

MINUTES of a MEETING of the SERVICE DELIVERY & CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held on 2 December 2024 at 5.30 pm

Present

Councillors

M Fletcher (Chair)
M D Binks, C Connor, M Farrell, C Harrower
(Vice-Chair), M Jenkins and J Poynton

Apologies

Councillors

B Fish and A Glover

Also Present

Councillor

J Wright

Also Present

Officers

Andrew Jarrett (Deputy Chief Executive (S151)), Matthew Page (Head of People, Performance & Waste), Paul Deal (Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience), Dean Emery (Head of Revenues, Benefits & Leisure), Andy Mackie (Leisure Services Manager), Darren Beer (Operations Manager for Street Scene), Luke Howard (Environment and Enforcement Manager) and Sarah Lees (Democratic Services Officer)

Councillors

Online

E Buczkowski, J Buczkowski, G Czapiewski, J Lock,
D Wulff and L Taylor

Officers Online

Laura Woon (Democratic Services Manager)

32 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Cllr B Fish and Cllr A Glover.

33 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from members of the public.

34 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

No interests were declared under this item.

35 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 September 2024 were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chair.

36 **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair had the following announcements to make:

1. He informed the Group that he and the Cabinet Member for Service Delivery and Continuous Improvement had visited the Leisure Centres recently and had enjoyed the experience greatly and learnt a lot. Sessions would be arranged with the remaining members of the Group to visit the Leisure Centres early in the new year and various drop in sessions and times to suit would be offered.
2. He reminded the Group that there were lots of service areas falling under the remit of this Policy Development Group and that their area of responsibility was wide and very impactful upon the residents of Mid Devon. He encouraged colleagues to bring forward ideas to enhance service provision where the Group could.

37 **PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD Q2 (00:15:00)**

The Group were presented with, and **NOTED**, a slide * showing performance information in the Service Delivery & Continuous Improvement area.

Since the Dashboard was last presented to this meeting, work had been ongoing to create a glossary. This contained all the measures used as part of the Dashboards and provided a definition for each. The definitions aimed to provide a fuller understanding of what was being measured and how. This was available on the Council's website.

The following was referred to:

- There was only one Corporate Risk in relation to this Group. 'Operation of a Waste Service' and there had been no change from the previous quarter.
- Staff turnover had slightly increased over quarter 1.
- Council Tax collection was slightly behind target.
- Agency spend was slightly increased as there had been some issues with not having enough loaders on the waste lorries.

Discussion took place regarding:

- A multi-year pay settlement would need to be agreed at the right level.
- Household recycling rates were slightly above target and the Group wished for their thanks to be passed on to the Waste Team for this continuing positive statistic.

- The 'Public Survey engagement rate statistic was new and needed to be monitored closely going forwards to see what could be done to improve it.
- The leisure service were running a number of retention campaigns at the moment.

Note: * Slides previously circulated.

38 **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN - GENERAL FUND (GF) (00:27:00)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151 Officer) presenting the options to update the 2025/2026 budget for consideration / approval.

The following was highlighted within the report:

- The report provided a 'refresh' of the service areas falling under the umbrella 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 report introduced the General Fund Capital Programme which was still being refined in the background.
- Appendix 1 showed the services falling under the remit of this Policy Development Group.
- Waste & Recycling and the Leisure Service were doing really well in terms of income gains.
- The report outlined how the current budget gap may be closed given assumptions regarding the Government settlement.
- A report going to Cabinet in December 2024 would present the very latest position ahead of Council needing to agree a budget in February 2025.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

39 **NATIONAL ASSISTANCE BURIAL POLICY REVIEW (00:29:00)**

The Group had before it a report * from the Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience presenting the revised Policy for National Assistance Burials.

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

- This was a simple update to an existing policy.
- Section 1.4 listed the changes that had been made.
- In summary, the policy covered circumstances where the deceased did not have any family. On average, there were about 3 such occurrences each year.

Discussion took place regarding:

- A possible review of the Funeral Directors used in order to check that the Council was using the most suitable and local firm.
- Would the numbers be likely to increase given the number of fractured families in existence? No projections had been made but this could be looked into. There had been 36 deaths since 2006 where the policy had had to be used.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that:

The revised Policy for National Assistance Burials be adopted.

(Proposed by Cllr C Harrower and seconded by Cllr M Jenkins)

Reason for the decision

As set out in the report.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

40 WASTE AND RECYCLING OPTIONS (00:36:00)

To receive a report * from the Operations Manager for Street Scene and Open Spaces and the Head of People, Performance and Waste building upon previous options regarding the provision of extra service provision. It also set out future options regarding the provision of the Waste and Recycling service to the residents of the District together with proposed pilots of new services.

The contents of the report were outlined and consideration was given to:

- The report set out the future plans of the Waste Service and details were provided of the proposed pilot schemes.
- Further updates would be provided to the Group regarding coffee pods and blister packs at future meetings.
- The cost of the trial for recycling nappies would be approximately £4.5k. It would cost around £280k per annum to roll this scheme out fully should it be so desired following the pilot. This needed to be made financially more viable as these were significant costs. The tonnage of waste may reduce if the number of nappies in waste collections was reduced.
- The Council had heard that the Government had made a decision such as to allow Council's to continue with 3 weekly collections. This was very positive news.
- The team were looking at breaking into the top 5% nationally for recycling rates.
- Parents needed to be encouraged to use re-useable nappies where possible and there needed to be a proactive campaign to encourage new parents in this regard. It was confirmed that this would be added into communications.
- It was recognised that there were pro's and con's for using terry nappies.
- The Council was working with 'NappiCycle' in Wales who had been recycling nappies successfully for a number of years.
- It was confirmed that there was a comprehensive Waste and Recycling Strategy for next year both in terms of Christmas and looking further ahead. All campaigns would be incorporated into this
- There was some concern that pots and pans would be put out for collection rather than taken more appropriately to recycling centres or charity shops.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that:

Trials be undertaken to introduce the following practices in the District:

- Nappy waste collections
- Collecting unwanted metal pots and pans
- New house builders be charged for new bins and containers to each new property.

(Proposed by the Chair)

Reason for the decision

As set out in the report.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

41 **EXTENDER PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY (EPR) (00:54:00)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Operations Manager for Street Scene and Head of People, Performance and Waste. The report considered the potential payments the Council would receive in 2025-26 with regards to Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and information regarding the Collection and Packaging Reforms and in particular the implementation and management of the EPR scheme.

The contents of the report were outlined and particular reference made to the following:

- It was explained that legislation in the Environment Act 2021 would enable waste reforms such as Extended Producer Responsibility (which ensured producers paid the full costs of packaging in waste for both collection and disposal), a Deposit Return Scheme for single use drink containers and simpler recycling guidance, which would aim to boost recycling rates in households and businesses.
- The packaging costs and performance model calculated the 'basic payment amount' to be paid to individual local authorities for the necessary costs incurred for the collection, handling, treatment and disposal of household packaging waste. The amount was net of income from the sale of recyclate as part of the efficient and effective service, which included administration and communication.
- The Scheme Administrator (appointed by Defra) was responsible for calculating producer fees and local authority payments.
- It was hoped that more detail would be provided once the Government settlement had been received.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

42 **QUARTER 2 ENVIRONMENT AND ENFORCEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT (00:57:00)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report from the Head of People, Performance and Waste providing a quarterly update on key environment enforcement performance data including fly tipping, littering, Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) and the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN's). It also gave a brief summary of Car Parking performance and the issuing of Parking Charge Notice's (PCN's).

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

- There had been a slight increase in income from car parking.
- The number of fly tipping instances had slightly dropped.

It was **AGREED** that the report presented a positive position at quarter 2.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

43 **COLLECTION OF COUNCIL TAX & BUSINESS RATES (00:58:00)**

The Group received, and **NOTED**, a presentation * from the Head of Revenues, Benefits, Corporate Recovery, Corporate Fraud, Welfare & Leisure explained how Council Tax and Business rates were collected. The Group had requested at their last meeting that they receive further information regarding how Council Tax and Business Rates were collected.

The following was highlighted within the presentation:

Council Tax Billing & Recovery:

- Gross Debt £ 86,733,094 million
- Net Collectable Debt £ 74,560, £170 million
- Total Dwellings 38,549k
- Reliefs/Discounts/Disregards Overall Total £ 12,172,924 million
- Council Tax Reduction £ 4,881,827million (part of the £12.9m)
- Council Tax was calculated by bands **A, B, C,D,E,F,G & H** properties were allocated those by the Valuation Office Agency.

Business Rates (also known as National Non Domestic Rates (NDR)):

- Gross Debt £ 28,654,229m
- Net Collectable Debt £ 18,066,623m
- Reliefs / Exemptions £ 10,587,606m
- Total Hereditaments 3553
- Rateable values are calculated by the Valuation Office Agency (part of HMRC)
- Some reliefs were fully funded under Section 31
- Income and costs are monitored by Government via complex returns, NDR1 & NDR3
- Income and costs were shared by
 - Government 50%

- Billing Authority 40%
- County Council 9%
- Fire Authority 1%

How is collection calculated?:

The formulae as shown below applies to Council Tax and Business Rates (NDR Example):

Net Collectable Debit	£ 18,066,623 (A)
Net Payments	£ 11,987,569 (B)
(B) divided by (A)	66.35%

Collection results were reported to the Government via a complex return at the end of the financial year (QRC4).

Collection was monitored monthly and compared to the previous years %.

Collection Methods:

- Annual Bill / Adjustments Notices / New Bills (10 or 12 statutory instalments or months as let with the financial year)
- Reminders
- Summons
- Court Order (Liability Order) - when granted further powers were granted by law, these were:
 - Attachment of Earnings
 - Attachment to Members allowances
 - Special arrangements
 - Enforcement Agents
 - Charging Orders
 - Bankruptcy
 - Committal
 - Business rates allowed for a County Court application rather than applying for a Liability Order at the Magistrates Court
 - Council Tax (SI 613)
 - Business Rates (SI 1058)

Discussion took place regarding:

- When somebody builds an extension it was not the case that the banding of the property was automatically reassessed. This would usually happen when the property was either sold or leased. A banding may not necessarily change just because an improvement had been made to a property.
- Residents had the option of paying 12 month's worth of Council Tax over 10 months.
- Mid Devon District Council had the highest collection rates in Devon and Somerset and nationally were in the top 5%.
- The last quarter of each year was the busiest for the service area as not only were they trying to collect outstanding monies for the year but also recalculating amounts due for the coming year.

- The service area worked hard to communicate with people who were suffering financial hardship and often made referrals to support agencies that could help in a number of different ways. It was important that Council Tax payers contacted the Council as soon as possible if they were beginning to experience problems regarding repayment.

Note: * Presentation previously circulated.

44 **LEISURE SERVICE - VERBAL UPDATE (01:15:00)**

The Group received a verbal update from the Operations Manager for Leisure Service regarding current activity within the Leisure Services area.

This included the following information:

- The Leisure Service was currently seeing it's highest ever membership base and was working hard on retention campaigns, customer and community engagement. Managers had clear objectives and were cascading these and the priorities for the service through the wider team as part of the appraisal process.
- Despite the positive increase in revenue, the team were in the midst of some significant challenges with staffing, particularly the swimming pools, where day time cover during the week was proving problematic. It was to the credit of the Duty Officers and Centre Managers that the impact of the shortage was not being more widely felt. Recruitment and training was an ongoing priority.
- There had been some changes to the Management Team with a new Centre Manager for Exe Valley and Culm Valley starting soon, and a new Duty Officer starting in early December 2024.
- In the community the Leisure Service were working with Active Devon to provide 'wellbeing walks' in Tiverton, Crediton and Cullumpton, those would be led by volunteers and be completely free of charge. This reinforced Leisure's commitment to providing accessible health and wellbeing for all members of the community.
- Another community driven project was with the NHS. Within the Royal Devon & Exeter area they had several community sites which retained small patient gym spaces. These were both for musculoskeletal problems (e.g back pain, knee pain etc) and wider health conditions (e.g stroke, amputees, cancer etc.) An NHS England drive was to provide care closer to home, and within local communities (vs large hospital sites). With this in mind, Leisure had donated two studio cycling bikes to be used in these community sites, again strengthening the Council's collaboration and showing how it valued the health of its communities.
- There were some significant projects coming to fruition in the coming months. The digital transformation had started with the Leisure Management System contract being awarded which would be the start of a major improvement to the way in which the service operated, offering it valuable reporting tools and dashboards to help it improve timetabling and run a more efficient service.

- Culm Valley gym, studio and squash court refreshes were underway and would greatly enhance the user experience, bringing the facility up to a more contemporary standard.
- The swimming pool sites would see a refurbishment of the wet-side changing rooms in March 2025 and the team were working on logistics of this to minimise the impact of the work, and to ensure a quality finish consistent at both sites.
- Despite the challenging resource issues, the leisure team had made some major steps forward with the service with more to come and would welcome anyone who would like to visit the sites and have a chat with the Management Team to get in touch.

Discussion took place with regard to:

- The Chair commented that the Culm Valley gym was looking 'fantastic' following the recent refurbishment.
- The Operations Manager would be looking to seek out volunteers to help with possible park runs in the future.
- The service was looking to strengthen partnership relationships in the future with regard to providing support in the mental health area. There were lots of things the Leisure Service were already doing but they had yet to be pulled together into a formalised framework.

The Chair thanked the officer for his helpful update.

45 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (01:22:00)**

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

In addition to this, the Group requested that early in the new year a workshop be arranged for the Group to discuss their work programme for the coming year and the areas they particularly wanted to focus on. As mentioned earlier in the meeting there was a wide range of service areas falling under their remit with some key priority areas and their meetings needed to be as constructive as possible whilst always remembering the key aims and objectives of the Council's Corporate Plan.

(The meeting ended at 6.55 pm)

CHAIR