

HOMES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

31 MAY 2022

WORK PROGRAMME & POLICY DEVELOPMENT 2022/23

Reason for Report: To identify and prioritise the PDG's work for 2022/23.

RECOMMENDATION: The PDG's work programme (as currently sent out in Appendix A) be updated.

Financial Implications: No direct implications.

Budget and Policy Framework: No direct implications

Legal Implications: None

Risk Assessment: N/A

Equality Impact Assessment: N/A

Relationship to Corporate Plan: The PDG's work programme should be consistent with the Corporate Plan or recommend changes to reflect budget pressures.

Impact on Climate Change: No direct implications for this report.

1.0 **Background**

1.1 Members of the PDG will appreciate that the PDG has a key role in investigating and advising Cabinet on 'Homes' related policy matters which:

(a) are pertinent to the Council's existing 'Homes' priorities set out in its Corporate Plan at <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/media/348008/20200312corporateplan20-2024v6.pdf>

(b) are pertinent to the PDG's strategic housing service responsibilities namely:

- Council and private sector housing
- Housing needs and allocations
- Housing enabling
- Building maintenance

and

(c) look ahead and in that regard continue to be ambitious but realistic (even if demanding) particularly taking account of:

- the medium term General Fund and HRA budget forecasts; and
- the needs of and feedback from, the communities within Mid Devon.

1.2 The wide extent of such work is illustrated by the number of policy and service related matters already set out in the PDG's work programme for 2022/23 in Appendix A. This work is in addition to the Planning Policy Advisory Group's work on the development of spatial planning policy for new housing.

1.3 Members of the PDG are invited to review their work programme to ensure it covers the key areas which they consider need to be addressed during the year. In doing so the PDG might want to consider:

- ***Do all the matters listed in Appendix A need to come to the PDG at a formal meeting?*** Some reports might be provided by way of information sheets (which may still be publicly available) or remote member briefing events (for PDG members or all members as part of the member development programme). Could such an alternative approach to receipt of officer reports, help release more time for the PDG to focus on more pressing issues?
- ***Does the programme ensure that the PDG will have before it all the information it needs to identify individual elements of the Homes part of Corporate Plan which it considers should be prioritised over others as part of the forthcoming budget cycle?*** Members will appreciate that the budget pressures previously outlined for 2023/24 have already indicated the need to 'prioritise the priorities' as part of its consideration of the budget at its meeting on 15 November. In preparation for this, consideration might be given to engaging key stakeholders in identifying lesser and higher priorities.
- ***Do the results of the residents' survey indicate any potential area of work or a different approach to its work?*** Members' attention is drawn to the results of the residents' survey for 2021/22 (as set out in the remainder of this report). Section 2 provides feedback on matters affecting all aspects of the Council. The more Homes focused elements are set out in Section 3.

2. Residents' Survey

2.1 There were 1683 responses to the survey. When asked how well MDDC keeps residents informed, 8% replied very well informed, 37% well informed, 37% not well informed and 14% not well informed at all; with 'don't know' covering the deficit in the 100% response. There were 48 comments about increased communication, engagement and consultation with residents. Ideas and comments included:

- Provide local written updates from the District Councillor e.g. in neighbourhood magazines;
- Increase interaction with the local community, e.g. community events or walkabouts;
- Greater consultation about forthcoming changes/regularly seek views;
- Allow residents to be more involved in decisions that affect them;
- Enable citizen participation in working groups; and
- Revert to pre-covid opening hours of Phoenix House.

2.2 There were 13 comments requesting the Council ensures focus is wider than just on Tiverton. Residents asked for greater focus on rural areas and for other towns, to be treated in line with Tiverton.

- 2.3 In response to a question about the importance of tackling climate change as part of the Council's work, 67% of respondents said it is very important that the Council tackles climate change. A further 23% said it is fairly important (90% in total).

3. Survey Results

Housing Enabling

- 3.1 59% of respondents said it is very important to deliver housing for local people and a further 32% said it is fairly important.
- 3.2 There were 51 comments on delivering housing in the District. These included:
- Strong support to build more social and affordable housing;
 - Request to support residents to improve the resilience and efficiency of homes (not necessarily financial assistance); and
 - Ensure that new housing is environmentally friendly.

Homelessness

- 3.3 There were 10 comments about homelessness, with residents requesting an increase in housing for the homeless and support for the most vulnerable.

Increase council tax on second homes

- 3.4 There were three requests to increase council tax on second homes.

4 Conclusion

- 4.1 Taking account of the matters covered in this report, the PDG is invited to (i) discuss and reflect on the above elements of the residents' survey; and (ii) agree its work programme for 2022/23 recognising of course that ad hoc matters will also arise during the course of the year.

Contact for more Information:

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