

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **CABINET** held on 26 October 2021 at 10.00 am

Present

Councillors

R M Deed (Leader)
Mrs C P Daw, R Evans, D J Knowles,
B A Moore, C R Slade and Mrs N Woollatt

Apologies

Councillor(s)

R J Chesterton

Also Present

Councillor(s)

G Barnell, S J Clist, L J Cruwys, B Holdman, B G J Warren
and A Wilce

Also Present

Officer(s):

Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Andrew Jarrett (Deputy Chief Executive (S151)), Jill May (Director of Business Improvement and Operations), Richard Marsh (Director of Place), Karen Trickey (District Solicitor and Monitoring Officer), Andrew Busby (Corporate Manager for Property, Leisure and Climate Change), Lisa Lewis (Corporate Manager for Business Transformation and Customer Engagement), Simon Newcombe (Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing), Tristan Peat (Forward Planning Team Leader), Sarah Lees (Member Services Officer) and Sally Gabriel (Member Services Manager)

81. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr R J Chesterton.

82. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (00-03-50)

There were no questions from members of the public present.

83. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (00-03-56)

Members were reminded to make any declarations of interest when necessary.

84. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (00-04-20)

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

85. HOUSING STRATEGY (00-04-49)

The Cabinet had before it a * report of the Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing providing Members of the Cabinet with an opportunity to

adopt the proposed revised corporate Housing Strategy (Annex 1) following the recent completion of external and public consultation. Details of the consultation were set out within the report. The consultation responses and outcomes were set out in Annex 2.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services outlined the contents of the report initially thanking officers for their work in creating such a comprehensive document which would provide a strategy for housing for four years. The strategy had been considered by the Homes Policy Development Group and the Scrutiny Committee.

Consideration was given to:

- The consultation process, the lack of responses and the various platforms used for the consultation
- Whether the strategy was ambitious enough with regard to affordable and social rented housing
- A mechanism to monitor housing numbers and the need for an integrated approach to performance management, how the delivery of the strategy would be reported via the Homes Policy Development Group and that there was a commitment to review the strategy on an annual basis.
- The need to identify the village communities, specifically community housing schemes, the meeting was informed with regard to a housing needs survey which had been sent to parishes.
- Funding for projects, affordability and possible grant funding
- Objective 26 – climate change and existing Council housing stock and affordability

RESOLVED that the Housing Strategy for 2021-25 be approved.

(Proposed by Cllr R B Evans and seconded by Cllr C R Slade)

Reason for the Decision – there is a need to ensure that an updated strategy is formally adopted allowing for the delivery against the strategic priorities and objectives over the strategy period of 4 years.

Note: *Report previously circulated, copy attached to minutes.

86. **SOUTH WEST BANK UPDATE (00-30-36)**

The Cabinet had before it and **NOTED** a *report of the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) providing an update on the formation of South West Mutual.

The Cabinet Member for Finance outlined the contents of the report stating that the update was provided to give visibility to the project, although progress had been slow due to the economic climate, the pandemic and the challenge of setting up a bank due to regulatory hurdles; the Council would continue to monitor and support the project.

Consideration was given to:

- How realistic was the project given the amount of money it would take to make it operational and whether such a bank could succeed – the lack of big banks in the community and the hope that the project would succeed
- Whether the Council's contribution to the project could be returned if the project failed seeing that there was a need for the Council to make savings across the board.
- The fact that such a bank would benefit residents
- The risk of the Council's investment and the amount of percentage on return if the project succeeded. It was reported that the initial investment would not be refundable but if the project was successful then the dividends/returns would be of value.

Note: *Report previously circulated, copy attached to minutes.

87. **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN - 2022/23 - 2026/7 (00-47-08)**

The Cabinet had before it a *report of the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) presenting to Member's the updated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) which covered the period 2022/23 to 2026/27 and took account of the Council's key strategies (i.e. the Corporate Plan, Business Plans, Treasury Management Plan, Asset Management Plan, Work Force Plan and Capital Strategy) and demonstrated it had the financial resources to deliver the Corporate Plan.

The Cabinet Member for Finance outlined the contents of the report stating that the MTFP was based on assumptions, it was not a plan or a budget but the best prediction that could be made at the current time and showed how the Council would strategically manage its finances in order to support the delivery of the priorities detailed in the Corporate Plan. He highlighted appendix 2 which considered the shortfall in the General Fund for the next financial year and following years, the budget options to address the budget gap, the detail within the Capital Programme highlighted within Appendix 5 and the borrowing requirements.

Consideration was given to:

- The HIF projects and the possible shortfall and whether that would be recouped via planning obligations
- The gap in the General Fund had been discussed as early as the beginning of the year and strategic discussions were promised but had not taken place with Members
- There was a need for a clear strategy to fund the gap in the budget
- The Cabinet Member for Finance and the S151 officer were willing to meet with members to hear their ideas
- It was felt that this was a problem for the Cabinet and that members wished to see clear proposals and plans
- The borrowing set out within the Capital Programme and the funding of 3 Rivers Developments Limited which would increase the debt – the meeting was informed that the social housing programme would be supported through borrowing and possible grant funding via Homes England
- Whether there was any provision in the MTFP for the Council to be Carbon neutral and the cost of retro fitting the current housing stock
- Possible 3 Rivers impairments

- The bid for the Levelling Up Fund and why was it assumed that only the Cullompton Relief Road bid would be successful and not the Tiverton Urban Extension – the meeting was informed that the Council was only allowed to identify one project and that a decision was expected in December
- The multi million pound loan to 3 Rivers was not mentioned specifically as an ongoing risk – surely it was a significant risk as identified by the Auditors – the meeting was informed that all investments were a risk, but the investments had been approved as part of the Business Plans; with regard to the Audit, controls were in place and the risk was being managed

It was **AGREED** that:

- a) The updated MTFP's for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account and the updated Capital Programme all covering the five years 2022/23 to 2026/27 be noted.
- b) The proposals outlined in paragraph 9.2 as the approach to balancing the General Fund Revenue Budget be endorsed.

Note: *Report previously circulated, copy attached to minutes.

88. **BEECH ROAD, TIVERTON - PROJECT DELIVERY (1-21-49)**

The Cabinet had before it a * report of the Corporate Manager for Property, Leisure and Climate Change. Following the withdrawal of the original Contractor number 2, there was a need for Cabinet to award the contract for the construction of three Council properties, using a JCT Design & Build 2016 Contract (as amended) to Contractor number 1.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services outlined the contents of the report informing the meeting that the original contractor had pulled out which had stalled the project and alternatives to the proposal had been considered i.e. the use of modular housing, however this was a site that would be funded by one to one returns and needed to be completed by next March. He identified the sustainable construction methods that would be used and the need to utilise the funding available within the dedicated timescales.

Members of the Cabinet welcomed the specifications and were pleased to support the scheme.

RESOLVED that: The Deputy Chief Executive (S151) and the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services be given delegated authority to award the contract for works required to provide three social rented houses at Beech Road in Tiverton.

- (i) To Contractor 1 under a JCT Design and Build Contract 2016 (as amended).
- (ii) To approve a £22k increase be approved for project contingency as detailed in paragraph 5.9 of the report.

(Proposed by Cllr R B Evans and seconded by Cllr C R Slade)

Reason for the decision – there is a need for the tender to be approved to allow the housing project to be progressed.

Note: *Report previously circulated, copy attached to minutes.

89. **ANNUAL REPORT OF COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS (1-30-28)**

The Cabinet had before it and **NOTED** a report of the Corporate Manager for Digital Transformation and Customer Engagement providing information with regard to compliments, comments and complaints.

The Cabinet Member for the Working Environment and Support Services outlined the contents of the report explaining the reasons for the increase in complaints, compliments and comments received throughout the pandemic.

Note: *Report previously circulated, copy attached to minutes.

90. **UPDATE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT (1-32-00)**

The Cabinet Member for Continuous Improvement informed the meeting that she had agreed to hold surgeries with members prior to scheduled meetings in Phoenix House.

She had dealt with 31 cases during the month, 1 of which was closed, 24 had been actioned and continued to be monitored and the remaining 17 were with the directors. She was also reviewing housing voids, working closely with the Corporate Manager.

She thanked the Policy Research Officer for her work.

Consideration was given to the good work that was taking place and whether the Cabinet Member would be looking into the complaints that had been received highlighted within the previous item. It was agreed that she would address those issues in time.

91. **NOTIFICATION OF KEY DECISIONS (1-38-25)**

The Cabinet had before it and **NOTED** it's *rolling plan for November/December 2021 containing future key decisions.

Note: *Plan previously circulated, copy attached to minutes.

92. **3 RIVERS DEVELOPMENTS LIMITED UPDATE REPORT (1-39-25)**

The Cabinet had before it an update *report from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151).

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services outlined the contents of the report stating that the Company were compiling the business plan which would be considered at the Scrutiny and Audit Committees in November and that the St Georges site would be marketed in January

Consideration was given to whether the business plan and the forthcoming Teckal report would consider key issues with regard to continued development and how such development would be sustained and maintained.

Note: *Report previously circulated.

(The meeting ended at 11.44 am)

CHAIRMAN