

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **COMMUNITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP**
held on 26 January 2021 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors

Mrs C P Daw (Chairman)
E J Berry, Mrs C Collis, L J Cruwys,
J M Downes, B Holdman and
Mrs M E Squires

Apologies

Councillor(s)

Mrs E M Andrews

Also Present

Councillor(s)

R M Deed, R Evans and D J Knowles

Also Present

Officer(s):

Jill May (Director of Business Improvement and Operations), Ian Chilver (Group Manager for Financial Services), Catherine Yandle (Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security), John Bodley-Scott (Economic Development Team Leader), Lee Chester (Leisure Manager), Clare Robathan (Scrutiny Officer) and Carole Oliphant (Member Services Officer)

59 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (0.02.47)**

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs E M Andrews

60 **REMOTE MEETINGS PROTOCOL (0.03.05)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, the *Remote Meetings Protocol.

Note: *Remote Meetings Protocol previously circulated and attached to the minutes

61 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (0.03.55)**

Members were reminded of the requirement to make declarations where appropriate

62 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (0.04.18)**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 8th December 2020 were approved as a correct record

63 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (0.04.44)**

Andrea Rowe from the Museum of Mid Devon Life referring to item 9 on the agenda stated:

The Board were concerned that the Council would cut the grant for 2021-2022 and that the Tourist Information Centre had just been announced as a finalist in the Visitors Centre of the year for 2020-2021.

The museum and tourist information service play a vital role in boosting the local economy by attracting visitors to the Mid Devon area, both to visit the museum and through our work on Visit Mid Devon which promotes the local area as a visitor destination. Given the challenges High Streets are currently facing, our town centre location is also a significant factor.

Using the Association of Independent Museum's Economic Impact Toolkit we have estimated that the museum's economic contribution to the local economy in 2019 was £213,744. This means that for every £1 that MDCC invested in the museum in 2018, there was a return of over £7 into the local economy.

The Museum and Information Services offer a variety of challenging volunteering opportunities which currently attract over 80 people and provide unique learning experiences on site and in schools and care homes for the young and old. They also organise low cost family activities in school holidays.

Are members fully aware of the economic, wellbeing and social impact of the museum?

The Chairman advised that the question would be addressed during the agenda item.

64 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (0.10.08)**

The Chairman had no announcements to make

65 **BUDGET (0.10.21)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, the *Budget report for 2021/2022 from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151).

The Group Manager for Finance stated that this was the second draft of the budget and that the deficit had reduced from an excess of £3m to £490k and included the impact of the Government's funding settlement.

He explained that Government funding for the pandemic via the Income Compensation Scheme had been extended to the end of June 2021.

He further explained that it remained a very volatile period and that the unknown impact of the ongoing Covid crisis may vary the numbers further.

Some of the £490k deficit would need to be met from reserves but Members were asked to consider that the deficit for 2022-2023 was forecast as £3m.

Members were asked to highlight any savings which could be considered to reduce the deficit for 2021-2022 and beyond.

Consideration was given to:

- Business rate return implications and how these could be mitigated
- What were acceptable services levels and how these could be determined
- Members concerns with regard to using reserves to reduce the budget deficit

Note: *The budget report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

66 **FINANCIAL MONITORING (0.26.15)**

The Group received a verbal financial monitoring report from the Group Manager for Finance who explained that as of November 2020 the forecast had improved by £133k and that the Council could realise a surplus of £109K. He explained that when the report had been produced there was no knowledge of a further lockdown so the situation could deteriorate.

The officer explained that the projected surplus did not mean additional money to spend but would see the Council ending the financial year better than anticipated. If any monies were left at the end of year this would be put into an ear marked reserve to bridge any future budget gap.

He explained that £530k had been received from the Government to date, through the Income Compensation Scheme and that an additional claim for £775k had been submitted. There was a risk of misinterpretation of the rules so these figures may need to be adjusted.

67 **GRANT PAYMENTS TO EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS (0.36.15)**

The Group had before it a *report from the Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration presenting the Strategic Grants Programme Evaluation and Review.

The Economic Development Team Leader outlined the contents of the report and explained that the Working Group had met 3 times to discuss the budget. The pandemic had severely impacted the Council's partners who had shown great resilience and had all played an important part in assisting and supporting vulnerable residents.

The officer explained that the Working Group had recognised the important work that the partners did and the financial difficulties the Council was facing.

Consideration was given to:

- The Working Group did not wish to cut the grants to the existing partners
- The £9650 saving from the Age UK Mid Devon grant should be offered as a saving to protect the grants for the other partners
- The additional external funding that was now available to the Council's partners
- Regular meetings with the partners were held which highlighted and signposted partners to additional sources of income that they may be entitled to

It was therefore **RECOMMENDED** to the Cabinet that:

- 1) A one year grant award be made for 2021-2022, with a review in the autumn of 2021;
- 2) Grants to be made on a 1 year settlement basis, to be reviewed annually each autumn;
- 3) The £9,650 previously offered to Age UK Mid Devon be identified as a saving;
- 4) The grant payments for 2021–2022 to the Council’s other strategic partners should remain at the same levels as 2020-2021.
- 5) The levels recommended were:

Organisation	2021-2022 Grant
Churches Housing Action Tam (CHAT)	£12,500
Citizens Advice	£15,500
Involve – Voluntary Action in Mid Devon	£12,000
Mid Devon Mobility	£22,000
Grand Western Canal	£45,000
Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life	£27,500
Tourist Information Service	£4,000
Total Grants	£138,500
Savings	£9,650

- 6) If the Cabinet were minded to reduce the grant payment awards in 2021-2022 the Community PDG recommended that the organisations which directly supported vulnerable residents should have their grant payments protected, namely:
 - Churches Housing Action Team (CHAT)
 - Citizens Advice
 - Involve – Voluntary Action in Mid Devon
 - Mid Devon Mobility

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Reason for the Decision – So that the allocation of grants could continue to support external agencies delivering services to enhance the Council’s Homes, Community and Economy priorities

Notes:

- i.) Cllr D J Knowles declared a personal interest as a member of the Mid Devon Museum and Involve
- ii.) *Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

68 SINGLE EQUALITIES POLICY AND EQUALITY OBJECTIVES (0.56.42)

The Group had before it a *report of the Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security presenting the Single Equalities Scheme and Equality Objectives.

There was no further discussion on the report.

It was therefore **RECOMMENDED** to the Cabinet that:

- The Single Equalities Scheme and Equality Objectives be **APPROVED**

(Proposed by Cllr E J Berry and seconded by Cllr Mrs M E Squires)

Reason for the Decision – To ensure that the Council fulfils its statutory duties under the Equality Act 2020

Note: *Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

69 **PERFORMANCE AND RISK (0.58.53)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a *report of the Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security providing updated information on the performance against the Corporate Plan and local service targets for 2020-21.

The Officer outlined the contents of the report and explained that the results were to the end of November 2020. Some of the items did not currently have results against the Corporate Plan as there was a need to work with partners and establish the measures which had been difficult during the pandemic.

Note: *Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

70 **ON LINE BOOKING SYSTEM FOR LEISURE CENTERS (1.00.00)**

The Leisure Manager explained to the Group that discussions had taken place regarding the suitability of any new CRM system to dovetail a bespoke leisure booking system onto it. The draft leisure plan for 2022-2023 already had a capital budget put aside for an off-the-shelf leisure offering so dovetailing a bespoke system into a CRM which had not yet been established would not be advantageous.

The officer explained that he had no quantitative data to suggest that there were any issues with the current offering.

The Leisure Manager explained that when the time came to establish a procurement exercise to define the new leisure booking system, a working group would be set up with Members and frequent users to help select a suitable offering.

71 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (1.09.05)**

There were no additional items identified

(The meeting ended at 3.27 pm)

CHAIRMAN