

MINUTES of a MEETING of the COMMUNITY, PEOPLE & EQUALITIES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held on 24 September 2024 at 12.30 pm

Present

Councillors

B Holdman (Chairman)
C Connor (Vice-Chair), D Broom, A Cuddy,
M Farrell, A Glover, C Harrower and
H Tuffin

Also Present

Councillor

G Duchesne MBE

Also Present

Officers:

Paul Deal (Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience), Laura Woon (Democratic Services Manager) and David Parker (Democratic Services & Policy Research Officer)

Councillors

Online

E Buczkowski, J Buczkowski and J Lock

Officers Online

Dr Stephen Carr ~(Corporate Performance and Improvement Manager) and Lewis Dyson (Resilience Officer)

15 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (00:03:36)

There were no apologies.

16 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (00:03:46)

There were no members of the public present.

17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (00:03:58)

No interests were declared under this item.

18 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (00:04:12)

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 June 2024 were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chair.

19 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (00:04:36)

The Chair stated that he understood that the Performance Dashboard was under review and likely to be further modified with glossary added to go into further detail relating to specific measures.

Although this was a meeting light of content, the Policy Development Group were likely to be busy at their future meetings.

20 PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD - QUARTER 1 (00:05:20)

The Group were presented with, and **NOTED**, summary information * reflecting performance in the Community People and Equalities areas for quarter 1 2024/2025.

The following was highlighted on the Performance Dashboard:

- The Dashboards were intended to provide an 'at a glance' representation of performance in the Community, People and Equalities area.
- The Dashboards allowed Members to easily see whether service areas were 'on track' and the use of pie charts and RAG (Red/Amber/Green) ratings were used to facilitate this.
- Given the new Policy Development Groups (PDG) structure and the new Corporate Plan, the dashboard continued to give an at a glance understanding of how services related to this PDG were performing in terms of performance, finance and risk.
- The performance measures mandated to this PDG relating to the new Corporate Plan were in yellow text.
- The 'In Focus' box was used to present additional information that may be of interest.
- There was one corporate risk (Severe Weather Emergency Recovery) in relation to this PDG and that risk was decreasing.
- Licenced vehicle inspections, although low for the first quarter, would improve through the year, it was normal for the inspections to happen later in the year.
- Private water supply sampling work had been paused but would resume in October when the performance metric would increase.

Discussion took place regarding:

- "Let's Talk Mid-Devon" – The service was launched in 2022 and 431 people had registered to use the site. Those people had visited the site almost 12,000 times and given contributions to the site in excess of 2,000 times. The engagement rate since inception was 22.8%. The Residents' survey was a successful proof of the concept. The platform was effective, lots of councils used such sites and Mid Devon had proved that it could work for this Council too. The figures quoted on the dashboard were new subscribers to the service in the first quarter of 2024/25. The Council were encouraging more services (such as "Development Management" and "Economic Development") to use the site in order to drive public engagement to the site and so encourage more people to subscribe.
- 104 complaints were made in the first quarter of which 95% were dealt with within the target timescale. The reasons for the remaining 5% not being dealt within target timescales were not known and the Corporate Performance and

Improvement Manager would ask the Complaints Team to circulate that information to the PDG.

- Was it possible to break down the level of complaints by complexity? – The new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system was designed to track complaints and give the officers greater oversight of what was happening with a complaint. The Annual Report of Complaints and Compliments goes to the Scrutiny Committee.
- There was no annual target measure for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme as it was a demand led scheme. Including it on the dashboard enabled, the value of the scheme to the residents of Mid Devon, which was just under £5 million, to be considered.
- A glossary to explain the performance and finance measures should be ready for the next round of PDGs – the Council wanted to communicate clearly what was being measured. The dashboards were a public facing document that needed to communicate with a wide range of audiences

Note: * Dashboard previously circulated.

21 **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN (MTFP) FOR 2025/26 (00:21:32)**

The Group were presented with a report * from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151 Officer) presenting the updated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) which covered the period 2025/2026 to 2028/2029 and took into account the Council's key strategies and demonstrated it had the financial resources to deliver the new Corporate Plan.

The contents of the report were outlined with particular reference to:

- The MTFP covered a period from 2025/26 to 2028/29. Normally this would be a 5 year plan but the Council were currently awaiting greater clarification from the new Government and the Chancellor's budget announcement on 30th October 2024. The 5th year would be added following that.
- The MTFP would normally include the Housing Revenue Account and Capital Programme updates but those were still being developed and the General Fund (GF) were slightly ahead of the game at this time of the year.
- The MTFP focussed on a framework of principles those being: (i) Each year the Council would target a balanced revenue budget without the use of General Fund reserve balances (ii) Optimise Income Generation to protect service delivery (iii) Allocation of Revenue Resources to statutory or higher priority services where necessary (iv) Allocation of Capital Resources to deliver the best value for money and minimise borrowing.
- The MTFP built on a number of assumptions around inflation which were shown in Appendix 1.
- Overall the result of pressures on the budget left a £1.2m gap rising to £4m by year 4 if the Council took no action.
- Over the summer, officers had looked at options which had been RAG rated as red, amber, green in terms of risk and deliverability.
- If the green and amber savings were accepted this would reduce the £1.2m gap down to circa £400,000.
- All Policy Development Groups would be asked to look at possible savings which would then be presented to Cabinet.

- There were no budget pressures (appendix 3) or savings pressures (appendix 4a) that related to this PDG.
- There would still be a shortfall for next year's budget even if the proposals set out in the report were agreed, therefore Members were encouraged to come forward with additional suggestions for savings.

Discussion took place regarding:

- What budgets related to the service areas of this PDG? - At the next meeting of the PDG there would be some training to assist Members of this PDG and to remind them of the service areas that each PDG was responsible for.
- The saving of £11,000 in relation to a reduction in engagement activity opportunities digitally and the impact on Let's Talk Mid Devon. As no-one was available to answer what the impact on Let's Talk Mid Devon would be, it was **AGREED** that the amber rated saving relating to Let's Talk Mid Devon NOT be recommended to Cabinet and it to come back to the December meeting, with an officer available to answer questions as to what the impact would be.

The Group **NOTED** the following:

1. The updated MTFP for the General Fund covering the years 2025/26 to 2028/29;
2. The principles and approach to balancing the General Fund Revenue Budget outlined in paragraph 6.2;
3. The emerging budget pressures included within Appendix 3;

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that:

The green and amber round 1 budget proposals, **except for** the amber rated saving relating to Let's Talk Mid Devon, as set out in Appendix 4b, be approved.

(Proposed by Cllr A Glover, seconded by Cllr C Harrower.)

Reason for the decision

As set out in the report and further information wanted in relation to the saving suggested relating to Let's Talk Mid Devon.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

22 **WORK PROGRAMME (00:38:14)**

The Group had before it and **NOTED**, the current *work programme for the Community, People and Equalities Policy Development Group (PDG) for 2024/2025.

Members were asked to consider whether there were any other areas that they wanted to focus on, in addition to those already listed in the work programme.

The following was discussed and **AGREED**:

- The “Trauma Informed Council” work would be looked at by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group. They would be bringing a report to the Community People and Equalities PDG in March 2025 on the Single Equalities Policy and Equality Objective which would include a section on Mid Devon District Council being a Trauma Informed Council.
- Let’s Talk Mid Devon would come back to the December 2024 meeting as part of the report on the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- A report on the Poverty Premium/Vulnerable Persons Strategy was requested.
- The clerk was asked to follow up on whether an invite to the Police to address the PDG had been made?

Note: *Work Programme previously circulated.

(The meeting ended at 1.13 pm)

CHAIR