

## **Chairman's Report: The Environment Policy Development Group (PDG) 2022-2023.**

Environment PDG has acted to further environmental sustainability in the round, both within the way the Council operates and across the Council's remit on behalf of Mid Devon's communities. Environment PDG has shaped, scrutinised and recommended important initiatives brought forward by officers, such as:

- the Bin-it-123 scheme; (\*already making a positive difference)
- electric vehicle rapid chargers;
- revenue reviews and spending plans.

With officer support, Environment PDG Members worked together in a joined-up manner between different groups and committees.

- Members from all PDGs participate in the Net Zero Advisory Group (NZAG) which has helped explore and steer activity on a wide range of topics from river pollution, to active travel, to better procurement.\*\*\*
- Our sustainable farming report has provided online guidance and fed into the Economy PDG's rural economy report.
- The PDG and NZAG held a special meeting on budgets in the autumn, and PDG successfully highlighted spend priorities to Cabinet.
- The PDG has indirectly supported the new Climate Emergency planning policy statement.

On October 10 2022 Waste and Recycling moved to three weekly bin collections, hereby becoming the second District in Devon to adopt the practice after East Devon. This followed a trial of the scheme in the summer of 2021 and a decision taken by the Cabinet to introduce the scheme in February 2022. The design and implementation of the scheme had to be carried out at the same time as continuing to collect all waste and recycling from the District and included;

- The sending out of letters and leaflets to residents to raise awareness of the scheme and give detail on how it would work.
- Distributing 37K bins and then dealing with requests for additional bins or supplementary seagull sacks from households.
- Providing site visits and education to residents on how to adapt to the new scheme.
- Increased patrolling of our town centres, car parks and other key areas of the district by our Environment Enforcement team to identify any arising issues or concerns.

Congratulations to all staff and operational management in making the transition to the new scheme work. Our thanks to our Communications, Finance, Customer First and Human Resources teams for all their contributions and support to the project management team.

Our Environment Enforcement Team have had an excellent year in both delivering best enforcement practice and reporting on our results to members. The team have dealt with a wide variety of cases including abandoned vehicles, fly typing, environment enforcement and parking. Our statistics and their follow through have become a key component of our Continuous Improvement programme as elected members have highlighted issues and concerns which affect the cleanliness of our District and protect its open spaces and parks. The work of the District Officers has also been of central

importance to us moving to three weekly bin collections by us patrolling town centres, car parks and other key areas of the District to proactively identify any arising issues or concerns.

Going forward to next year I hope to be able to serve on the Environment Committee again. Balancing the demands of tight budgets with ever increasing demands on public services and at the same time as supporting our communities to live as sustainably as possible is the greatest challenge our generation faces. I look forward to being part of the discussions and debates that help that future.

I would like to thank fellow members for their contribution to the debates this year, officers for their guidance, support and professional recommendations and I would particularly like to thank Carol and Sarah for organising the agendas and report packs and ensuring everything runs smoothly. Your help and support is really appreciated.