

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **CABINET** held on 4 March 2025 at 5.15pm

Present

Councillors

L Taylor, S J Clist, J Lock, J Buczkowski,
G Duchesne, S Keable, J Wright and
D Wulff

Apology

Councillor

N Bradshaw

Also Present

Councillor

E Buczkowski

Also Present

Officers:

Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Andrew Jarrett (Deputy Chief Executive (S151)), Maria De Leiburne (Director of Legal, People & Governance (Monitoring Officer)), Richard Marsh (Director of Place & Economy), Simon Newcombe (Head of Housing & Health), Matthew Page (Head of People, Performance & Waste), Paul Deal (Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience), Dean Emery (Head of Revenues, Benefits & Leisure), James Hamblin (Operations Manager for People Services), Tristan Peat (Forward Planning Team Leader), Kelly Lee (Leisure Business Manager), Ben Snow (Leisure Centre Manager) and David Parker (Democratic Services & Policy Research Officer)

Councillors

Online

L Cruwys, G Czapiewski, M Farrell, M Fletcher, A Glover,
R Roberts and S Robinson.

Officers Online

Clare Gillard (Finance Business Partner), Andy Mackie (Leisure Services Manager) and Jan Moreland (Finance Business Partner).

137. APOLOGIES (00:03:12)

Apologies were received from Cllr N Bradshaw.

138. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (0:03:22)**

Paul Elstone a local resident.

Question 1- Agenda Item 7 Establishment Report – Organisation Charts.

The Local Government Transparency Code 2015 updated 29 January 2025 Paragraph 44 required that this Council must publish an organisation chart for the top 3 levels that showed:

Contact details.

Salary Ceiling (the maximum for the grade).

Salary in £5,000 brackets.

This amongst other things.

Can it be confirmed that this organisation chart is currently available and if so, where is it published for the public to see?

Question 2 - Agenda Item 8 - Residents Survey.

It is noted that there is nearly a 50% reduction in persons responding to the survey down to just 433 residents this year. Assuming that the 42 Councillors completed this survey that's 10% of the total.

That given the population is 82,800 rightly it is stated that the low number of responses received is not a representative sample.

Has this Council any intention of trying to find out why such a low response?

Question 3

Given the very low response how can any credibility be placed in the percentage shifts? This as the process can be so easily corrupted.

Question 4 - Agenda Item 11 Quarter 3 Monitoring Report

Page 192 Appendix 7 HRA 1063 shows that over £214,000 has been spent on St Georges Court. The public were previously told the work required to make the properties fit for over 60's occupation would cost around £100,000.

What precisely does the increased expenditure relate to?

Question 5.

It is stated that there was no allocated budget at the beginning of the year, but cost has been covered by funding received from 3 Rivers.

It was the understanding that the 3 Rivers books were closed prior to the commencement of the financial year. Therefore, precisely what account has the funding come from?

Question 6

Is this not yet another Council loss incurred on the 3 Rivers account this including a further loss of nearly a quarter of a million pounds on the Haddon Heights site?

Question 7

It is noted that 7 of the ZED PODS projects are showing overspend and one by over £700,000. Can it be fully explained exactly why the overspend and against each project?

Question 8

As stated previously there is no easy way to see what the Housing Revenue Account Project original cost estimate was. Similarly, there is no easy way to see what the current project cost estimate is. This including in the Monitoring Report.

Will this be remedied and for reasons of openness and transparency that we are promised?

The Leader explained that as the questions had not been provided in writing in the required period in advance of the meeting that a written response would be provided within 10 working days.

Question 9 – Supplementary - Question asked after Council Leader said he was proud of what this Administration had achieved in respect of closing down the 3 Rivers business.

Question - The opportunity was given in May 2020 to shut 3 Rivers down, including by at least two Members of this Cabinet. So therefore, why was it not done then?

The Leader responded that there were two Members who are present in this Cabinet. They did not close 3 Rivers in May 2020 because it was a different administration and they went with the advice they received at that time.

139. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (0:08:26)

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

140. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (0:08:37)

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 4 February 2025 were **APPROVED** as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Leader.

141. POLICY FRAMEWORK REPORT (0:08:57)

The Cabinet had before it a report * from the Chief Executive on the Policy Framework.

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

- This annual report defined the Policy Framework in accordance with the Constitution for the Council.
- A list of Strategies and Policies covered by the Framework was published in Annexe 1.
- The documents gave dates of when various polices would be coming up for renewal.

RESOLVED that:

The Policy Framework be recommended to Council for adoption.

(Proposed by the Leader)

Note: *Report previously circulated.

142. PAY POLICY REPORT (0:10:50)

The Cabinet had before it a report * from the Head of People, Performance and Waste and the Operations Manager for People Services on the Pay Policy report.

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

- The Council was required to publish an annual policy to comply with the legislative requirements of the Localism Act 2011, relating to transparency on senior officer pay, in particular the roles of the Chief Executive, Directors and other senior officers.
- The purpose of having a pay policy was so that the pay and related award structure of the Council was transparent.
- The pay policy was detailed in appendix 1.

RESOLVED that:

The Pay Policy and appendices be recommended to Council for approval.

(Proposed by the Leader)

Reason for Decision:

To have a robust Pay Policy which ensured good use of public money in respect of the salaries of the most senior employees of the Council that was both transparent and visible.

Note: (i) *Report previously circulated.

(ii) Cllr G DuChesne abstained as she had left the meeting during this item. Cllr G DuChesne did not return for the remainder of the meeting.

143. ESTABLISHMENT REPORT (0:13:02)

The Cabinet had before it a report * from the Head of People, Performance and Waste and the Operations Manager for People Services regarding the Establishment.

The Cabinet Member for People, Development and Deputy Leader of the Council outlined the contents of the report with particular reference to the following:

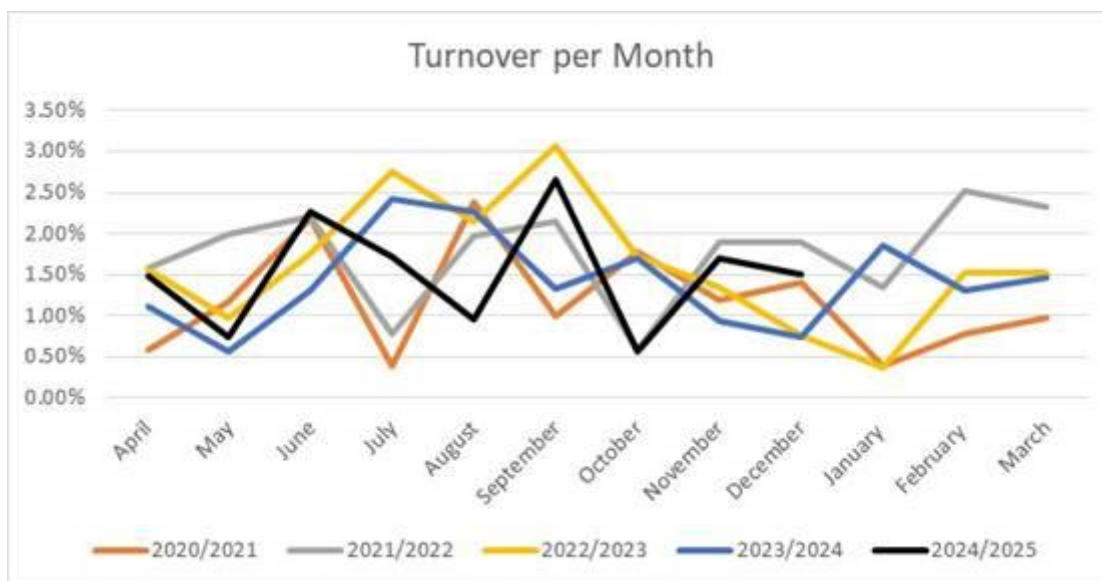
- The report provided Members with an update on both the Establishment of the Council together with its performance.

- The report should be read in conjunction with the functions of individual officers highlighted in the Constitution.
- The report sat within the current Budget and Policy Framework.
- An updated set of structure charts were provided in Appendix 1.
- The graph published on page 65 of the document pack for Cabinet regarding the Establishment report was incorrect. The sickness graph from page 62 had been duplicated on page 65 rather than the correct graph for turnover being presented. The correct graph was circulated to the Cabinet in hard copy. This would be available with the minutes of the meeting (correct graph is shown below) and would be available from Democratic Services. The accompanying statistics presented in points 3.1 and 3.2 of the paper were correct and aligned to the turnover graph.
- The excellent work that the Council was doing with apprentices.
- The pay for apprentices was rising to £12.26 per hour giving people an opportunity to earn while they learn. The Cabinet Member paid tribute to the calibre of apprentices coming forward.

Discussion took place with regard to:

- Sickness days were on a par with the lowest graph over the past five years.

Cabinet **NOTED** the report.



Note: *Report previously circulated.

144. MID DEVON RESIDENT SURVEY 2024 (0:16:19)

The Cabinet had before it a report * from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) on the Mid Devon Resident Survey 2024.

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

- The response rate to the Public Survey had been disappointing. However, the request to complete the survey had been sent out to all Parish Clerks, all Members, all council staff, primary schools within the district and the local press. Social media had been used and the survey had been sent to 6,500 people who were subscribers to the Mid Devon District Council E-Bulletins. Posters had been placed at Phoenix House, the Tiverton Pannier Market and the three leisure centres. A lot of work had gone into the survey and whilst it was disappointing to only get 433 responses from over 80,000 electors, it was difficult to get more people to complete the survey without significant extra cost to the tax payer.
- In surveys, perhaps more people were likely to respond if they were unhappy with the service so this could be interpreted in a positive light.
- The survey results that had been received showed that most respondents were fairly satisfied or very satisfied in mid Devon as a place to live.
- There was almost a 10% increase in those who were fairly satisfied or very satisfied with the way the Council ran things.
- There was a 10% decrease in those who were fairly or very dissatisfied, so that could be seen as an improvement.

Discussion took place with regards to:

- The Residents generally seemed content.
- Putting a population size of 88,000 into a sample size calculator using a “Z score” the ideal sample size that was calculated was 383, which was slightly below the 433 the Council received. It showed a 95% confidence level with a margin error of 5%.
- Looking at the cost of the survey it gave relative confidence in the accuracy and the general feeling of the public in mid Devon.
- Whether changing the time of year of the survey would assist in getting a better response rate, however, that would be difficult as the survey impacted on the budget setting process.
- Whether the State of the District Debate would be an excellent forum to engage with the parishes and give them a degree of ownership of the survey.

Cabinet **NOTED** the survey results.

Note: *Report previously circulated.

145. **MID DEVON HOUSING (MDH) RIGHT TO BUY POLICY (0:25:18)**

The Cabinet had before it a report * from the Head of Housing and Health on the Mid Devon Housing (MDH) Right to Buy Policy.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Property Services and Deputy Leader outlined the contents of the report with particular reference to the following:

- Under the statutory Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard set by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH), landlords must be open with tenants and treat them with fairness. Although the terms and processes that enable tenants to acquire their Council homes under Right to Buy (RTB) was largely set by legislation, it was important that Mid Devon Housing (MDH) had a clear point of reference through a specific policy available for tenants.

- There had also been some key recent legal changes to RTB policy nationally which made it timely to have an up to date policy in place. The report therefore, presented a new policy that outlined MDH's approach to managing tenant's right to buy their council homes.
- The report included specific additional scenarios for properties sold under RTB, those were:
 - Right of First Refusal: MDH's process for deciding on repurchase offers for properties resold within ten years of the original RTB purchase.
 - RTB Discount Repayment: The MDH procedure for reviewing requests to waive discount repayments if the property was sold within five years of purchase
 - Covenant Removal: Restrictions to keep former Council properties affordable for local buyers, with removal considered only in exceptional cases.

RESOLVED that the Right to Buy Policy and Equality impact Assessment contained in annexes A and B respectively as recommended by Homes Policy Development Group be recommended to Council for adoption.

(Proposed by Cllr S Clist and seconded by Cllr J Lock)

Reason for Decision:

A decision to buy back a former Right to Buy (RTB) property could only be made if a capital budget was available and approved for this purpose within the Housing Capital Programme.

Note: *Report previously circulated.

146. MID DEVON HOUSING (MDH) SAFEGUARDING ADULTS, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY (0: 28:20)

The Cabinet had before it a report * from the Head of Housing and Health on the Mid Devon Housing (MDH) Safeguarding Adults, Children and Young People Policy.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Property Services and Deputy Leader outlined the contents of the report with particular reference to the following:

- In March 2024, a Consumer Regulation Health check advised that Mid Devon Housing (MDH) establish a dedicated Safeguarding Policy to better manage risks associated with protecting vulnerable adults and children from abuse and neglect. Safeguarding was a crucial legal obligation for MDH. Whilst the existing corporate policy was widely updated in 2024 as an initial policy priority, it lacked detail on the role of MDH as a landlord as required by housing providers. The new MDH specific policy had been developed in the context of updating corporate policy.

Discussion took place regarding:

- In paragraph 12.12 'Having been in Care, Prison or other Institutions'. The Care element should be removed from that line and a new line should read 'having been in the care of a local authority'. It was agreed to be amended within the policy.

RESOLVED that the Mid Devon Housing (MDH) Safeguarding Adults at Risk, Children and Young People Policy and Equality impact Assessment contained in annexes A and B respectively as recommended by Homes Policy Development Group be recommended to Council for adoption.

(Proposed by Cllr S Clist and seconded by Cllr J Buczkowski)

Reason for Decision:

The policy contributed to Objective 3.4 outlined in the Corporate Plan: “We will work closely with our tenants to ensure they feel safe, secure and happy in their homes”.

Note: *Report previously circulated.

147. 2024/2025 QUARTER 3 MONITORING REPORT (0:32:37)

Cabinet had before it a report * from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) and the Head of Finance, Property and Climate Resilience on the 2024/2025 Quarter 3 Monitoring report.

The Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk outlined the contents of the report with particular reference to the following:

- The report provided a comprehensive overview of the Council’s financial position as they approached year-end, highlighting key variances, challenges, and opportunities.
General Fund & Financial Resilience
- The Council continued to maintain a strong and stable financial position, with the projected year-end outturn now forecasting a £293k underspend. This remained a significant improvement on budget and compared to the financial position in previous years, and was a testament to the Council’s sound financial management and fiscal responsibility. Importantly, it allowed the Council to build resilience for the future.
- If this forecast held, the General Fund reserve would increase to £2.318m, well above the Council’s agreed minimum balance of £2m. This was not just about ending the year in a good position—it was about preparing for the future.
- As outlined in the Council’s recently approved Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), the financial landscape ahead remained uncertain. With ongoing pressures, potential changes to local government funding, and no clear long-term settlement from Westminster, it was essential that the Council strengthened their reserves now—essentially, fixing the roof while the sun was shining, (to weather any financial storms that may be heading their way).
Income & Expenditure
- The Council’s income performance remained a mixed picture—some areas were exceeding expectations, while others faced economic headwinds. Planning and Building Control income continued to be affected by a stagnant housing market, but those shortfalls were more than offset by strong performance in Waste and Leisure, where recycle prices remained high and membership numbers had grown.
- On the expenditure side, staff costs remained the most significant driver of variances.

- The Council had managed budgets prudently in departments like Finance, HR, and Legal, creating underspends.
- However, challenges in key areas such as ICT and Environmental Enforcement had resulted in overspends.
- In some services, the Council were still reliant on agency staff due to difficulties filling long-term vacancies, particularly in Finance, Legal, and Planning Enforcement. Encouragingly, though, overall reliance on agency staffing continued to decline year-on-year.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

- The HRA remained in a healthy position, with a forecast underspend of £174k. However, this was lower than in Quarter 2, reflecting the financial impact of the historic rent calculation error. While tenant income had been affected, significant underspends in staffing and lower-than-expected borrowing costs had helped to maintain an overall positive financial outlook. That said, the Council were closely monitoring investment yields and the rising costs associated with void properties.

Capital Programme

- The Council's capital programme forecasted a £12.7m variance, primarily due to the slippage of £10.1m for the Cullompton Town Centre Relief Road. With funding now secured, the project was progressing well.
- Other key variances included:
 - Increased investment in Disabled Facilities grants, exceeding government funding.
 - Expansion of the Exe Valley Combined Heat and Power Plant (CHP) project to incorporate battery storage, allowing the Council to capture excess energy.
 - Mixed performance in HRA development projects, with some schemes accelerating ahead of schedule while others faced delays due to utility company coordination and road closures.
 - Further details on service variances, income, and staffing trends were outlined in Appendices B, C, and D.

3Rivers Update

- The formal closure of 3Rivers was completed on 26 November 2024. Meanwhile, work at St George's Court was nearing completion, with the first over-60s community residents moving in. However, progress at Bampton remained slow, despite price reductions stimulating new interest. While viewings had increased, no offers had been received yet, and the Council continued to assess the best course of action.

Conclusion

- In summary, Mid Devon's finances remained in a robust position despite external economic pressures. The Council's prudent management meant that the Council were not just balancing the books—they were building resilience for the future, ensuring that the Council were well-placed to handle economic shocks, funding uncertainties, and the ever-changing landscape of local government finance.
- The Council could not predict the future, but it could prepare for it—and that responsible approach ensured that the Council did exactly that.

RESOLVED that:

- a) The financial monitoring information for the income and expenditure for the nine months to 31 December 2024 and the projected outturn position be **NOTED**;
- b) The use of Waivers for the Procurement of goods and services as included in Section 8 be **NOTED**;
- c) The completion of the closure of 3Rivers Developments Ltd be **NOTED**.
- d) The revisions to the 2024/25 Treasury and Prudential Code Indicators (para 6.1.1 and 6.1.2) be **APPROVED**.

(Proposed by Cllr J Buczkowski and seconded by Cllr S Clist)

Reason for Decision:

Good financial management and administration underpinned the entire document. A surplus or deficit on the Revenue Budget would impact on the Council's General Fund balances. The Council's financial position was constantly reviewed to ensure its continued financial health.

Note * Report previously circulated.

148. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (0:38:25)

Cabinet had before it a report * from the Director of Place and Economy on the Local Development Scheme.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration outlined the contents of the report with particular reference to the following:

- The report was about the need for an amended timetable for preparing a new Local Plan for Mid Devon.
- Local Planning Authorities were required to prepare and keep up to date a development plan for their area. The Mid Devon Local Plan was adopted in July 2020 and work had commenced with preparing a new Local Plan that would cover the period to 2043.
- There was a legal requirement to maintain a Local Development Scheme (LDS). The LDS was the project plan for preparing the Local Plan and included a timetable which set out the key milestones for each step of plan preparation. A new LDS was needed now. This followed a Government requirement for all local planning authorities to produce an updated LDS and submit those by no later than 6 March this year.
- A new LDS had been prepared and was included in Appendix 1 to the report. The preparation of the new LDS had involved consideration of a number of important matters, including:
 - Progress already made with preparing a new Local Plan and remaining work needed,
 - Government reforms to the planning system, including:
 - a new National Planning Policy Framework,
 - new standard method for calculation housing need and increased number of new homes that needed to be planned for in Mid Devon,

- a deadline for submission of Local Plans under the current system and the forthcoming introduction of a new plan making system,
 - Resources and capacity available,
- The report included a detailed evaluation of 4 options for progressing the new local plan:
 - Option 1** - Prepare the Local Plan under the current 2004 Act system through the two staged approach to plan making including a second Regulation 18 consultation on Draft Policies and Site Options consultation and Regulation 19 publication (proposed submission) stage plan.
 - Option 2** - Prepare the Local Plan under the current 2004 Act system through moving straight to a Regulation 19 publication (proposed submission) stage plan.
 - Option 3** – Move to the reformed plan making system once this had been introduced and front load the process now though progressing technical studies, evidence gathering and develop emerging spatial development strategy and site development options.
 - Option 4** - Stop production of a new Local Plan and wait for the Government to introduce new regulations for preparing plans under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 expected in the summer 2025.
- The merits of each option had been carefully considered and it was recommended that Option 3 was taken forward.
- Option 3 was the most practicable option to produce a new Local Plan that provided sufficient opportunity for early public engagement and for the Mid Devon community to have a say on emerging proposals before the draft Local Plan was finalised. It would also provide more time to complete the preparation of the new Local Plan and the technical work that was needed to inform it, which would increase the likelihood of the Local Plan being found sound at its examination. While the forthcoming plan making regulations were not expected until the summer 2025, the Government confirmed on the 27 February its intention to progress the implementation of plan making reforms, including a requirement to prepare Local Plans in 30 months, included 'gateway' checks and also included two mandatory stages of public engagement. Risks could also be mitigated through frontloading work now that there was core to plan-making, including an emerging spatial development strategy and site options.
- A new Local Development Scheme was included in Appendix 1, which included updated key milestones.

Discussion took place with regard to:

- Risks and Mitigations of Option 3 and whether there was any chance of the current Local Plan timing out under that option. The current Local Plan would become five years old in July 2025 at which point the Standard Method would be applied to calculating housing need within the District. There would be a high probability that that would result in the Council no longer being able to demonstrate a 5 year deliverable housing land supply. That would happen irrespective of the options presented. The Government had announced on 27 February 2025 that it did intend to carry forward the proposals for a 30 month timetable for the production of local plans as part of its proposed reforms to the plan making system. This would include gateway checks and two mandatory stages for public consultation at the two key stages of plan

preparation. This announcement gave the Council a much greater degree of confidence in what the new plan making system would look like, where the regulations for the new system had not yet been published. A locally produced and derived Spatial Development Strategy coupled with a locally produced and derived set of site development options would remain core to the new Local Plan under the new system and this work had already been progressed.

- If the Government had not changed the National Planning Policy Framework or increased the Council's housing targets by 67% then the Council would have been on track to deliver a new local plan for Mid Devon for submission by December 2026.
- The requirement for two mandatory stages for public consultation would provide an early opportunity for the public and Parish Councils to comment on and help shape the emerging policies of the new local plan before it was finalised for submission for its independent examination.

RESOLVED that:

1. The Local Development Scheme 2025 based on option 3 in Table 1 in this report and which was included in Appendix 1 and published on the Council's website be **APPROVED**.
2. A copy of the Local Development Scheme 2025 (Appendix 1) be submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by the Government's deadline of the 6 March 2025.

(Proposed by Cllr S Keable and seconded by Cllr J Buczkowski)

Reason for Decision:

The new Local Development Scheme, set out a timetable for a new Local Plan, which would set the strategy for guiding new development in the district, allocate sites for housing and economic development, the provision of infrastructure, as well as policies for the protection of the environment and managing development.

Note * Report previously circulated.

149. UNPAID CARERS- ACCESS TO LEISURE (0:52:18)

Cabinet had before it a report * from the Head of Revenues, Benefits and Leisure and the Leisure Services Manager on the Access to Leisure for Unpaid Carers.

The Cabinet Member for Service Delivery and Continuous Improvements outlined the contents of the report with particular reference to the following:

- Unpaid carers played an essential role in our community, providing invaluable support to family members, friends, and loved ones who required care due to age, illness, or disability. Their dedication often went unnoticed, yet their contributions were estimated to save billions of pounds annually in social care costs. Despite their selflessness, many unpaid carers faced financial strain, social isolation, and challenges in maintaining their physical and mental well-being. It was vital that the Council recognised their efforts and explored ways to support them.
- The report presented a pilot scheme aimed at addressing one critical area of support—access to leisure facilities. Recognising the positive impact of

exercise and social engagement on well-being, this initiative offered discounted leisure memberships to our local carers and free access for young carers. By easing financial barriers and providing opportunities for relaxation and respite, the Council hoped to enhance carers' overall health and quality of life. This initiative built upon the success of a previous trial and aligned with the Council's broader commitment to community well-being and inclusivity.

- The report outlined the details of this proposed pilot, including eligibility criteria, financial considerations, and evaluation methods. It sought Cabinet approval to proceed with this initiative, not only to support unpaid carers in Mid Devon but also to potentially serve as a model for other district councils across Devon. By demonstrating the benefits of improved leisure access for carers, this trial had the potential to inform future countywide strategies and encourage broader adoption of similar schemes. By investing in carers' well-being through this initiative, the Council took an important step towards building a more inclusive and supportive community, both locally and across the wider region.

Discussion took place with regard to:

- The Council were fortunate that Cllr F Letch (Chair of the Council) had done a lot of work with the Carers Group in Devon and in particular there was a lot of discussion about young carers.
- It should be noted that the Council had already given free access to leisure centres to Care Leavers.
- Hopefully this initiative would encourage more people and in particular young carers to come forward and register as young carers and so take advantage of the scheme.
- The Council was working quite closely with Devon County Council and the Care Ambassadors as well to encourage carers to step away from their responsibilities occasionally and to give them the confidence and the permission to join the sports and leisure facilities as something for themselves.
- The beneficial nature of the networking that may be a further benefit to carers from this initiative.
- The Council was meeting with Devon Carers to agree the best means of promoting this initiative widely to all carers.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- a) The pilot as detailed within this report be **APPROVED**.
- b) That adult carers received a 25% discount on membership, or a 20% discount on casual sessions. Additionally, carers under the age of 18 would be granted free access to the facilities be **APPROVED**;
- c) Delegation to the Deputy Chief Executive (s151) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Service Delivery and Continuous Improvement to make any minor changes as required to enable the pilot to proceed be **APPROVED**.

(Proposed by Cllr J Wright and seconded by Cllr J Lock)

Reason for Decision:

The proposed pilot project to support unpaid carers by providing access to leisure services was likely to have several positive equalities impacts. However, it was

essential to consider potential disparities and ensure that the project was inclusive and accessible to all carers.

Note * Report previously circulated.

150. ACCESS TO INFORMATION- EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC (1:00:35)

The Leader indicated that discussion with regard to the following items, may require the Cabinet to pass the following resolution to exclude the press and public having reflected on Article 12 12.02 (d) (a presumption in favour of openness) of the Constitution. This decision was required because consideration of this matter in public would disclose information falling within one of the descriptions of exempt information in Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972. The Cabinet decided, in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption interest in disclosing the information, outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

It was **RESOLVED** that the meeting remain in Part 1.

151. AWARD OF DRAINAGE WORKS CONTRACT FROM HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNTS PROPERTIES 2025-2029 (1:01:19)

Cabinet had before it a report * from the Head of Housing and Health on the Award of Drainage Works Contract from Housing Revenue Accounts Properties 2025-2029.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Property Services and Deputy Leader outlined the contents of the report with particular reference to the following:

- To advise Cabinet Members on the results for the tendering of the Drainage Works Contract for Housing Revenue Account Properties 2025 – 2029 and confirm the award of the contract.

RESOLVED that:

- The new four year Drainage Works Contract for HRA Properties 2025 - 2029, be awarded to Contractor 1.
- Delegated authority be granted to the S151 Officer (in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Property Services) to complete the associated Drainage Works Contract for HRA Properties 2025-2029.

(Proposed by the Cllr S Clist and seconded by Cllr J Lock)

Reason for Decision:

To contribute towards meeting our obligations relating to the Decent Homes target by making best use of the existing stock.

Note * Report previously circulated

152. AWARD OF INTERNAL PAINTING CONTRACT FOR HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) PROPERTIES FOR 2025-2029 (1:03:27)

Cabinet had before it a report * from the Head of Housing and Health on the Award of Internal Painting Contract for Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Properties for 2025-2029.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Property Services and Deputy Leader outlined the contents of the report with particular reference to the following:

- To advise Cabinet Members on the results for the tendering of the Internal Painting Contract for HRA Properties 2025–2029 and confirm the award of the contract.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Where there were a number of similar scores in the evaluation process, were there any other factors that were taken into account before awarding the contract? The main areas focussed on were quality and price. However, to be accepted as a valid tender there were a number of other requirements which had to be met in terms of company due diligence, environmental performance etc. There was quite a wide area within the base threshold to have the tender accepted in the first place.

RESOLVED that:

- The new four year Internal Painting Contract for HRA Properties 2025 - 2029, be awarded to Contractor 7.
- Delegated authority be granted to the S151 Officer (in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Property Services) to complete the associated Internal Painting Contract for HRA Properties 2025-2029.

(Proposed by Cllr S Clist and seconded by Cllr J Lock)

Reason for Decision:

To contribute towards meeting our obligations relating to the Decent Homes target by making best use of the existing stock.

Note * Report previously circulated

153. THE COUNCIL INSURANCE AWARD (1:07:21)

Cabinet had before it a report * from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) on the Council Insurance Award.

The Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk outlined the contents of the report with particular reference to the following:

- The report was on the award of the Council's insurance contracts for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2028, with an option to extend for a further two years.

- The expiry of the Council's current agreement required a public tender process, which had now been successfully completed.
- The process had resulted in a competitive selection of insurers across key categories, ensuring robust coverage for the Council's assets, liabilities, and operations. The recommendations before Cabinet represented a balanced approach—delivering essential protections while maintaining financial responsibility.
- Notably, the new contracts provided an expanded range of risk management support and aligned with the Council's procurement principles.
- While this award did create a financial pressure of around £78k, it was a necessary investment to safeguard the Council against unforeseen risks.

Discussion took place with regard to:

- The Council had had to make a number of claims on their insurance policies over the past few years. However, whenever a claim was made, the officers would do a lessons learned exercise, all services would be informed so that the Council could minimise their exposure as much as possible. Knowledge learned was also shared among neighbouring local authorities and received from them so that all could learn from best practice.
- The increase in insurance premium was reflective of the current market conditions.
- There was brokerage support in putting together the new insurance contracts.

RESOLVED that:

- The new insurance contracts for the period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2028 be awarded to:
 Insurer 3 – Lot 1 – General Properties
 Insurer 3 – Lot 2 – Industrial and Commercial Property
 Insurer 4 – Lot 3 – Casualty and Crime
 Insurer 5 – Lot 4 – Motor Fleet
 Insurer 4 – Lot 5 – Personal Accident and Travel
 Insurer 4 – Lot 6 – Engineering Insurance and Inspection
 Insurer 3 – Lot 7 – Leasehold Right to Buy

(Proposed by the Cllr J Buczkowski and seconded by Cllr S Clist)

Reason for Decision:

The award of this contract would realise a pressure of £78,314.08 against existing insurance premium and a £23,828.04 pressure against 2025/26 budget. This contract award protected the Council and its services from the financial risk of liability claims.

Note * Report previously circulated

154. NOTIFICATION OF KEY DECISIONS (1:11:41)

The Cabinet had before it, and **NOTED**, the Notification of Key Decisions *.

The Clerk identified the changes that had been made to the list since it was published with the agenda.

This included the following:

- The Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan had moved from May to the meeting in June 2025.
- The Council Tax Rebate Policy to be added to the meeting in December 2025.
- A Digital Transformation verbal update to be added to the meeting in May 2025.

Note: * Key Decisions Report previously circulated.

(The meeting ended at 6.28 pm)

LEADER