leader), J P McLachlan (Principal Accountant), Catherine Yandle (Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security) and Sarah Lees (Member Services Officer)

75 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Cllr D R Coren be elected Vice Chairman of the Group for the remainder of the municipal year 2019/20.

76 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from the following Members:

- Cllr Mrs E M Andrews
- Cllr J Cairney
- Cllr C J Eginton
- Cllr S J Penny

77 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT

There were no interests declared under this item.

78 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public present.

79 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

80 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman had no announcements to make.

81 PERFORMANCE AND RISK (00:03:13)

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Group Manager for Governance, Performance and Data Security 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.

The contents of the report were outlined with reference to:

- Whether the Group had any suggestions to make regarding additional measures in relation to KPI targets.
- The 6 week public consultation on the Local Plan main modifications had finished on 17 February 2020. 75 representations were received, these were sent to the Inspector for his consideration on 28 February 2020.
- The risk scores in relation to Homelessness and the fact that they were likely to increase given the current and ongoing situation regarding Coronavirus. The Housing Service Business Continuity Plan had been amended to take the current crisis into consideration and mitigating actions had been put in place, for example, the possibility of using some of the Council's void properties to house those classed as homeless.

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

82 FINANCIAL MONITORING (00:08:37)

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) presenting a financial update in respect of the income and expenditure so far in the year.

The following was brought to the attention of the Group and discussion took place with regard to:

- The report and appendices before the Group only provided data up to the end of quarter three. The forecasted deficit figure in relation to the year-end position had previously been identified as £252k, this had now risen to £292k. This had mainly been due to an under recovery in the Revenues and Benefits area and Planning income being down on budget.
- The HRA was showing a healthy forecasted under spend of £668k. This was ring fenced however and would be returned to the housing maintenance fund at the end of the financial year.
- The 3 Rivers Development Company impairment of loans being a provision at this stage.
- The shortfall in relation to the Premier Inn car parking income. A detailed breakdown was requested and it was **AGREED** that the officer would provide this additional information.
- Concerns regarding those people on low incomes who may not be able to pay their rent or Council Tax.
- Concerns regarding the budgeted income per car parking space in each of the car parks not meeting its target, especially in relation to the Multi-Storey Car Park when so much had been spent on improvements and security.
- Agency fees being high in the Waste Services area. Such fees were reactive and it was difficult to budget for them.

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

83 **CAR PARKING MANAGEMENT POLICY (00:25:40)**

The Group had before it a report * from the Group Manager for Housing Services outlining a review of the Car Park Management Policy.

It was explained that the policy had last been updated in January 2016 and it had therefore been due for review. The review had identified a number of minor changes which included:

- A clause in relation to vehicle maintenance and a requirement for tenants not to block dropped curbs.
- A move to virtual car parking permits rather than paper permits.
- Where vehicles have been abandoned contact would be made with the DVLA.
- The need for the policy to be clear on tenants not parking on grass verges.

Consideration was given to:

- Concerns regarding abandoned vehicles and the difficulties involved in trying to get them removed. These vehicles were not only untidy but quite often attracted anti-social behaviour. The officer explained that removal of these vehicles depended on whether they were on Devon Highways land or on MDDC housing land. If a vehicle was on housing land a notice could be served and enquiries made to find out who the registered keeper was. If the registered keeper did not respond to the notice then the Council had the ability to seize the vehicle and dispose of it. However, this was a lengthy process with officers having to prioritise workloads and other important housing matters. There were cross overs, in terms of how these matters were dealt with, with the Street Scene service who operated under different regulations.
- Abandoned vehicles were just as much of an issue in the rural areas as well as the urban ones.
- The officer requested that the details of specific cases be provided to her outside of the meeting so that further investigations could take place.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that the revised Car Park Management Policy be approved.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

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

84 **GARAGE MANAGEMENT POLICY (00:45:01)**

The Group had before it a report * from the Group Manager for Housing Services outlining a review of the Garage Management Policy.

It was explained that the policy had last been updated in January 2016 and it had therefore been due for review. The review had identified a number of minor changes which included:

- An amendment to facilitate future changes with regard to rental charges.
- Maintenance issues.
- Any reference to 'rent free weeks' had been removed.

- Amendments in relation to garage ground rent plots.

It was further explained that there was an intention to move all housing policies to a ten yearly review unless there were changes to housing legislation or good practice guidance.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that the revised Garage Management Policy be approved.

(Proposed by Cllr F Letch and seconded by Cllr L Cruwys)

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

85 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2019/20 (00:48:32)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a draft report * by the Chairman of the Group, a final copy of this report would be submitted to Council on 29 April 2020.

86 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (00:52:07)**

The following was requested to be on the agenda for the next meeting (in addition to the items already identified in the work programme):

- A review of empty properties within the district.

(The meeting ended at 3.10 pm)

CHAIRMAN