

## MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

**MINUTES** of a **MEETING** of the **ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP**  
held on 13 July 2021 at 5.30 pm

### **Present**

#### **Councillors**

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

### **Apologies**

#### **Councillor(s)**

L D Taylor

### **Also Present**

#### **Councillor(s)**

Mrs C P Daw, R M Deed, R Evans and C R Slade

### **Also Present**

#### **Officer(s):**

Andrew Busby (Corporate Manager for Property, Leisure and Climate Change), Paul Deal (Corporate Manager for Finance), Matthew Page (Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste), Jason Ball (Climate and Sustainability Specialist), Darren Beer (Operations Manager for Street Scene), Deborah Sharpley (Solicitor), Vicky Lowman (Environment and Enforcement Manager), Philip Langdon (Solicitor), Clare Robathan (Policy and Research Officer) and Carole Oliphant (Member Services Officer)

## **1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN (THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL IN THE CHAIR) (0.00.07)**

Cllr J Wright was duly elected Chairman for the municipal year.

## **2 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN(0.07.00)**

Cllr E J Berry was duly elected Vice Chairman for the municipal year.

## **3 START TIME OF MEETINGS (0.08.07)**

The start time of meetings for the municipal year was agreed as 5.30pm.

## **4 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (0.08.30)**

Apologies were received from Cllr L D Taylor who was substituted by Cllr L J Cruwys.

## **5 HYBRID MEETING PROTOCOL (0.09.02)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, the Hybrid Meeting Protocol.

Note: \*Protocol previously circulated and attached to the minutes

## 6 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (0.09.12)**

Members were reminded to declare any interests where appropriate.

## 7 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (0.09.35)**

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2021 were agreed as a true record and were signed by the Chairman

## 8 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (0.10.29)**

There were no questions from members of the public present.

## 9 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (0.10.33)**

The Chairman had no announcements to make.

## 10 **CABINET MEMBER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE (0.10.40)**

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change reported on areas within his portfolio and informed the Group of the following:

- There were currently some staffing issues at Carlu Close due to staff sickness and staff having to self-isolate. There were a number of vacancies for drivers and the service was looking at a recruitment drive and retaining the staff they had.
- The 3 week waste collection trial was underway and social media platforms were being used to promote this. No issues or problems had been reported so far.
- The draft MDDC Litter Strategy was being updated with suggestions from the Scrutiny Committee and would be brought before the Environment PDG at the September meeting.
- Possible sites had been identified for recycling bins and initial consultations had taken place with the Town and Parish Councils.
- He had recently attended a meeting with the Local Government Association

## 11 **CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE (0.15.24)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a \*report of the Corporate Manager for Property, Leisure and Climate change providing an update on the Climate Change Action Plan from the Climate and Sustainability Specialist.

The Climate and Sustainability Specialist gave the Group a summary of actions which had been taken against the Corporate Plan which included:

- Development of an interim statement on Climate Change which would sit alongside the current Local Plan;
- Working with teams, including the Culm Garden Village, to promote sustainable building practices;

- Work to support the team behind the Housing Strategy. The Housing team are working to establish the best options and costings for retrofit on different types of housing stock held e.g. how they could be made more energy efficient;
- Utilising a £300k grant to decarbonise the Council's buildings and leisure centres;
- Looking to source a higher percentage of the Council's electricity needs through green energy tariffs/agreements;
- Signing up to an electric car charging scheme to increase the number of charging points across the District and investigations into obtaining electric vehicles across the transport fleet;
- Encouraging recycling to increase the rates, including running a recycling promotion at the Mid Devon Show;
- Working with local groups such as Sustainable Tiverton and Crediton to achieve mutual benefits

The Officer gave an overview of sustainable housing Zed Pods and informed the Group that one was due to go on display in Cullompton shortly.

In response to questions asked the Officer confirmed that the Council was working with local landowners and groups to promote tree planting but that the council scheme was outside of the wider DEFRA scheme. The lighting on the Council's sport pitches had been tendered and the lighting on the all weather pitch at Exe Valley Leisure Centre was being looked at as part of the replacement LED lighting project. This work was captured within future plans to install low energy lights.

The Group then discussed the impact of the right trees in the right place and sustainable farming practices.

With regard to increasing the number of electric car charging points the Climate and Sustainability Specialist stated the Council could encourage them to be built on new housing developments and people buying electric cars were able to obtain a grant to have a charging point installed at their home. He stated there was a need to put additional chargers where people currently parked for a period of time like supermarkets, leisure centres and places of work.

The Cabinet Member for Housing informed the Group that the Homes PDG would be looking at the Housing Strategy next week which included many climate change initiatives and invited members of the group to attend. He stated that he would see if it was financially possible for the Zed Pods to be displayed in Tiverton.

Note: \*Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes.

## 12 **TREE POLICY (0.50.46)**

The Group had before it a \*report of the Corporate Manager for Property, Leisure and Climate Change providing details of the revised Tree Policy.

The Corporate Manager for Property, Leisure and Climate Change gave the Group an overview of the Tree Policy and stated that the Policy covered only Council owned trees. It did not include those trees subject to Tree Protection Orders (TPO's), privately owned trees or high hedges. The Policy was a useful guide for the public and customer services officers alike.

The officer informed the Group that permission would not normally be given to prune or remove trees because of:

- a) Leaf fall
- b) Fruit fall
- c) Bird droppings
- d) Interference with TV signals
- e) They block a view
- f) They cause an acceptable level of shading
- g) Fears that they may damage a building or surface with no evidence
- h) Aphid infestation (Honeydew)
- i) Because they are considered by some to be too tall
- j) Because they overhang an adjacent property, where no damage is likely (each case is assessed individually)
- k) They are shading solar panels

Members requested an addition to the Policy so that it would be possible for some stock to be removed to allow the growth of new trees in the area which would keep the woodlands sustainable. The Officer agreed to add this addition.

Consideration was given to:

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

- The revised Tree Policy be adopted as attached in annex A for five years subject to minor amendments suggested by the Environment PDG

(Proposed by the Chairman)

**Reason for the decision:** To ensure that the Council has a Policy to manage its tree stock and ensures that inherent risk associated with trees is managed.

Note: \*Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

### 13 PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER (1.03.00)

The Group had before it a \*report of the Environment and Enforcement Manager setting out the key findings from the consultation on the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO).

The Environment and Enforcement Manager informed the Group that the PSPO contained the results of the recent public consultation. She advised that two areas in Hemyock had been left off parts of the order in error and she apologised for this.

In order to include the two missed areas the Officer informed the Group that the PSPO could be brought into force and a variation adding the two areas could be brought back to the Environment PDG at a later date, once the public consultation was done on these areas.

The Group agreed that a lot of work had gone into the PSPO and that it should not be delayed in coming into force. They agreed that further areas to be added should be brought as a variation at a later date.

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

1. To make and bring into force the draft PSPO at appendix A
2. To authorise the Monitoring Officer to take all necessary steps to make and bring into force the draft PSPO at appendix A
3. To instruct officers to bring to the Environment PDG a draft variation of the PSPO (once made) to include the land identified by Hemyock for consideration for consultation

(Proposed by Cllr B G J Warren and seconded by Cllr R F Radford)

**Reason for the decision:** To ensure that the Council has a Public Spaces Protection Order in place

Note: \*Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

#### 14 **PERFORMANCE AND RISK OUTTURN REPORT (1.14.03)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a \*report of the Operations Manager for Performance, Governance and Health and Safety providing the outturn performance against the corporate plan and local service targets for 2020/2021.

The Chairman asked the Group to reflect on the content of the reports and if Members felt they enhanced Policy Development. He advised that moving forward the Group would not be presented the Performance and Risk report at each meeting and that if Members were interested in the results these would still be reported at Council, Scrutiny Committee and Audit Committee.

Note: \*Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

#### 15 **FINANCIAL OUTTURN REPORT (1.20.02)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a \*report of the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) presenting the Revenue and Capital Outturn figures for the financial years 2020/2021.

The Corporate Manager for Finance explained that the report covered the General Fund, HRA Fund and the Capital Program.

He explained that the outturn was a remarkable achievement and the position had improved by year end.

The Chairman explained that following an informal session of the programming panel, the financial forecast would no longer be brought to the PDG but that the Group would be involved in the budget setting process for the Environment portfolio as normal. He asked Members to think about what they wanted to influence with regard to the budget for the Environment portfolio so that this could be considered and discussed during the budget setting process in the autumn.

Note: \*Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

16 **WORK PROGRAMMING SESSION (1.25.48)**

The Group received an update from the Scrutiny and Policy Development Officer which gave an overview of the programming panel and the aim of the work programming session.

The Group considered the current \*work plan for the Environment PDG and suggested the following for further consideration:

- Fly tipping of grass cuttings by the grounds maintenance team
- Involvement of Town and Parish Council's in the street naming process – This would first be investigated by Corporate Manager for Property, Leisure and Climate Change and Members updated with the current process.

Note: \*Work Plan previously circulated and attached to the minutes.

(The meeting ended at 7.10 pm)

**CHAIRMAN**