

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP**
held on 9 March 2021 at 5.30 pm

Present

Councillors

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

Also Present

Councillor(s)

Ms E J Wainwright, R M Deed, R J Dolley, R Evans and
C R Slade

Also Present

Officer(s):

Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Jill May (Director of Business Improvement and Operations), Kathryn Tebbey (Head of Legal (Monitoring Officer)), Andrew Busby (Corporate Manager for Property, Leisure and Climate Change), Paul Deal (Corporate Manager for Finance), Catherine Yandle (Operations Manager for Performance, Governance and Health & Safety), Jason Ball (Climate and Sustainability Specialist), Clare Robathan (Scrutiny Officer) and Carole Oliphant (Member Services Officer)

62 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (0.03.43)**

There were no apologies or substitute Members.

63 **REMOTE MEETINGS PROTOCOL (0.03.56)**

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

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

64 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (0.04.21)**

Members were reminded of the need to declare any interests when appropriate.

65 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (0.04.30)**

A member of the public requested to ask a question with regard to Cabinet changes but this was rejected by the Chairman under procedure rule 11.2 (e):

- Questions must be relevant to an item on the Agenda for that meeting

66 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (0.08.11)**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12th January 2021 were agreed as a true record.

67 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (0.09.33)**

The Chairman had no announcements to make

68 **MARY QUICKE MBE (0.09.48)**

The Chairman introduced Mary Quicke MBE to the meeting.

Mary Quicke MBE explained working practices on her farm and how these fitted in with Climate Change. She stated that farmers had sustainability built into their DNA and her farming heritage went back 14 generations.

She explained that food used by animals was a by product of food production for humans, that animal waste was spread on the land and that the land was kept viable through crop rotation.

She explained that the Covid pandemic had shown that when the world worked together it could overcome vast challenges and this sort of cooperation was going to be required to tackle Climate Change. She stated it was time for everyone to start to challenge the normal and to produce systems of food production which would not bankrupt the planet.

She stated that people needed to understand the complex systems of sustainability and become conscientious consumers who were knowledgeable on how their food was produced and where it came from.

The Group then had a detailed discussion which included:

- Government grants in the 90's were only for arable crops which had in turn lead to an over dependence on them
- Farmers controlled 90% of the land area in the UK
- Farming was aiming to become net zero by 2040
- Farmers were using crop diversity and herbal lays to improve the soil
- Alternative foods, like seaweed, were being trialled to reduce the methane output from cows

Members then discussed the Farm Advisory Service which was coming out of the Interim Devon Carbon Plan and that DEFRA were going to be involved.

The Chairman thanked Mary Quicke MBE for her attendance and for sharing her knowledge.

69 **MOTION 567 - (COUNCILLORS: J WRIGHT AND MISS E WAINWRIGHT, R DOLLEY AND MRS C P DAW - 18 DECEMBER 2020) (1.03.12)**

The Group had before it and discussed Motion 567 - (Councillors: J Wright and Miss E Wainwright, R Dolley and Mrs C P Daw - 18 December 2020) which had been referred to the Policy Development Group by Council:

This Council:

- Welcomes and appreciates the work that has gone in to developing our climate action plan so far, especially in the context of the Covid pandemic, which stretched capacity and resources.
- Welcomes the recruitment of a Climate and Sustainability Officer, to develop our work.
- Requests that once in place, the new Climate and Sustainability Specialist focuses on further development to our climate action plan, so that it shows the priority actions for the short, mid and longer term, covering the entire period to 2030 and beyond. Plans should outline the strategic actions we need to take to be on track to meet this target.
- Requests that officers explore opportunities to develop the Net Zero Advisory Group, so that it has more authority and responsibility for our climate strategy, and so that the public can access it (e.g. via agendas published online, and being able to attend meetings).
- Requests that budget be created and ring-fenced for developing our climate work - through a mixture of funding bids; income generation; prioritisation; partnerships; and 'spend to save' schemes.

The Group had before it a *briefing paper from the Monitoring Officer which outlined the options for the Net Zero Advisory Group (NZAG).

Cllr J Wright introduced the motion and stated that it represented work which had already been done and what was still required. He stated that the Council needed some form of funding to be able to host Climate Change events.

The Monitoring Officer explained that the NZAG was operating within the current governance arrangements. There were opportunities to have regular reports on its work brought to the PDG and it was a decision of the PDG how it wished to interact with the NZAG.

The Group discussed the Motion and considered:

- That MDDC had already put a significant amount of funding into carbon reduction and that needed to be highlighted to the electorate
- The details of funding to date could be included on the MDDC Climate Change webpage which was due to be launched
- The NZAG to widen its remit and include invited members of the public to its meetings
- The NZAG to provide regular updates to the PDG on the work it had done and any identified policy development
- That the wording of the Motion be amended to include a future budget be created as the current budget had already been agreed

The Group therefore **RECOMMENDED** to Council that the Motion should be supported with the following amendment:

- Requests that future budgets be created and ring-fenced for developing our climate work - through a mixture of funding bids; income generation; prioritisation; partnerships; and 'spend to save' schemes.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Reason for the Decision – To support the Council's Climate Change Declaration

Note: *Briefing paper previously circulated and attached to the minutes

70 **CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT - CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE (01.33.59)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a *report of the Cabinet Member for the Environment and Climate Change outlining areas within his portfolio.

The Cabinet Member explained that the Climate Change portfolio had now been brought under his remit but it had not been merged with the Environment portfolio and was a separate portfolio in its own right.

He thanked the previous Cabinet Member for her work with the portfolio and commended her for her work.

He explained that a costed plan was being worked on and would be presented to the Scrutiny Committee on 15th March.

The Corporate Manager for Property, Leisure and Climate Change detailed the work ongoing and the recent grant funding awarded. He explained that the Climate and Sustainability Specialist had started on 1st March 2021.

In response to a question asked the officer confirmed that MDDC would not be liable for any works carried out through the Solar Together scheme and that liability for works completed would rest with the supplier.

Members requested that rapid car charging opportunities were relayed to the Town and Parishes.

Note: *Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

71 **FINANCIAL MONITORING (1.47.07)**

The Corporate Manager for Finance provided the Group with a financial monitoring update.

He explained that the financial position had improved and although it was an overspend of £46k it was a remarkable achievement due to the extraordinary year of the pandemic.

He stated that the Council was awaiting £775k from the Governments Income Compensation Scheme and that a further claim was being submitted.

The officer explained that he had issued an initial briefing to the Governments Budget statement and confirmed that the furlough scheme had been extended, the £20 increase in Universal Credit was to continue and that there was an extension to the Business Rates Relief scheme. He explained that restart grants were being introduced for between £6 - £18k, dependant on the type of business.

72 **BEREAVEMENT SERVICES FEES AND CHARGES (1.57.08)**

The Group had before it a *report of the Corporate Manager for Property, Leisure and Climate Change presenting the Bereavement Services Fees and Charges for 2021-2022.

The officer outlined the contents of the report and explained that the charges were comparable to other local authorities in the area.

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

The proposed charges for 2021-22 set out on Table A be approved.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Reason for the Decision – To ensure that the Council's Bereavement Services Fees and Charges do not place financial constraints on the Council

Note: *report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

73 **PERFORMANCE AND RISK (1.59.49)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED** a *report of the Operations Manager for Performance, Governance and Health & Safety 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 stating that there was a recommendation to review the new targets for 2021-2022.

She explained that the waste performance had been affected by the Covid pandemic as more people were at home and producing more waste and recycling.

In response to a question asked she advised that further details of the home improvement loans would be provided to Members.

Consideration was given to:

- The reasons why the recycling targets had not been increased
- Members views that the Garden Waste Customers target should be increased
- That the Hydromills project would not be completed in the next financial year and therefore could not be a target

Therefore it was **RECOMMENDED** to the Cabinet that:

The targets suggested for 2021/2022 against the Corporate Plan Performance framework (appendix 4) be approved subject to:

- Garden Waste Customers – target to be set at 11,200
- Corporate Renewable Energy Projects – target to be set at 4

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Note: *report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

74 **CHAIRMANS ANNUAL REPORT (2.20.22)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, the *Chairman's Annual Report.

Note: *report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

75 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS (2.21.12)**

Members requested that the Cabinet Member for the Environment give an update at every meeting.

(The meeting ended at 7.54 pm)

CHAIRMAN