

COMMUNITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

7 JUNE 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 adopted Corporate Plan or recommend changes to reflect budget pressures.

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

1.0 Background

1.1 The PDG will appreciate that it has a key role in investigating and advising Cabinet on community focused policy matters which:

(a) are pertinent to the Council's existing 'Community' priorities set out in its Corporate Plan at
<https://www.middevon.gov.uk/media/348008/20200312corporateplan2020-2024v6.pdf>

(b) are pertinent to the PDG's strategic service responsibilities which is wide ranging covering "*any matters that impact on the health, safety and wellbeing of people*" and which includes the following principal service areas:

- Leisure
- Grants and Town and Parish funding
- Community engagement and consultation
- Equalities and safeguarding
- Community safety e.g. anti-social behaviour,
- Digital transformation
- Local welfare assistance e.g. benefits

and

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

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

- 1.2 Given the huge extent of its terms of reference (see 1.1(b)) as well the other competing priorities for the district's economy, homes and environment, the Community PDG is invited to identify the areas of policy work it would like to concentrate on during 2022/23, being the last year of the current Council term. The current work programme which contains matters carried forward from 2021/22, is set out in Appendix A. It will be noted that some questions have been raised in the final column within the appendix table. These seek to assist the PDG to identify reports which might not need to come to the PDG but could be considered more informally or for example might warrant some additional work in advance.
- 1.3 Examples of possible projects / reviews which the PDG might wish to include in its work programme over the coming months might include one or two of the following which take into account the PDG's strategic service responsibilities (listed in 1.1(b) above).
- 1.3.1 *An examination of effective community integration and engagement focusing on the topical experiences of refugee or asylum seekers in moving to the district given international conflicts.* This example of a project would cut across the PDG's equality, safeguarding, community safety and welfare assistance service responsibilities. It could seek to identify exemplary as well as routine and practical ways to engage new communities within the district and / or provide examples where better education or support might be needed. It could involve discussions with the police, county council, third and fourth sector organisations as well as individuals, with a view to promoting community resources (not just financial) and highlight methods of effective collaboration between organisations. It could also be a means to develop future community focused policies and / or change existing priorities.
- 1.3.2 *A review into the impact of the anticipated budget pressures on specific community projects.* If pursued this type of review should be undertaken in advance of the first budget related report tabled for the November meeting. Such detailed work might usefully involve meeting with key stakeholders to discuss projects which are competing for limited funding particularly from the Council. It could help 'prioritise the priorities' of the Community element of the corporate plan and consider how services might be resourced differently (or reluctantly compromised) to secure the timely delivery of the most important community initiative(s) as assessed by the PDG.
- 1.3.3 *Given its 'Community Engagement and Consultation' role, consideration of the feedback from the 2021/22 residents' survey.* A resume of key points in the survey has been set out in the remainder of this report. Section 2 considers general issues. Section 3 sets out feedback which is specific to the Community PDG's responsibilities.

2. **Residents' Survey**

- 2.1 There were 1161 completed responses to the survey which was accessed by 1682 residents, the survey being open for 1 month in November 2021. A hard copy of the survey was also available and like the survey as a whole, publicised by various means including via parish councils and primary

schools, local press and social media, and the council's 10,000 news subscribers and leisure centres. The following results were obtained.

- (a) 81% of respondents recorded that they were very or fairly satisfied with their local area. For benchmarking, this compares with 78% from the Local Government Association resident satisfaction telephone survey conducted in October 2021 ("LGA survey").
- (b) 45% considered they were very well or well informed by the council (57% LGA survey comparison) while 52% didn't (i.e. 37% not well informed and 14% not well informed at all); with 'don't know' covering the deficit in the 100% response.
- (c) 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 as individuals;
 - Enable citizen participation in working groups; and
 - Revert to pre-covid opening hours of Phoenix House.
- (d) There were 13 comments requesting the Council ensure 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.

3. Residents' Survey: Service Specific Results

Leisure

- 3.1 With regards to satisfaction of leisure services, 38% are either very satisfied or fairly satisfied and 16% fairly and very dissatisfied. (The remainder are neither).
- 3.2 There were 26 comments regarding leisure in the district. Residents would like to see:
 - An increase in leisure facilities;
 - Consideration of a swimming pool in Cullumpton; and
 - Consideration of the value for money of membership, particularly given Petroc gym appears to be cheaper.

Safety

- 3.3 With regards to feeling safe in the local area at night, 19% felt very safe, 42% felt fairly safe, 15% fairly unsafe and 8% felt very unsafe.

- 3.4 In response to a question about feeling safe in the local area at day, 52% felt very safe, 36% felt fairly safe, 3% felt fairly unsafe and 0.5% felt very unsafe.
- 3.5 40 comments were received on community safety and anti-social behaviour, these focused on:
- Tackling ASB – particularly from the night time economy/pubs;
 - Increase in CCTV;
 - Increase police presence; and
 - Dealing with drug issues.

Youth provision

- 3.6 29 comments were received on provision for young people in the district, many stressing that there are very few things for young people to do in the district and the impact this has on anti-social behaviour. Residents requested provision of areas for the youth including social clubs, a skate park in Crediton, boxing clubs, indoor community and leisure spaces.

Promoting community life

- 3.7 18 comments were received around promoting community life in the district. Residents would like to see:
- An increase in allotments;
 - An increase in cultural activities and events, including events on Council land to bring the community together; and
 - Support to help towns/villages to establish community groups and cafes.

Health and wellbeing

- 3.8 47% of people said it is very important to promote activities that improve the public's health and 37% said it is fairly important. There were 5 comments that requested that provision for mental health in the district be increased. There were 9 comments requesting the Council to deal with the issue of flies in one particular parish, with a request for a public consultation on the issue to fully understand how many residents are affected. There were 6 comments on air pollution in the district, particularly around encouraging methods to deal with air pollution and looking at areas where there is excess traffic.

4 Conclusion

- 4.1 Taking account of the matters covered in this report, the PDG is invited to (i) discuss and reflect on specific comments and themes which have emerged from the analysis of the survey results; and (ii) identify policy development projects it would like to undertake in 2022/23 particularly noting the budget pressures and priorities identified in the Corporate Plan.

Contact for more Information:

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