MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **ECONOMY POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP** held on 3 August 2023 at 5.30 pm

Present **Councillors**	J M Downes (Chairman) G Cochran, A Cuddy, M Farrell (Vice Chairman), B Fish, M Fletcher and R Roberts
Apologies **Councillor(s)**	G Westcott
Also Present **Councillor(s)**	D Broom, R Gilmour, B Holdman, S Keable and S Robinson
Present **Officer(s):**	Richard Marsh (Director of Place), Paul Deal (Corporate Manager for Finance, Property and Climate Change), Luke Howard (Environment and Enforcement Manager), Zoë Lentell (Economic Development Team Leader) and Andrew Seaman (Member Services Manager)

15 **Apologies and Substitute Members (00:03:46)**

Apologies were received from Cllr G Westcott who was substituted by Cllr M Jenkins

Cllrs J Buczkowski, S Clist, A Glover, F Letch, J Lock and M Fletcher attended the meeting via Teams.

16 **Public Question Time (00:04:16)**

There were no public questions.

17 **Declaration of Interests under the Code of Conduct (00:04:32)**

No interests were declared under this item. Members were reminded of the need to make declarations of interest where appropriate.

18 **Minutes (00:04:50)**

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 8 June 2023, were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

19 **Chairman's Announcements (00:05:23)**

The Chairman encouraged and welcomed ideas from Councillors that supported revenue generating opportunities for the Council.

20   **Car Parking Working Group Update (00:06:41)**

The Group received and **NOTED** a verbal update from the Chairman of the Working Group on car parking. The working group aimed to look at: the sustainability of car park; improved presence of the Council to user groups; development of redundant and zero revenue parking areas; future planning and community provision; revenue streams; tariff and permit options and Devon County Council (DCC) traffic management plans.

The following was discussed:

- Coach parking was important for the local area and should be included within the provision of the working group.

- A sensibly priced option for car parking, there were some cases where cars needed to move in the afternoon, this was particular to those who worked in Town and why an all-day option was needed.

- There was a need to look at long term stay parking and to encourage use of car parks. There was a need to promote options available to the public such as parking permits.

- That working group present the finance options report for the Economy Policy Development Group.

- It was raised whether there were flexible options for parking permits, there could be more flexibility, officers explained that communications had been made to make residents aware.

- Making residents aware of the options available was very important and needed to be clear.

- Whether there was an opportunity for parking overnight for motorised homes.

- The Chairman encouraged other Councillors to participate with the working group.

21   **Economic Development Team Update (00:22:47)**

The Group received and **NOTED** a report* which provided an update which provided members on activities undertaken by the Economic Development Team during the last two months.

The following was highlighted:

- Funding of £1m from the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) was received. £800k had also been allocated from the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)

- Through the REPF grant schemes 16 applications of interest had been received with 11 meeting the necessary criteria. Work was being done to encourage others to apply.

- Town centre projects were being promoted with 6 projects undertaken, next round of applications were due to take place in October 2023.

- Promotion of the 'Field to Fork' scheme continued.

- Pilot of a walking festival was due to be launched in September 2024.

- Other local support activities that had occurred included job fairs, a recent event saw 22 employers participate and that the next job fair was due to place on 20 September.

- A shop survey had been undertaken in Crediton, Cullompton and Tiverton. Vacancy rates were: 4.3% for Crediton, 15.5% for Collumpton and 9.9% for Tiverton. The national average for vacancy rates was 13.8%.

- Footfall for Quarter 1 had exceeded pre-pandemic levels. The latest Visit Mid Devon Guide had been launched. Public engagement in schemes such as the 'Escape to Mid Devon was to be analysed.

- Visitor boards were due to be drafted for Bradninch and Bampton in September 2023.

The following was discussed:

- Asked how many responses there had been, it was confirmed that the Council received 40 responses from the consultation.

- Asked why there was not a pie chart for Cullompton it was explained by officers that this data was not available but could be gathered for the next Economy PDG meeting.

- That the shop vacancy rate in Cullompton was above average and that work had been undertaken through the heritage works. It was raised whether businesses were encouraged to set up within the Cullompton high street. Officers explained that a Project Officer was working on the long-term occupancy of shops within the Cullompton high street.

- It was noted that spaces along high streets needed to be utilised and that bigger retail units were struggling.

- It was asked if, for the Shopfront Enhancement Scheme there could be pie charts to show funds allocated and funds remaining.

Note: * Report previously circulated; copy attached to the signed minutes.

22 **Finance and performance update (00:44:58)**

The Group were presented and **NOTED** a presentation was given by corporate manager for finance, which provided an introduction to finance as well as budgetary information which related to the Economy PDG's remit.

The Committee Members were given the opportunity to ask questions to which the Corporate Manager for Finance and the Director of Place answered accordingly.

23 **Identification of items for the next meeting (01:37:52)**

The following items were identified by the Group as needing to come to a future meeting:

- Junction 27 Update
- Viability of a Crematorium in Mid Devon
- Budget Options

(The meeting ended at 19:10)   **CHAIRMAN**