

Chairman's Annual Report – Community Policy Development Group

So it has been a busy year to date with a lot happening on the Community Policy Development Group.

Firstly I would like to thank Angie Howell and Sarah Lees for their support and constant encouragement and enthusiasm. Also my thanks to the Officers, the Vice Chairman Cllr Cathy Conner plus our Portfolio Holders from Cabinet. I would also like to thank all Members of the PDG for their hard work and commitment. It's been a learning curve for us all and for me personally as Chairman.

You may be surprised as to what we have achieved so far! We have done quite a bit including:-

- Visits to the 3 Leisure Centres – it was really good to visit and to meet the staff who do an amazing job. Part of our manifesto was to keep the Leisure Centres going and it was really good to see how passionate everyone is that works there and what a fantastic service is provided.

Also we have seen a lot of investment in Leisure Centres over the past year. From new solar panels to heat source pumps to help improve the running costs. As a Council we subsidise the Leisure Centres by £1.4 million a year in running costs. However the importance of providing this service in Mid Devon is massive in my opinion as it continues to thrive and provides such an essential amenity to so many people.

- Since becoming Chair we have set up a Working Group looking at our vulnerable customers and how the lack of opening hours are affecting them. The Working Group have been looking at different ways this could be improved whilst still keeping within budget and staff constraints. I would like to thank Lisa Lewis, Lynsey Chilcott, Cllr Glover, Cllr Harrower, Cllr Connor and Cllr Cochran for their enthusiasm and input into this. Hopefully the recommendations that we put forward will be approved and we can help improve the way that Mid Devon deliver their services to our vulnerable customers.

- We have also received an update from Devon and Cornwall Police regarding antisocial behaviour and looked at better ways of working together.
- We received a visit from Alex Munroe, Devon Energy Partnership which was interesting and extremely informative.

We have also looked at and reviewed various policies and strategies such as:-

- Communication and Engagement Strategy,
- Vulnerability Statement,
- Climate Change Updates,
- Leisure Policy and Pricing Strategy,
- Strategic Grants to External Organisations where incredibly tough important decisions were made,
- Budget Setting to help MDDC achieve a balanced budget.
- Recommended a full consultation for the Town and Parish Charter;
- Customer Care Policy; with still many more to come.

There's been some tough decisions we have had to recommend to Cabinet, unfortunately due the underfunding of Central Government it has not been easy.

We will still have budget setting for 25/26 so please share any ideas you may have for potential savings.

I have enjoyed being the Chairman of the Community PDG. Looking ahead, if I am still Chair I would be keen to look at:-

- Starting to develop some new policies and would like to set up a workshop to do this. This will enable the whole Council to get involved and it will be great to see some work done on this.

- I would also like to arrange another visit to our Leisure Centres and to see the progress they continue to make.
- Additionally, I would plan to invite Devon and Cornwall Police back to talk to the Community PDG and to continue working together regarding anti-social behaviour.

I am open to other ideas that any of you may have now that you have been part of the Community PDG for a year and you can see the important work we do and will continue to do together.

Once again many thanks to all Members and Officers for their support and commitment.

Councillor Ben Holdman
Chair of Community Policy Development Group
Tiverton Castle Ward