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MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **CABINET** held on 1 November 2022 at 10.00 am

Present

Councillors

R M Deed (Leader)
C J Eginton, R J Chesterton, Mrs C P Daw,
D J Knowles, B A Moore, S J Penny and
C R Slade

Also Present

Officers:

Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Andrew
Jarrett (Deputy Chief Executive (S151)), Richard
Marsh (Director of Place) and Maria De Leiburne
(District Solicitor and Monitoring Officer)

76. APOLOGIES

None received.

77. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

None received.

78. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Members were reminded of the need to make declarations of interest if and when necessary.

79. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

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

80. UPDATE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The Cabinet Member for Continuous Improvement informed the meeting that the Tracker continued to be updated. In addition she noted; that there had been positive feedback from the Department for Work and Pensions regarding the administration of benefits and that Revenues & Benefits officers had been trained to be generic in order for customer services to be improved. In addition, a Revenues Information Officer role had been piloted in order to reduce “avoidable contact” this also improved customer service.

With regard to planning enforcement there were 74 pre 2022 cases, with 293 open enforcement cases. Since April 2022 255 cases had been closed and 227 opened.

The Cabinet Member raised awareness of the 3CX software that allowed Members to contact officers and residents more easily and encouraged Members to use it.

There were 180 abandoned vehicles reported in Q2, 46 required action to be taken.

In regards to parking enforcement, Q2 reported a 52% collection rate with 863 PCNs paid, 202 written off and 317 outstanding.

Litter patrols had taken place, with a particular focus on Crediton, Cullompton and Tiverton town centres. Street cleansing and inspections had been completed in Tiverton, Crediton and Cullompton, with funding received and machinery procured for gum removal.

81. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

The Cabinet were presented with a report from the Deputy Chief Executive which updated Member's on the updated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) which covered the period 2023/24 to 2027/28 and accounted 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. This modelled potential changes in funding levels, new initiatives, unavoidable costs and proposed service savings.

Consideration was given to:

- That Members took an active role in the forthcoming PDG meetings, for the budget process.
- That every year there seemed to be a budget gap. There was a need to have a strategy and for the gap to be managed. It was felt that the PDGs were compartmentalised and there was a need for a more holistic approach.
- This exercise was to support the council in this financial year and through to the MTFP and that Member's input would be welcomed.
- A top down approach of setting the scene was applied with a bottom up strategy where Members could feedback through the PDGs due to the complex nature of the budget.
- There was no mention of 3 Rivers Development Ltd in the report.

Officers provided a response stating that the Council was in a very challenging position and noted that other local authorities had similar budget gaps. The Council's cost base had risen between 10 – 15% with income figures having not fully recovered post pandemic. They agreed that a strategy was needed but also every service needed to be assessed. In addition, officers had engaged with Members as well as residents to be part of this process.

RESOLVED: That

- Note the updated MTFP's for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account and the updated Capital Programme all covering the five years 2023/24 to 2027/28 and endorse the proposals outlined in paragraphs 5.6, 5.7 and 6.2 as the approach to balancing the General Fund Revenue Budget.
- Seek recommendations from the Policy Development Groups on the appropriate fees for Services to charge and the services areas where savings should be sought and to what level.

(Proposed by Cllr B A Moore, seconded by Cllr C Slade)

Reason for decision – As stated in the report.

82. REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT - DISCRETIONARY FEES

The Cabinet were presented a report from the Director of Place which advised Members of the proposal to increase the fees associated with our current pre-application service in addition to introducing a range of new charges relating to discretionary services currently provided by the Planning department. As pressure on the Council's budget continued to increase, the introduction of these charges will assist this key service area to maintain the level of service provided to our customers whilst managing the cost to the Council of providing these services. It will also bring Mid Devon more in to line with similar district councils within the wider Devon and South West geography.

It was highlighted that:

- The current pre-application fees had not been reviewed since 2020 and benchmarking exercises revealed that Mid Devon was charging far less than other Local Planning Authorities' in the region.
- This would support staff levels and resource. In addition, the current planning duty service be stopped which would allow officers to spend more quality time on chargeable pre-application enquires.

Consideration was given to:

- There was a need for revenues to be improved
- It was asked if these fees were capped.

Officers provided a response by stating that the fees were not capped, however, because there was a competitive dynamic there was a need to not make services too expensive. This report would bring the Council in line with neighbouring authorities, which meant this council remained competitive, reasonable and to sustain a viable service.

RESOLVED: That

- That the proposed fees and charges set out in Appendix 1 of this report be introduced from 15 November 2022
- That the duty planning service be removed from 15 November 2022.
- That future increases to discretionary fee charges to be delegated to the Director of Place in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic regeneration.

(Proposed by Cllr R Chesterton, seconded by Cllr B A Moore)

Reason for decision – as stated in the report.

83. **CREDITON MASTERPLAN - PROCUREMENT**

The Cabinet were presented a report from the Director of Place which sought Members approval for commissioning consultants to assist in the preparation of a Crediton Town Centre Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and Delivery Plan; and also sought Members endorsement of the geographic scope for the Crediton Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document.

It was highlighted that:

- This work had been delayed due to the Covid-19 Pandemic but could now be resumed. This had provided an opportunity to reflect on additional challenges such as cost of living and climate change.
- St Saviour's Way Car Park was now included within the study area which also enabled a review of the car parking as part of this study.

Consideration was given to:

- There was a need for a clear implementation plan. In addition, there was a need to make Crediton a place to visit for those that lived in the surrounding areas.
- Crediton is a hub for the Wards that surround the town.

RESOLVED: That

- That delegated authority be given to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration, to engage consultants to

assist with the preparation of a Crediton Town Centre Masterplan and Delivery Plan;
and

- That the geographic scope in Appendix 1 be approved.

(Proposed by Cllr R Chesterton, seconded by Cllr S Penny)

Reason for decision – as set out in the report.

84. **NOTIFICATION OF KEY DECISIONS**

RESOLVED: That the notification of Key Decisions be noted.

(The meeting ended at 11.09 am)

CHAIRMAN