

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP**
held on 24 May 2022 at 5.30 pm

Present

Councillors

J Wright (Chairman)
E J Berry, W Burke, S J Clist, D R Coren,
Miss J Norton and B G J Warren

Apologies

Councillor(s)

R F Radford, R L Stanley and L D Taylor

Also Present

Councillor(s)

C R Slade, Mrs C P Daw, R J Dolley and Mrs E J Lloyd

Also Present

Officer(s):

Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Andrew Jarrett (Deputy Chief Executive (S151)), Karen Trickey (District Solicitor and Monitoring Officer), 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), Darren Beer (Operations Manager for Street Scene), Clare Robathan (Policy and Research Officer) and Carole Oliphant (Member Services Officer)

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN (VICE CHAIRMAN OF COUNCIL IN THE CHAIR)

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

2 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN (0.05.12)

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

3 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (0.06.19)

Apologies were received from Cllrs R L Stanley, R F Radford and L D Taylor who was substituted by Cllr S J Clist.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (0.06.44)

Members were reminded of the need to make declarations where appropriate.

5 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (0.06.57)

Laura Conyngham, a local resident, referring to no 11 on the agenda asked:

1. What action is the council taking to facilitate Co Cars Exeter's stated ambition to locate electric hire cars on the Market Street and St Saviours Way car parks in Crediton?

2. Please can you give details of progress to date and, assuming no undue delay on Co Car's behalf, an estimate of when people in Crediton can expect to see this project completed?
3. We are aware of the separate tendering process via Devon County Council for the installation of EV charging points in Crediton and elsewhere. This is not the subject of our question.

In response the Corporate Manager Property, Leisure and Climate Change stated:

1. To date the Council has held meeting 2-3 remote meetings with this company to understand their scheme and the benefits. Co-Cars helped shape some topical ideas on the run-up to the State of the District Debate. We are meeting with Co Cars again in early June 2022.
2. Regarding progress to date – we have listened and have held useful conversations regarding what Co Cars can offer our residents and the Council support ideas to reduce carbon emissions across our District. As you would expect in terms of transparency and fairness, we would need to advertise the opportunity to see if there are any other local businesses who are offering a similar model. Once discussion and confirmation of this is received a further paper will be presented to the Environment Policy Development Group in July 2022, should the Chair agree to have this on the work plan.
3. It is noted that this question does not relate to the separate tendering process for EV charging points in Crediton that has taken place with Devon County Council

6 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (0.10.57)**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8th March 2022 were agreed as a true record and duly **SIGNED** by the Chairman

7 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (0.12.07)**

The Chairman had no announcements to make.

8 **START TIME OF MEETINGS (0.12.09)**

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

9 **MEETING MANAGEMENT**

The Chairman agreed to take item 13, Revenue and Outturn Report as the next item on the agenda.

10 **REVENUE AND OUTTURN REPORT (0.13.19)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, the Revenue and Capital Outturn *report from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151).

The Corporate Manager for Finance outlined the contents of the report and explained that it provided a summary of the net service costs of the general fund and housing revenue account and was subject to audit.

He explained that the general fund underspend of £29k was an excellent return and showed a good degree of financial forecasting.

Consideration was given to:

- Reduced levels of income due to the pandemic including car parks and business rates
- The reduction in levels of Government support received
- Higher contract staffing levels due to sickness and unfulfilled vacancies
- The significant grants provided by the Government which were passed onto residents
- The general fund was circa 10% above minimum requirements
- The Carlu Close site had been occupied for 5 years with a 15 year lease and officers were investigating if the Council could construct its own facility in the future
- The interest charged on loans to 3 Rivers Developments Ltd was 4.5% above base rate as per the shareholders agreement and represented a very good return for the Council

The Chairman passed on the thanks of the PDG to the Revenue and Benefits team for all their work in redistributing the Government grants in such a timely manner.

Note: *Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

11 **PDG WORK PROGRAMME AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT FOR 2022/23 (0.27.39)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a *report from the District Solicitor and Monitoring Officer outlining the PDG's work programme for 2022/2023.

The Officer outlined the contents of the report and invited the PDG to consider what it wished to focus on for the forthcoming year, taking account of its Corporate Plan priorities and residents' feedback.

The Corporate Manager for Property, Leisure and Climate Change provided a detailed review of the recent residents survey and explained that it had been conducted in November 2021. Residents had the opportunity to respond on line or via paper copies and that it had been distributed as widely as possible.

Some of the responses indicated areas in which the District Council was not responsible for and that the results of the survey would be highlighted at County and Parish level.

Consideration was given to:

- Whether the PDG were able to include members of the public in working groups if required
- Where would the funding come from if big projects were identified by the PDG

- Were there areas which were over performing where funds could be redirected to underperforming areas
- The importance of the Council's cross service priority on Climate Change initiatives for which it was the lead PDG; parks and open spaces; waste and recycling and street cleaning
- How the council was continuing to provide public conveniences with other community partners and already investigating efficient lighting systems for its buildings

Members then identified more specific areas of work upon which they felt the PDG could add value and focus on over the coming year:

- Encouraging wilding projects throughout the District
- Encouraging residents to go plastic free and recycle more
- Installation of Electric Vehicle Charging Points to be more target driven
- Increase the number of cycling and walking routes in the area
- Investigate if there was an opportunity for the Council to recycle more waste such as pots and pans and plan for increased recycling in the future
- Consideration of improvements to waterways across the district

Note: *Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

12 **CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE (0.58.29)**

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change gave an update on his portfolio and explained that he had attended DASWC in which local authorities were making progress to align their recycling services.

He explained that the 3 weekly bin collections was due start in the autumn and that there was an all Member briefing arranged for 14th June which would explain the process to Members.

Air Source heat pumps were going to be installed at Lords Meadow and Exe Valley Leisure Centres after a successful grant application which would contribute towards the Council's carbon reduction ambitions.

He had attended a meeting with Network Rail and had received details on the future of electric trains and upgrades to Mid Devon train stations.

13 **CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN UPDATE (1.08.03)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a *report from the Climate and Sustainability Specialist providing an update on the Climate Change Action Plan.

The Corporate Manager Property, Leisure and Climate Change outlined the contents of the report and explained how the Council was doing against the Action Plan.

Consideration was given to:

- People who currently used the Electric Vehicle Charging points in the Council car parks had to pay to park. Some Members felt that these charges should be abolished to encourage more electric vehicles whilst others felt that people

who owned such vehicles were usually more affluent and should pay for parking like everyone else

- The carbon reduction target was challenging and over 50% of the Council's footprint was its housing stock. There would be a need to spend a significant amount of money in the coming years to retrofit the properties
- The recent State of the District Debate had been extremely useful for residents to be involved in the carbon reduction conversations

Note: *Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

14 **SUSTAINABLE FARMING (1.27.23)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a detailed briefing *report from the Climate and Sustainability Specialist on Sustainable Farming in Mid Devon.

The Corporate Manager Property, Leisure and Climate Change outlined the contents of the report and explained that it was a briefing paper requested by the PDG to encourage debate on the subject. He explained that there were corporate plan aims around sustainable farming.

Members then had a lengthy debate on the subject matter and consideration was given to:

- That officers should contact Mole Valley Farmers who were doing some excellent work with farmers to promote sustainable farming
- The Council could encourage farmers to share knowledge and ideas
- The Council's sustainability website could be a tool to signpost interested groups to work together
- The Council had a role to influence local media about the benefits of our farming community
- The PDG could set up working and impact groups to feed into future planning policy
- Consideration should be given to how to better engage the farming community in the Council's sustainable farming initiatives

Note: *Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

15 **CORPORATE PLAN MID POINT REVIEW (2.14.03)**

The Group had before it a *report from the Chief Executive presenting the Corporate Plan 2020-2024 Mid-Point Review.

The Chief Executive explained that the report had previously been presented to the Cabinet and that it was now being shared with the PDG's in order that they could feed back any priorities that they felt needed to be highlighted.

He explained that the Corporate Plan had been agreed just prior to the pandemic and therefore it was not as far along as originally hoped but that some progress had been made. He informed Members that it was now prudent to revisit the plan to establish what could be realistically completed in the timeframe to 2024.

He stated he would listen to any viewpoints that Members had and he would encourage them to contact either him directly or via the PDG Chairman within the next 10 days in order that these could be fed back to the Cabinet.

Members highlighted the following priorities:

- Consider providing equipment for disabled children
- Bring budget conversations to the PDG's earlier in the cycle

Note: *report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

(The meeting ended at 7.55 pm)

CHAIRMAN