

**MINUTES of a MEETING of the PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY
POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held on 26 November 2024 at 5.30 pm**

**Present
Councillors**

G Cochran (Vice-Chair), C Adcock,
C Connor, G Czapiewski, C Harrower,
L Knight and S Robinson

**Apologies
Councillors**

B Fish and A Glover

**Also Present
Councillor**

J Buczkowski

**Also Present
Officer(s):**

Richard Marsh (Director of Place & Economy), Paul Deal
(Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience), Jason
Ball (Climate and Sustainability Specialist), Elaine Barry
(Planning Obligations Monitoring Officer), Adrian Welsh
(Strategic Manager for Growth, Economy and Delivery)
and Angie Howell (Democratic Services Officer)

**Councillors
Online**

B Fish and G Westcott
N Bradshaw, E Buczkowski, S Chenore, S J Clist,
S Keable, J Wright and D Wulff

Officers Online

Dr Stephen Carr (Corporate Performance and
Improvement Manager), Tristan Peat (Forward Planning
Team Leader) and Poie Li (Forward Planning Officer)

1 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (00:06:04)

Apologies were received from Cllr B Fish and Cllr A Glover with Cllr S Robinson attending as her substitute.

2 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (00:06:50)

There were no public questions.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (00:06:55)

No interests were declared under this item.

4 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (00:07:02)**

The minutes of the last meeting held on 3 September 2024 were approved as a correct record of the meeting and **SIGNED** by the Chair.

5 **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (00:07:45)**

The Chair had no announcements to make.

6 **MEETING MANAGEMENT (00:07:57)**

The Chair advised that he would be bringing forward the following Agenda Items:-

- (i) 13 – Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change Update
- (ii) 14 – Climate Strategy and Action Plan

This would be to give SASSY (Serious about a Sustainability Society and Led by Youth) the opportunity to stay and observe those reports.

7 **SERIOUS ABOUT A SUSTAINABILITY SOCIETY AND LED BY YOUTH (SASSY) - PRESENTATION (00:08:10)**

The Group received a presentation from SASSY (Serious about a Sustainability Society and Led by Youth).

A summary of the information provided was as follows:-

- SASSY was a small group of young people which were brought together by Sustainable Tiverton Youth Development and had been running for over 6 months.
- Funding had been received from Transition Together and Devon Communities Foundation to recruit a Development Worker.
- At a Community Forum where members of the public were invited to attend the request was to get more young people involved. It was felt that 18-35 year olds had been ignored but they wanted to help with decision making in terms of where funds were being spent.
- There were concerns locally in Devon regarding bad flooding, vanishing wildlife and green spaces, litter, pollution and sewerage in rivers and beaches.
- SASSY's aims included enabling young people to be part of the climate conversation in Tiverton, to empower them to create projects of their own, to create conditions for new ways to engage and see themselves as change makers and to be representatives of the Tiverton Society.
- They were currently working on 3 areas of activity which included:-
 - (i) Mapping what was already in existence for young people in Tiverton;
 - (ii) Youth pop up events which included an apple pressing day and litter picking walks
 - (iii) Vox Pop Listening Projects – with a grant received from Devon Community Foundation, young people were employed to gather sound recordings of young people talking about climate related concerns. This was also played as a recording to the Group.

- Their Manifesto included developing more youth projects; challenging stereotypes; to build connections, to address green transport, for there to be more local jobs and apprenticeships and to ask the Council how they are facing climate change.

Discussion took place with regard to:-

- How SASSY could contribute working with MDDC – it was explained that SASSY felt there was a lack of events locally as events tended to be more focussed in Exeter and that projects in Tiverton were more directed towards older people. They would like to get schools involved.
- Whether SASSY would be interested in giving a formal update to the Policy Development Group (PDG) or the Net Zero Advisory Group (NZAG) every 6 months. It was explained that this particular project would end soon as it would be running out of funding but that the group could attend to give an update.
- Junior Wildlife Warden Projects and the possibility of them working together.
- Whether Members could receive a copy of their Manifesto and a list of events that they could be involved with and share with others.

The PDG thanked SASSY for their presentation.

8 **CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE (00:36:44)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED** a report* from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change which was presented by the Climate and Sustainability Specialist Officer.

The following was highlighted within the report:-

- The 4 appendices would be presented to Cabinet on 10 December 2024.
- New rapid EV chargers were operational in Cullompton and Tiverton with Crediton to follow.
- Devon County Council's LEVI (Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure) procurement was due to go out to tender on Tuesday 3 December.
- Mid Devon locations would benefit. The majority of subsidy will benefit on-street residential areas and parish/community car parks.

Discussion took place with regard to:-

- Engaging with the community by using specific techniques such as social media, meetings and forums to reach a range of different audiences.
- Suggestions with regard to holding an annual forum to showcase work that the community were involved with.
- Whether the Council would be in a position to show progression against targets annually? It was explained that the Action Plan would try to achieve this and would show work to be undertaken.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

9 CLIMATE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN (00:39:50)

The Group had before it a report * from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change which was presented by the Climate and Sustainability Specialist Officer.

The following was highlighted within the report:-

Draft Climate Change Strategy and Climate Action Plan

- The Climate Change Strategy gave an overview of the district and where the Council were and looked at what could be achieved.
- There was room for ideas, debates and discussions with the core document being a starting point for engagement in the community.
- The Strategy would be the overarching document and would be set for 4 years with the Action Plan being renewed annually.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that the appended enclosure be approved.

(Proposed by Cllr S Robinson and seconded by Cllr L Knight)

Biodiversity Duty Action Plan

- The role and content of the Action Plan was debated at every Policy Development Group (PDG) and the Planning Policy Advisory Group (PPAG).
- The tables of actions related to each PDG remit.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that the appended enclosure be approved.

(Proposed by Cllr L Knight and seconded by Cllr C Connor)

Green Enterprise Grants

- The proposal built on the success of a grant pilot scheme for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Mid Devon to enable investment to reduce environmental impact. The Economic Development Team had awarded £24,245 in capital funding from the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (Local Growth Fund).
- The proposal was now to develop the next phase of the Green Enterprise Grants using Mid Devon District Council funding.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that the Economic Development Team and the Climate Sustainability Specialist develop the next phase of the Green Enterprise Grant Scheme in consultation with the Head of Finance, Property and Climate Resilience

(Proposed by Cllr S Robinson and seconded by Cllr G Czapiewski)

Reason for the decision

As set out in the report.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

10 **PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD Q2 2024/25 (00:59:40)**

The Group were presented with and **NOTED** the Performance Dashboard for Quarter 2 2024/25. The following was highlighted within the report:-

- The overall performance was presented in the pie chart.
- Since the dashboard was last presented work had been completed on a glossary. This provided a description of each measure and could be viewed on the Council's website.
- There was 1 corporate risk related to this Policy Development Group.
- Two financial measures related to capital projects were showing as red performance due to project slippage. The scope of two of those projects was being further refined and two were being led by the Environment Agency.
- Building Control Income was slightly below budget due to the depressed housing market.

Note: * Performance Dashboard previously circulated.

11 **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN (MTPF) 2025/2026 (01:02:32)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) presenting the updated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTPF) which covered the period 2025/26 to 2028/29 for the General Fund (GF) and considered additional savings.

The Head of Finance, Property and Climate Resilience presented the report and the following was highlighted:

- The report provided an update on progress made on setting the budget and outlined options for the remaining shortfall.
- The report provided clarity on service areas falling under the remit of this Policy Development Group and showed the movement to date in the process of trying to set the budget for 2025/2026 and beyond.
- The Council were awaiting Government announcements over the next 3-4 weeks which would hopefully close the remaining gap for next year.
- A report going to Cabinet in December 2024 would present the very latest position ahead of the Council needing to agree a budget in February 2025.

Discussion took place regarding:-

- Waste recovery set up costs for new housing developments.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

12 **INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING STATEMENT; THE INFRASTRUCTURE LIST (01:09:55)**

The Group had before it a report * from the Director of Place and Economy to consider the Infrastructure Funding Statement; the Infrastructure List.

The Group Manager for Growth, Economy and Delivery presented the report and the following was highlighted:-

- Local Planning Authorities (LPA) were required to publish an Infrastructure Funding Statement annually and by 31 December 2024.
- This Statement included a summary of developer contributions and spend from the previous financial year.
- An Infrastructure List also identified the infrastructure requirements to support the delivery of the adopted Local Plan.
- It was reviewed regularly by officers, with Members input, to ensure it was fit for purpose.

Discussion took place regarding:-

- Youth Team Facilities and why it was prioritised in the way it was.
- Rail infrastructure throughout Mid Devon with the suggestion under Priority 2 in Appendix 1 – Sustainable Travel to widen the definition to include “District Wide Railway Infrastructure”.
- The importance of the SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Facility and the suggestion under Priority 1 Appendix 1 - Education Category to include “post 16 provision”.
- Whether there was a need to expand the current Fire and Rescue Service or other emergency services due to the additional builds.
- Criminal Justice Centre and the level that would be? It was explained that this would be guided by partners to identify needs.
- The difficulties in accessing health facilities and the state of the NHS and prioritising this accordingly.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that:-

- i) The list of infrastructure (Appendix 1; the Mid Devon Infrastructure List) that the Council intends to fund, either wholly or partly, by developer contributions is approved.

(Proposed by Cllr L Knight and seconded by Cllr C Harrower)

- ii) The Infrastructure List is included within the annual Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) to be published on the Council’s website by 31st December 2024.

(Proposed by Cllr L Knight and seconded by Cllr S Robinson)

Reason for the decision

As set out in the report.

Note *Report previously circulated.

13 THE WILLAND NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (01:30:01)

The Group had before it a report * from the Director of Place and Economy to consider the Willand Neighbourhood Plan.

The report was presented by the Forward Planning Team Leader and the following was highlighted within the report:-

- There were currently 4 Adopted Plans in Mid Devon.
- A Neighbourhood Plan gave communities the opportunity to have a greater say on developments taking place.
- Willand Parish Council had prepared the Neighbourhood Plan which covered the whole of the parish of Willand. The preparations had included a draft plan and consultation on regulations and had been published in April 2024.
- It had since been examined by an independent examiner.
- The Council now had to consider the examiners recommended modifications and decide whether the Neighbourhood Plan should proceed to a local referendum.
- Should Cabinet agree with the recommendations at its meeting on 7 January 2025 a decision statement would be published and the referendum would proceed on 27 February 2025.
- Following the referendum if more than 50% voted yes then the Neighbourhood Plan would come into force as part of a Statutory Development Plan.
- The Neighbourhood Plan must be adopted within 8 weeks of the local referendum.

Discussion took place regarding:-

- Whether Willand Parish Council had accepted the recommendations? It was explained that they had accepted them.
- What would happen if the Neighbourhood Plan was rejected? It was explained that the plan would not proceed.
- Whether there was the possibility of postponing the referendum and carry it out at the same time as the Devon County Council elections? This could not happen due to the strict timetable. The referendum had to take place within 56 days of the decision notice being published.
- Whether the Neighbourhood Plan was compatible with the National Policy Planning Framework. It was explained it had gone through the basic checks necessary for the purpose of the plan going to referendum.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that:-

- (i) The Examiner's modifications (Table 3) and the factual corrections (Table 2) be agreed, and that subject to these modifications the Willand Neighbourhood Plan is determined to meet the Basic Conditions (as defined in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 Schedule 4B) and other legislative requirements;

(Proposed by Cllr S Robinson and seconded by Cllr G Czapiewski)

- (ii) The Decision Statement attached at Appendix 2 be approved to be published on the Council's website; and (iii) the Willand Neighbourhood Plan (at Appendix 3) as modified with the Examiner's modifications and factual corrections, proceeds to a local Referendum based on the boundary of the Willand Neighbourhood Area as recommended by the Examiner

(Proposed by Cllr C Harrower and seconded by Cllr C Adcock)

Reason for the decision

As set out in the report.

Note *Report previously circulated.

14 REPORT ON MOTION 605 (01:49:11)

The Group had before it a report * from the Director of Place and Economy considering Motion 605.

The following was highlighted within the report:-

- Motion 605 was previously put before Full Council in September 2024.
- It was agreed at Full Council that this Policy Development Group considered the Motion and refine it to make recommendations to Full Council in terms of how this Motion might be best presented.

Following discussion it was **RECOMMENDED** to full Council to support and approve the updated wording of the Motion as below:

a) Mid Devon District Council recognises and notes the huge contribution made by our farmers, growers and the food and drink industry to the local economy and environment.

b) Mid Devon District Council commits to further developing our partnerships with key organisations alongside our arable, livestock and dairy farmers to enhance our beautiful countryside.

c) Mid Devon District Council also commits to supporting our local farmers, growers and the food and drink sector by, where possible, ensuring that all food and drink provided at Council organised events is sourced from local suppliers, to include meat and dairy as well as plant based produce. Efforts will also be made to promote locally sourced or produced organic items.

d) That the Council encourages and promotes local suppliers and locally produced products in other events hosted within Mid Devon.

e) As part of tackling the environmental priorities for Mid Devon District Council and fulfilling our biodiversity duty, the Council will consider ways to encourage our residents to shop locally, taking full advantage of home-grown, affordable and nutritious produce, including meat, dairy and plant based options, thus reducing food miles to our tables and boosting the local economy.

(Proposed by Cllr L Knight and seconded by Cllr C Connor)

Note *Report previously circulated.

15 **SECTION 106 GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK (PART B RECORDING 00:09:03)**

The Group had before it a report * from the Director of Place and Economy considering the S106 Governance Framework.

The Planning Obligations Officer presented the report and the following was highlighted:-

- S106 agreements were entered into in order to mitigate the impact of development and make it acceptable in planning terms.
- They may include obligations on the developer to make a financial contribution and usually contained obligations on the Council to spend any money collected, in accordance with the terms of the agreement.
- The report proposed an updated approach to the Council's S106 governance arrangements and would provide Members with more visibility and input into the spend process.
- Officers had reviewed those arrangements and looked to refine them, to bring them up to date to reflect best practice, to use experience gained over the last few years and to ensure that they were consistent with the latest government regulations.
- Attached to the report was the proposed governance framework, which set out the arrangement on the nature of the S106 spend and provided clarity in terms of when decisions were delegated to Planning Officers and the conditions where more significant decisions needed to go to the Board for consideration.
- Also included were the Terms of Reference, which set out the purpose and expectations of the Board and the decision making process.
- Those governance arrangements were due for consideration by Cabinet in December 2024.

Discussion took place regarding:-

- The need to change Section 4 Paragraph 3 to now state "Highways and Transport Infrastructure".
- The process where S106 funding was applied for and received.
- How the need for spending S106 funding was identified.
- Whether S106 funds must be spent within 10 years and how this was monitored. It was explained that it must be spent within 10 years and it was closely monitored by a board of officers.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that the revised S106 Governance arrangements (Appendix 1; Mid Devon District Council S106 Governance Framework) are approved with the additional amendment of:-

- (i) Section 4 Paragraph 3 to state “Highways and Transport Infrastructure”.

(Proposed by Cllr S Robinson and seconded by Cllr L Knight)

Reason for the decision

The S106 Governance had been updated as a result of a best practice review to ensure that the Mid Devon Framework and Governance arrangements remained the most appropriate and effective approach to S106 management and monitoring.

Note *Report previously circulated.

16 PLANNING SUMMARY REPORT (PART B RECORDING 00:28:31)

The Group had before it, and **NOTED** a report* from the Director of Place and Economy summarising activity undertaken in relation to planning matters. The following was highlighted within the report:-

- The report summarised the actions from the proceeding months in relation to planning matters. The following updates were included within the report:-
 - (i) New National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
 - (ii) New Local Plan
 - (iii) Development Management Policies
 - (iv) Development Management
 - (v) S106
 - (vi) Conservation
 - (vii) Building Control
 - (viii) Planning Enforcement

Note: * Report previously circulated.

17 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (PART B RECORDING - 00:29:43)

The items already listed in the work programme for the next meeting in March 2025 were **NOTED**.

Cllr B Fish suggested inviting Richard Somerwill to attend the next meeting of the PDG in March 2025 to give a presentation on the Tiverton to Exeter Cycle Way – this was **AGREED**.

(The meeting ended at 20.24pm)

CHAIR