

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **COUNCIL** held on 27 October 2021 at 6.00 pm

Present

Councillors

R F Radford (Chairman)
G Barnell, J Bartlett, E J Berry, W Burke,
J Cairney, S J Clist, Mrs C Collis,
Mrs F J Colthorpe, D R Coren, L J Cruwys,
N V Davey, Mrs C P Daw, R M Deed,
R J Dolley (Vice Chairman), J M Downes,
C J Eginton, R Evans, Mrs S Griggs,
P J Heal, B Holdman, D J Knowles,
F W Letch, Mrs E J Lloyd, B A Moore,
Miss J Norton, S Pugh, Mrs E J Slade,
C R Slade, Mrs M E Squires, B G J Warren,
A Wilce and Mrs N Woollatt

Apologies

Councillors

Mrs E M Andrews, R J Chesterton,
S J Penny, D F Pugsley, R L Stanley,
L D Taylor, A White, J Wright and A Wyer

63 Apologies (00-06-48)

Apologies were received from Councillors: Mrs E M Andrews, R J Chesterton, S Penny, D F Pugsley, R L Stanley, L D Taylor, A White, J Wright and A Wyer.

64 Public Question Time (00-07-00)

Mrs Lock referring to Minute 23 of the Environment Report - the three weekly waste collection stated that:

I live in one of the three communities that has taken part in the three weekly black bag waste collection trial, can you tell me what the conclusions have been reached following the trial?

The current Administration ran a petition to 'Stop Mid Devon District Council reducing refuse collection services', which I notice 76 people signed and also called for the previous Administration to scrap the idea of three weekly collections.

Bob Evans then Opposition Leader said they "oppose reducing this service and had refused to consider it while they ran the Council." Is this still the case? If so, how does this Council intend to meet the Government's target of 65% recycling of household waste by 2035?

In response the Cabinet Member for the Environment and Climate Change stated that: Waste and Recycling is responsible for delivering critical statutory front line services to the public but also for helping deliver on vital environment targets.

These targets include reducing refuse collection rates and increasing recycling rates, both of which are crucial to the reduction of our carbon footprint.

To achieve such a reduction in our carbon footprint we need to examine the relationship between refuse collection and recycling rates so the necessary changes happen that will allow the target regarding our carbon footprint to be reached. As part of this work we have piloted trials of three weekly residual waste collections in the wards of Holcombe Rogus and Westleigh as well as the area in and around Canal Hill in Tiverton.

The trials concluded last week and there will now be careful consideration of the data that has been compiled during this pilot period to inform decisions around next steps. This information will be publicised ahead of the relevant meetings taking place as is standard practice. There were 5 options on the table and there are still 5 options on the table, no decision has been made at this time and the outcomes of the trial will be reported to the PDG and Cabinet.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services also responded stating that my comments were raised to the then Portfolio Holder, Councillor Taylor at the Environment PDG in September 2019. Councillor Taylor indicated that consideration of the trial was being looked at as a cost saving exercise as can be seen in the minutes of the meeting. My comments also included a statement what is not quoted, that I believe that the reduction of waste per household would be equally if not of greater benefit as would putting pressure on supermarkets to reduce their waste, these comments were supported by other Members outside of my political group at that meeting. The scheme at that time focussed on a very short cost saving exercise and had no detail, so yes I was opposed to the scheme as it was presented at that time.

We are now 2 years on and today's scheme has a greater focus on waste reduction and, as well as seeking to reduce and recycle more of the waste that is produced. I now await the detail of the trial with interest and the consideration of Environment PDG members and future debate at both Cabinet and Full Council.

65 Declarations of Interest under the Code of Conduct (00-12-18)

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

66 Minutes (00-12-31)

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 August 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

67 Chairman's Announcements (00-12-54)

The Chairman had the following announcements to make:

- He had attended the Civic Service at West Devon Borough Council on 17 October
- He recalled comments made at the Annual Meeting with regard to the date of the December meeting of Council which was scheduled for 22 December and Members views that this was rather close to Christmas. He therefore

suggested that the meeting be brought forward one week to 15 December unless there were any objections to this.

- He had also attended an event in Cheriton Fitzpaine to dedicate a memorial to the late Honorary Alderman Susan Meads who had been a member of the Parish Council for 50 years.

68 **Petitions (00-16-37)**

There were no petitions presented.

69 **Notices of Motions (00-16-44)**

(1) MOTION 576 – (COUNCILLOR MRS N WOOLLATT – 14 OCTOBER 2021)

The Council had before it a **MOTION** submitted for the first time.

“Many councils and councillors across England have called for the ability to be able to attend and vote on line. Whilst we will always want councillors to be able to meet in person, there needs to be the provision for some members to be online, for example if they are vulnerable, self-isolating, have caring responsibilities or difficulties with transport. It is also in line with reducing carbon emissions to zero by 2030.

Our hybrid system of meetings are currently working well, but non-voting members attending online are not currently allowed to be recorded as having attended even though they can raise issues and contribute to the debate! Equally it would be very useful if voting members of a committee could have the flexibility to attend online if they find themselves in circumstances preventing physical attendance. This would help to reduce the risk of meetings not being quorate.

Northern Ireland recently agreed in its parliament to allow councils to meet and vote remotely, Wales and Scotland already allow this. England is being left behind.

Therefore:

This Council mandates the Leader to write to the new Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to call for parity across the UK and enable councillors in England to meet and vote on line as they see fit.”

The **MOTION** was **MOVED** by Councillor Mrs N Woollatt and seconded by Councillor A Wilce.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 14.4, the Chairman of the Council had ruled that the matter be discussed at this meeting.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Recent issues with meetings nearly being inquorate due to isolation, the fact that hybrid meetings were working well and that revised legislation would allow flexibility.
- The need to lobby Government so that England was in line with other nations within the United Kingdom with regard to holding public meetings remotely
- What could be done at a local level
- It would be up to the Government to amend the legislation to allow remote public meetings

- The need for guidelines, so that members did not just attend meetings remotely, there needed to be good reason for not attending in person
- Whether it was too easy just to stay at home and that this took away the importance of Council meetings
- A view that there was a need to get back to where we were pre pandemic
- The risk of attending public meetings when the virus was still apparent
- The ability to dial into a meeting would open up access to meetings and provide flexibility and would be good for the climate, emissions of travel and save money
- People's lives have changed through the pandemic and that there was a need for flexibility

Upon a vote being taken the **MOTION** was declared to have been **CARRIED**.

70 Cabinet – Report of the meeting held on 31 August 2021 (00-39-33)

The Leader presented the report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 31 August 2021.

71 Cabinet - Report of the meeting held on 28 September 2021 (00-40-20)

The Leader presented the report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 28 September 2021.

72 Scrutiny Committee - Report of the meeting held on 13 September 2021 (00-41-16)

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee presented the report of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 September 2021.

73 Scrutiny Committee - Report of the meeting held on 11 October 2021 (00-41-57)

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee presented the report of the meeting of the Committee held on 11 October 2021.

Councillor B A Moore requested that the Chairman of the Committee reconsider the removal of the scheduled attendance of the Cabinet Members at meetings of the Scrutiny Committee.

74 Audit Committee - Report of the meeting held on 21 September 2021 (00-51-16)

In the absence of the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Audit Committee Councillor N V Davey presented the report of the meeting of the Committee held on 21 September 2021.

75 Environment Policy Development Group - Report of the meeting held on 7 September 2021 (00-52-42)

The Vice Chairman of the Environment Policy Development Group presented the report of the meeting of the Group held on 7 September 2021.

76 Home Policy Development Group - report of the meeting held on 14 September 2021 (00-53-13)

The Chairman of the Homes Policy Development Group presented the report of the meeting held on 14 September 2021.

77 Economy Policy Development Group - Report of the meeting held on 9 September 2021 (00-53-47)

The Chairman of the Economy Policy Development Group presented the report of the meeting of the Group held on 9 September 2021.

78 Community Policy Development Group - Report of the meeting held on 21 September 2021 (00-54-23)

The Chairman of the Community Policy Development Group presented the report of the meeting of the Group held on 21 September 2021.

79 Planning Committee - Report of the meeting held on 8 September 2021 (00-55-13)

The Chairman of the Planning Committee presented the report of the meeting of the Committee held on 8 September 2021.

80 Planning Committee - Report of the meeting held on 22 September 2021 (00-55-59)

The Chairman of the Planning Committee presented the report of the meeting of the Committee held on 22 September 2021.

81 Planning Committee - Report of the meeting held on 6 October 2021 (00-56-36)

The Chairman of the Planning Committee presented the report of the meeting of the Committee held on 6 October 2021.

The Chairman also paid tribute to the former Chairman of the Committee, Councillor Mrs F J Colthorpe, highlighting her long service and commitment to the work of the committee.

Members showed their appreciation with a round of applause for Councillor Mrs Colthorpe.

82 Standards Committee - Report of the meeting held on 13 October 2021 (1-01-53)

The Chairman of the Standards Committee presented the report of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 October 2021.

1. Model Code of Conduct

The Chairman of the Standards Committee **MOVED** seconded by the Leader:

THAT the recommendation of the Committee as set out in Minute 21 be **ADOPTED**

Upon a vote being taken the **MOTION** was declared to have been **CARRIED**.

Reason for the decision – there is a requirement for the Code of Conduct to be kept up to date.

2. Outcomes of the Governance Review (Minute 22)

The Chairman of the Standards Committee **MOVED** seconded by Councillor C R Slade:

THAT the recommendation of the Committee as set out in Minute 22 be **ADOPTED**

Upon a vote being taken the **MOTION** was declared to have been **CARRIED**.

Reason for the decision – to bring the Audit Committee in line with the Policy Development Groups.

83 Regulatory Committee - Report of the meeting held on 27 September 2021 (1-03-56)

The Chairman of the Regulatory Committee presented the report of the meeting of the Committee held on 27 September 2021.

1. Mobile Homes Fit and Proper Person Fee Charge and Policies (Minute 14)

The Chairman of the Regulatory Committee **MOVED** seconded by Councillor Mrs E J Slade:

THAT the recommendations of the Committee as set out in Minute 14 be **ADOPTED**

Upon a vote being taken the **MOTION** was declared to have been **CARRIED**.

Reason for the Decision – as this was a new policy, it must be agreed by Council and added to the Policy Framework.

84 Questions in accordance with Procedure Rule 13 (1-05-17)

There were no questions submitted under Procedure Rule 13.2.

85 Leader's 6 monthly update to Council (1-05-25)

The Leader addressed the Council reflecting on the last six months in the life of Mid Devon District Council, the efforts of members as well as officers and the achievements during this period. He referred to the pandemic and the impact of this, the vaccine roll out, the challenges still in place and the ambitions of the council for better economic fortunes for people, better homes and housing options as well as a strengthened community and environment.

He highlighted the themes within the corporate plan and the work that had taken place:

Homes:

- The delivery of a comprehensive new Housing Strategy
- The restructured housing service designed around the needs of tenants
- The exploration of modular hubs, net zero and social housing options
- The management of arrears
- Funding for new enforcement approaches to energy efficiency standards in private sector housing
- New Homes Residents Survey
- The appointment of officers to lead on securing the delivery of more affordable housing in the district

Economy

- The reduction of the planning back log
- The work that had taken place to reduce the backlog in S106 funding
- The bid that had been submitted to the Levelling Up Fund of £14.5m for the Cullompton Relief Road
- The work taking place with regard to infrastructure for the Tiverton Eastern Urban Extension
- The promotional work taking place within the Economy department directed at tourism
- The Cullompton Heritage Action Zone grants scheme had been established
- The strategic work that had taken place with regard to the Cullompton Railway Station and the town centre masterplan, also the continued work taking place with regard to the Garden Village
- The occupancy rates at Tiverton Pannier Marker

Community

- The public response to the pandemic and effective partnership working that had taken place with various stakeholders
- Licensing policies progressed
- Continued air quality work
- The use of assets for vaccination centres

Environment

- The appointment of a climate and sustainability specialist officer
- Continued work on the Climate Change Action Plan and successful bids to secure funding as part of the public sector decarbonisation scheme
- Continued promotion and fitting of electric car chargers in car parks
- How the waste and recycling service had been maintained throughout the pandemic

Corporate

- Enhanced strategic and operational management of the Covid risk to the organisation through updated business continuity plans, risk assessments and guidance
- Involvement with the Local Resilience Forum
- The procurement of major IT upgrades to help operationalise hybrid working
- Completed the annual Statement of Accounts
- Management of local Land charges despite an increase in the number of searches
- Held meetings remotely throughout the pandemic and then hybrid meetings
- The increased collection rates for council tax and business rates
- The amount of business granted processed and paid.

He also informed the meetings that Climate Change would be the subject of the State of the District Debate with a view to identifying how the Council may assist in carbon reduction across the community, timescales and the possible cost.

Note: Due to technical issues, the meeting lost the zoom connection and therefore the recording stopped from this point in the meeting.

86 Special Urgency Decisions

With regard to any decisions taken under Rule 16 (of the Constitution) Special Urgency taken since the last meeting. The Chairman informed the meeting that no such decisions had been taken in that period

87 Questions to Cabinet Members

Councillor Holdman addressing the Cabinet Member for Finance asked whether a pre-Christmas free parking scheme had been considered in the 3 main towns.

The Cabinet Member responded stating that he had not yet considered this but that he would look into the matter.

Councillor F W Letch addressing the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration (in his absence) asked whether a timetable for the Crediton Masterplan was available.

The Leader stated that he would request that the Cabinet Member respond to Councillor Letch.

Councillor J Cairney addressing the Cabinet Member for Community Well-Being asked whether leisure centre memberships were back to pre-pandemic levels.

The Cabinet Member responded stating that he was due an update at the weekend and would circulate the latest figures.

Councillor Barnell addressing the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration (in his absence) referred to his question at the previous meeting with regard to the Tiverton Eastern Urban Extension and the capacity of staff to which he had not received a response.

The Leader apologised and stated that he would take this up with the Cabinet Member.

Councillor Barnell addressing the Cabinet Member for Finance referred to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) which had been discussed in full at the Cabinet meeting the previous day. He referred to the lack of net zero items included in the strategy and that several costings provided to the Net Zero Advisory Group (NZAG) had been omitted. He asked for clarification of what had been included in the MTFP and whether an itemised list of items could be shared.

The Cabinet Member stated that the MTFP was an assessment of medium term financial issues but that he would provide some cross referencing from the MTFP and the items discussed at NZAG.

Councillor Dolley made reference to car parks in Westexe, Tiverton and whether they could be included in any free parking initiative. He also made reference to an empty unit in Westexe North.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services stated that he would look into the matter.

88 Members Business

The Leader informed the meeting that from 20 November an additional train service had been established serving Okehampton and Exeter which would also serve Crediton as well.

Councillor J M Downes also stated that since Government funding had been released for the re-opening of stations, Okehampton station had been operational within a year.

Councillor G Barnell raised concerns with regard to the budget setting process. He referred to a year ago when members were told that strategic discussion would be held, those discussions with members had not taken place. He understood that the Policy Development Groups would be required to find savings when they met in November, however no proposals had been put forward by the Cabinet and he therefore requested that these come forward for discussion.

Councillor Mrs N Woollatt thanked officers for their involvement in the revised room layout for Council and that she felt that the layout had worked well and requested any feedback for future meetings of the Council.

Councillor B Holdman thanked officers and members for their support of Allies- Mid Devon who had worked to restore the fountain in Peoples Park and identified the other projects that the group were working on.

The Leader stated that he continued to meet with staff in off-site locations and thank them for their work.

Councillor Dolley wished to thank the Civic Officer for her work with regard to Armistice Day.

(The meeting ended at 7.40 pm)

CHAIRMAN