

MINUTES of a MEETING of the COMMUNITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP
held on 26 March 2024 at 1.00 pm

Present

Councillors

B Holdman (Chairman)
C Connor (Vice Chairman), D Broom,
G Cochran, G Czapiewski and C Harrower

Apologies

Councillor(s)

S Robinson

Also Present

Councillor(s)

G Duchesne

Also Present

Officer(s):

Maria De Leiburne (Director of Legal, HR & Governance (Monitoring Officer)), Matthew Page (Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste), Lisa Lewis (Corporate Manager for Business Transformation and Customer Engagement), Simon Newcombe (Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing), Jason Ball (Climate and Sustainability Specialist), James Hamblin (HR Business Partner) and Angie Howell (Democratic Services Officer)

Councillors

Online

J Buczkowski

Officers Online

59 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (03:45)

Cllr S Robinson sent her apologies and Cllr G Czapiewski attended as her substitute.

60 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (04:15)

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

There were no declarations of interest.

61 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (04:45)

There were no members of the public present.

62 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (05:00)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd January 2024 were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

63 CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS (05:18)

The Chairman had no announcements to make.

64 MEETING MANAGEMENT (05:28)

The Chairman announced that the Group would be discussing Agenda Items 9 and 10 before Agenda Item 6.

65 CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY (06:04)

The Group had before it a report * from the Operations Manager Human Resources on the Health and Safety Policy which had been reviewed and approved by the Health and Safety Committee on 24 January 2024 as well as the Joint Negotiation and Consultation Committee (JNCC) on 25 January 2024.

The following was highlighted within the report:-

- The main changes were to the job titles.

Discussion took place with regards to:-

- Accidents, incidents and near misses and how these were recorded and reviewed. It was explained by the Corporate Manager for People, Performance and Waste that the data was analysed at a quarterly corporate meeting which was chaired by the Chief Executive that looked at the high risks which were scrutinised across the Council.
- Emergency evacuations and the use of the evacuation chair, where they were stored and staff training. All members of the Democratic Services Team and all Caretakers had received training.
- The requirement of a fire drill at a meeting of full Council and when this would be. This would be confirmed by the Corporate Manager for People, Performance and Waste.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that the revised Health and Safety Policy be approved.

(Proposed by Cllr C Connor and seconded by Cllr G Cochran)

Reason for the decision

As set out in the report.

Note: (i) * Report previously circulated.

66 SINGLE EQUALITIES SCHEME AND EQUALITY OBJECTIVES (13:14)

The Group had before it a report * from the Corporate Performance and Improvement Manager with an update on action taken to help meet the Council's statutory duties under the Equality Act (2010).

The following was highlighted within the report:-

- This report was presented annually to the Community PDG.
- The report outlined how the Council worked to implement equality duties.
- The Policy had been reviewed over the past 6 months by the Equality and Diversity Inclusion Group (EDI).
- Following the review a new set of objectives had been proposed to make them more specific and measurable.

Discussion took place with regards to:-

- Mid Devon residents being able to access the Council's services despite having no email address or internet facilities and how this was overcome by the existing channels in place such as the press and lobbying for better digital connectivity. An idea suggested by the Group was to approach Town and Parish Councils asking them to advertise on their local notice boards.
- Supporting Ukraine families now that CHAT were no longer managing this.

The Community PDG also thanked Dr Stephen Carr for his work on this report.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that the Single Equality Scheme together with the Equality Objectives for 2024/2025 be approved.

(Proposed by Cllr G Cochran and seconded by Cllr C Connor)

Reason for the decision

As set out in the report.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

67 PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD Q3

The Group were presented with, and **NOTED**, the Performance Dashboard * providing summary information reflecting performance for the previous quarter.

The following was highlighted:

- All Council complaints had been resolved within the timescales.
- Environment Protection Services were showing red as this was a new indicator set up for this financial year.

Discussion took place with regard to:

- Capital Projects and why there were showing Amber. It was explained that there were 5 projects running behind schedule and that this was not unusual.

Note: * Dashboard previously provided.

68 BIODIVERSITY DUTY REPORT

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a briefing paper * from the Climate and Sustainability Specialist and the Director of Place and Economy setting out the need for all of the Council's operating areas to be fully aware of their responsibility in needing to meet the biodiversity duty.

The following was highlighted within the paper:-

- Local Authorities had been asked by Government to set out an action plan which would be monitored to enhance nature in all areas to be applied across the organisation.
- The Cabinet had asked for all Policy Development Groups to consider this statutory duty under their own remits and to provide ideas and policies to take back to Cabinet so that they could be incorporated into an action plan.
- In the last 5 years the Council had achieved its tree planting targets.

Discussion took place regarding:-

- Whether Council tenants were able to plant trees in their gardens. It was explained that tenants would be encouraged to plant native trees as long as it did not affect neighbouring properties.
- The planting of community orchards and how this had already been a success.
- The idea of planting a tree for each baby born in Mid Devon, including stillborn babies as there was a similar scheme in Somerset.
- Biodiversity on waste land or brownfield sites and whether areas should be left for natural regeneration.
- The State of District Debate and how this highlighted how Town and Parish Councils wished to be involved.
- The monitoring of the survival of trees and how to protect trees that had been planted.
- Flood management schemes and how support was actively being offered to support projects for natural flood management.

Note: * Briefing paper previously circulated.

69 PUBLIC ACCESS FOR VULNERABLE CUSTOMERS

The Group had before it a report * from the Corporate Manager Digital Transformation and Customer Engagement to present the findings of the Public Access Working Group.

The following was highlighted within the report:-

- On the 22 August 2023 the Community PDG commissioned a Working Group to be set up to assess the impact of reduced opening hours of Phoenix House for vulnerable residents.
- The Working Group had met 3 times where Members worked with officers to assess the current provision and how this could be improved.
- The Working Group had forwarded a request to the Car Parking Working Group to identify whether it would be possible to provide free blue badge parking in the disabled parking facility as currently customers had to cross the car park to pay which could be difficult.
- The Working Group had suggested the provision of an intercom to be placed at the front of the building within the airlock so that when reception was closed to the public, the intercom would still be accessible.
- The calls made using the intercom would go through to the Contact Centre where they would be triaged and dealt with effectively.
- The usage would be monitored after 6 months of installation to see how much the facility was used. This would be reported back to the Community PDG.

Discussion took place with regards to:-

- The installation time and how long this would take. It was hoped, if approved that this could be achieved within a few weeks from approval.
- How this would be communicated to ensure members of the public were aware of the intercom being installed. This would be achieved through normal channels such as press releases and signage.
- It was also suggested by the Group that a table with a pen and paper be provided in the airlock for customers to use when making calls.
- The personal protection of staff when dealing with members of the public that were abusive or threatening.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet the approval of the installation of an intercom for use by the public when Phoenix House was closed (available office hours only).

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Reason for the decision

As set out in the report.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

70 DEVON PREVENTING SERIOUS VIOLENCE STRATEGY

The Group had before it a report * from the Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing which was presented by Cllr D Wulff, Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure.

The following was highlighted within the report:-

- The report outlined the overall vision and priorities to prevent violence.
- There was a legal requirement for a Strategy for the area to be published by 31 January 2024.
- The work was completed with the Community Safety Partnership who had worked closely with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to develop the adopted governance framework for delivery of the duty.
- There were 3 states of prevention, Universal (Primary Prevention), Targeted (Secondary Prevention) and Specialist (Tertiary Prevention).
- Cabinet had previously looked at the report in January 2024 and was now being presented to the Community PDG to embed the Strategy within the Council Policy Framework to enable delivery.

Discussion took place with regards to:-

- The role of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC).
- The unfortunate language used in the report when referring to children in care as it appeared they were being demonised.
- When referring to children in the report the Community PDG requested that it also included missing children.
- The need to work alongside Town and Parish Councils to ensure they were engaged and working alongside the Community Safety Partnership.

The Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing would put forward the above suggestions to the Community Devon Partnership.

RECOMMENDED that Cabinet recommends to Council the adoption of the Devon Preventing Serious Violence Strategy 2024-29 as attached in Annex A to enable delivery as appropriate by the Council's Community Safety Partnership (as a specified authority under the Serious Violence Duty).

(Proposed by Cllr D Broom and seconded by Cllr C Harrower)

Reason for the decision

The purpose of the report was to enable the Community PDG to make a forward recommendation for adoption of the Strategy. As a new Strategy within the Policy Framework it would require full Council approval to adopt.

Note: (i) * Report previously circulated.

71 SAFEGUARDING POLICY

The Group had before it a report * from the Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing with a revised Corporate Safeguarding Policy.

The following was highlighted within the report:-

- The current Policy was last reviewed by the Community PDG in March 2022.
- A Policy review was instigated to take into account changes of responsibilities within the Council.
- As part of the review process, views were sought on current safeguarding policy and operational practice from an internal Working Group of safeguarding leads and the external Devon Districts Safeguarding Officer Network.
- A draft Policy was also reviewed by a Housing Safeguarding Policy expert.
- Feedback from Members Safeguarding Training which took place in December 2023 had also helped to shape the policy format.
- The Policy was now updated and fit for purpose.
- As part of the policy review process it also identified a potential gap in safeguarding provisions for Members with a recommended mechanism to review Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) checks which could be included in a future update of relevant policies. This would be a Member led decision.

Discussion took place with regards to:-

- The action taken if a DBS result disclosed information. It was explained that it would be kept confidential and that there would be steps put in place to deal with such matters.
- The DBS check would be a basic check rather than an enhanced check.
- The importance of best practice and eligibility.
- The Group requested that on Page 124, 1.3.3 – the last bullet point of the report which currently read as “having been in care, prison or other institution” that children in care are not put in the same category as prison or other institution. The Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing would change this before it went to Cabinet.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that the revised Corporate Safeguarding Policy be approved.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

RECOMMENDED to Standards Committee that a Member Working Group be established to review the potential future inclusion of DBS checks for Members within the Corporate Safeguarding Policy and related DBS Policy.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Reason for the decision

As set out in the report.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

72 COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

The Group had before it, and **NOTED** a * report from the Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing on the annual report of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and planned activities for the coming year 2024/25.

The following was highlighted within the report:-

- The CSP priority areas of focus for 2024/25 were based on Strategic Assessments that had been discussed, shaped and agreed by the CSP Board Members.
- The Policy was largely unchanged from the previous year with priority areas of focus being based on violent crime and youth risk and vulnerability.
- The Terrorism Bill also known as Martyn's Law would require venues to assess and mitigate potential risks and to be prepared to deal with incidents to protect people.
- A new requirement based on a national of Community Safety Partnership and Anti Social Behaviours (ASB) powers. This work would need to be incorporated into the Council's Action Plan going forward to have plans in place to strengthen relationships with the local Police Team and other bodies.

Discussion took place with regards to:-

- Martyn's Law and whether training and guidance would be put in place to support those managing facilities. It was explained that at the moment the Council were unsure where this funding would be coming from.
- The need to have more information to encourage people who have intelligence regarding a crime to come forward. The Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing would look into this further.

Note: (i) * Report previously circulated.

73 CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, the Chairman's Annual Report for 2023/2024
*.

The following was discussed:-

- The need to invite Devon and Cornwall Police back to future meetings of Community PDG.
- To also engage more with Town and Parish Councils moving forward.

There being no further comment on the report, this would now be presented to full Council at their meeting on 24th April 2024.

Note: * Report previously circulated

(The meeting ended at 3.33 pm)

CHAIRMAN