

MINUTES of a MEETING of the COMMUNITY, PEOPLE & EQUALITIES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held on 25 March 2025 at 12.30 pm

Present

Councillors

B Holdman (Chair)
C Connor (Vice-Chair), D Broom, A Cuddy,
M Farrell, H Tuffin and L G J Kennedy

Apologies

Councillors

C Harrower and A Glover

Also Present

Councillors

D Wulff

Also Present

Officers:

Simon Newcombe (Head of Housing & Health), Matthew Page (Head of People, Performance & Waste), Dr Stephen Carr (Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager), Joanne Pope (Commercial Team Leader Public Health) and David Parker (Democratic Services & Policy Research Officer)

Councillors

Online

J Buczkowski, A Glover and J Lock

Officers Online

Adrian Gardner (Specialist Lead - Community Safety and Safeguarding), Tanya Wenham (Operations Manager to Public Health) and Sarah Lees (Democratic Services Officer)

Also in attendance

Inspector Mark Arthurs Neighbourhood Policing Inspector for Mid Devon and Police Constable Kate Jeffries a Local Neighbourhood Beat Manager.

34 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (0:03:29)

Apologies were received from Cllr C Harrower, she was substituted by Cllr L G J Kennedy.

Cllr A Glover attended on line.

35 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (0:04:01)

There were no questions from members of the public.

36 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (0:04:20)

No interests were declared under this item.

37 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (0:04:35)

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 December 2024 were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chair.

38 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (0:05:06)

The Chair had no announcements to make.

39 MEETING MANAGEMENT ITEM

Due to the Police Inspector needing to be back at his office for 2.00pm, the Presentation from the Police would be brought forward to the next item on the agenda with the Community Safety Partnership Policy to follow that and the Corporate Anti-Social Behaviour Policy to follow that.

40 PRESENTATION FROM THE POLICE ON THEIR EFFORTS TO TACKLE ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (0:05:42)

The Group received a presentation from the Neighbourhood Policing Inspector for Mid Devon.

- In addition to the Inspector, there were currently 8 Police Constables and 6 Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) who covered the mid Devon area. Following the promotion of Sergeant Simon Andrews the Sergeant's post was currently vacant.
- Performance meetings were held monthly looking at performance indicators, crime, fraud, domestic abuse, anti-social behaviour, crime trends and issues within certain localities.
- Mid Devon had 3 Police Stations one in Crediton, Cullompton and Tiverton and the team of 15 officers and staff were split equally between those stations. Due to the rural nature of Mid Devon, response times could be challenging but they had stepped away from officers all being in one hub to responding direct from the local Police Stations so there should be an improvement in response times.
- The Police and Crime Commissioner had just announced that a significant part of her plan would be tackling Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). ASB could cover a significant amount of issues some of which were criminal and some that were not. It covered anything from dog fouling, speeding, nuisance behaviour to drunk and disorderly. The Police had worked with the Council and Social Services in looking at the escalation process which looked at tackling both young and older people. Using the escalation process the Police and the Council tried to intervene at each stage working with partner agencies to try and reduce ASB.

- Recently, there had been problems in Tiverton around ASB involving young people. The Police working with the Council and Social Services had followed not just a criminal justice focussed approach but a joined up approach in terms of safeguarding and recognising vulnerability. Questions were asked about the cause of that person's ASB, was it their home? Was there someone grooming them? Was child sexual exploitation involved? All the partner organisations were brought together with the common goal of making that person safe whilst recognising that that person had made the community feel unsafe. In the autumn of 2024 there had been an increase in drug and drink related ASB in an adult cohort, the Police had pursued them through the criminal justice route to ensure that Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBO) were sought, as a result 3 or 4 main offenders received lengthy custodial sentences. That had resulted in a significant improvement in Tiverton town centre.
- Crediton Town Council had worked with the Police and the District Council to enforce Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO) and so reduce ASB that way.
- Crime Trends Reports were available on-line. The Police had moved away from producing reports for Parish Councils as all the information was available on-line at www.police.uk. There had been a rise in dwelling house burglaries and performance car thefts which formed part of wider operations tactics and was held by one of the Police's investigative divisions.
- As mid Devon was predominantly a rural community and as spring had arrived, the current theme was livestock worrying and livestock theft along with responsible dog ownership.
- The local Police Team still had to tackle organised crime groups and recently had closed a really significant cannabis farm in Cullompton.
- The ASB escalation process included: Letter 1, Letter 2 and an Acceptable Behaviour Contract. That got the Police across the stages of telling people 'your behaviour is unacceptable if you don't stop this, you're going to get another warning letter', but eventually that would turn into either; a civil injunction at court or the perpetrator ending up with a criminal record with the police looking at community protection warnings and community protection notices.
- The Inspector was in favour of using civil legislation to prevent escalation in crime, as an example he mentioned 'gang injunctions' and tackling 'legal highs'. Further Acts were coming through Parliament which would give the Police additional powers.

Discussion took place regarding:

- No effect on crime or ASB had been seen by the dimming and switching off the street lights in rural areas, if ASB continued then the Inspector would have concerns if that policy was rolled out across Tiverton.
- County Lines were everywhere. Police Officers were trained in recognising it and training should be rolled out to partner agencies too.
- The ASB in the Tiverton multi-storey car park that was getting out of control and needed to be addressed by the Police. There was a risk to life with slates being dropped from the top floor.
There was a new Crime Management Investigation Team so that most of the everyday reports of crime, not serious complex crime investigations, went to a central point to be managed. There were a lot of new officers in that team and there had been some confusion as to the seriousness of the situation. Reports of ASB in the car park had dropped off but if the behaviour was continuing,

reports of that behaviour should continue to be made. If the Police saw a month on month increase in reporting of crime then that assisted the Inspector in getting more staff. Reports of crime, ideally should be made through the website.

- The Head of Finance, Property and Climate Resilience informed Members that there was currently underway a review of security in the Tiverton multi-storey car park with a significant project planned for the site which would enhance the critical nature of securing the site and preventing anyone from getting up to the higher levels.
- The Police did have a link to the CCTV control room, there were two radios in the control room, one for Exeter and one for East and Mid Devon. The situation had improved and the CCTV Team were responsive to requests from the Police.
- ASB at Moorhayes and the recent Police meeting with residents from there. Moorhayes would continue to be a policing priority for Police in Tiverton. It appeared to be an evening and night time issue and the Inspector would seek more resourcing from a wider area if the problems persisted.
- Vandalism at the Tiverton Town Allotments.
- Police priorities were set largely from engagement with the public and partners identifying trends in crime, so continued reporting of crime would influence priorities.
- The most effective way of contacting the Police for non-emergency matters was via the website using the on-line forms or Chat, however, if people wanted to get hold of a team individually, the e-mail addresses were: crediton@devonandcornwall.pnn.police.uk or cullompton@devonandcornwall.pnn.police.uk or tiverton@devonandcornwall.pnn.police.uk.
- Shop theft was a continuing problem. The Police were working with an external private company who worked with major brands and shops who were building an intelligence database looking at organised crime gangs in shoplifting. The Tiverton team did concentrate on those who were prolific offenders. It was important that shoplifting offences were still reported to the Police. There had been a 2% increase in shoplifting across the County.
- A new specialist in business crime was working from the Police headquarters.
- A high level of speeding cars on the B3181 at Willand particularly at times when the M5 was closed for overnight works. Would it be possible for the Police to monitor traffic speed the next time the M5 was closed? The Inspector asked to see the parish's Vehicle Activated Sign data to assist him in formulating a case for that resource.
- The Inspector invited Councillors to give him ideas of how to get his message out to communities particularly to make reports of crime.

41 COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP (CSP) UPDATE (1:12:20)

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a *report from the Head of Housing and Health (Chair of the East and Mid Devon CSP).

The East and Mid Devon Community Safety Partnership (CSP) was a statutory function under the Crime and Disorder Act. It was a multi-agency group that came together to look at community safety and crime in a particular area. The group comprised; the Police, the upper and lower tier Local Authorities i.e. Devon County Council (DCC) and the District Councils, the Fire and Rescue Service, the Probation

Service and the NHS. They were the statutory partners that made up the board of the CSP. The CSP had its group terms of reference which were updated this year and the role of chairing the partnership could be met by any of those statutory partners.

Two key initiatives and key areas of work that the CSP had focussed on in the last 12 months had both focussed on Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). The use of the Council's powers had been expanded and they had equipped Mid Devon's housing team to do more ASB work directly and work specifically with young people and the intervention panel around young offenders and young persons engaged in ASB.

The following was highlighted:

- There was a link at the bottom of the report that would take readers to the Devon County Community Safety Partnership full report, which included the Community Strategic Assessment.
- The CSP had seen the second highest increase in crime after South Devon and Dartmoor CSP, proving that there was a rural nature to some of the crime in addition to the city and town nature.
- Crime numbers were quite low so any change in them led to fairly high percentage changes.
- There had been a double figure increase in domestic abuse so that type of crime would be a priority for the CSP.
- Martyn's Law – The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill 2024. The Security Industry Authority would be the regulator and it would not be for the Council to enforce.
- The new Police and Crime Bill would include changes around how shoplifting was treated as a crime. There would be a broad focus on anti-social behaviour with particular emphasis on young people and street related ASB.
- Domestic Abuse and Violence against Women and Girls. This would include a focus on young people and harmful sexual behaviours including misogyny and harmful sexual content.
- Exploitation with an emphasis on young people which again led back to 'County Lines', drugs and modern slavery.
- Statutory Duties on the CSP irrespective of where they set their own priorities included: a serious violence duty; domestic homicide reviews; and safeguarding adult reviews which was about particularly complex cases where there had been a failure to protect a vulnerable adult (learning lessons from the past and applying those going forward).
- The CSP had no direct funding other than ad-hoc specific grants for particular projects and so was largely a facilitating body. It was about the people in the room rather than the money they could spend, it was about partnerships. The CSP also facilitated groups in accessing Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) funding and some of the community grant work that the PCC had stood up. There was a small local authority budget to cover those statutory duties mentioned earlier.

Discussion took place regarding:

- A Community Alcohol Partnership had been set up in Tiverton to educate young people around the dangers of alcohol misuse and to help promote healthier activities. Recently they had held a family day and invited a wide range of families that had been struggling and had young adults and children

that had been associated with some of the local problems, there they were offered support and encouragement. The Coordinator had expressed an interest in developing similar partnerships in Crediton and Cullompton.

- Public Space Protection Orders (particularly a new order under review in Crediton).
- Respect Orders may be a new power coming through central Government later in 2025.
- Street related ASB in young people included drug taking as well as alcohol and anything else happening on the streets, in the town centres and in the communities that focussed on young people.
- Causes of and trends in Domestic Abuse.
- Home Office funding through Devon County Council to fund sessions in schools around appropriate relationships and appropriate behaviours.
- Lack of early intervention caused by lack of resources.
- Domestic Violence from the child on the parent. Members of the family were often in the front line.
- The age at which young people may need to be engaged with. There were 2 key age groups. Those pupils transitioning from primary to secondary school (10-12 years old) and those who were 15 to 17 years of age were also particularly vulnerable.
- Provision of Youth Services outside the school remit was largely left to voluntary agencies.

Note: *Report previously circulated.

42 CORPORATE ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR UPDATE (1:53:02)

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a *report from the Head of Housing and Health presenting an update on Anti-Social Behaviour.

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

- The work the Council was doing was driven through the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) working with the Council's Public Health, Community and Housing teams working directly with people that commit Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).
- The definition of ASB in the report showed how wide the issue was.
- East Devon and Mid Devon were working with the South Devon and Dartmoor CSP.
- The Youth Intervention Panel was something that had been piloted by the Police working with the CSP. It was about bringing young people into the process at a very early stage with the agencies that touched upon their life whether it was with Housing Teams, Social Services, doctors NHS, Police, the family and those young people. During the process the group talked through what was happening, why the behaviour was occurring and what else was going on in that individual's life or in their family. Was it about the cost of living crisis, lack of decent housing or alcohol and drug misuse? The group discussed how they could tackle the problem together from a multi-agency perspective and how they could intervene before a Community Protection Warning (CPW's) or Community Protection Notices (CPN's) were issued.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The Fire and Rescue Service were also a statutory partner on the CSP.
- Irresponsible dog ownership.
- The Youth ASB toolkit (Annex B in the report) showed early interventions. Letters 1 and 2, Community Protection Warnings (CPW) Criminal Protection Notices (CPN) were all civil justice actions and not criminal justice until such time as there was a breach. There were lots of interventions that could be made on a civil basis which hopefully would keep the individual away from the criminal justice process.
- Current compliance across the 2 CSP's with CPW's and CPN's were 98%. It was diverting a huge percentage of individuals away from the criminal justice system.

Note: *Report previously circulated.

43 ANNUAL AIR QUALITY REVIEW (2:04:18)

The Group received and **NOTED** a *report from the Head of Housing and Health presenting the Annual Air Quality Review.

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

- The Council had a statutory responsibility to monitor air quality under the Local Air Quality Management regime and to report to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).
- There were 2 Air Quality Management Areas, one in Crediton and another in Cullompton which were set up on the basis of historic air quality exceedances of the air quality standards in each town. As the Council had continued to monitor and introduce changes and measures to tackle the air quality, so the air quality in both towns had improved. DEFRA were now expecting that the Council should be reviewing the status of their air quality management areas going forward. Within the next 12 months the Council would review the presence of the air quality management areas.
- In the intervening period, the Council had commissioned 2 new air monitoring stations that would be placed in Crediton and Cullompton and allowed the Council to receive high resolution, high quality data, minute by minute, 365 days a year. It was expected that the data would show a continuation of the trend towards cleaner air, however, in Cullompton in particular there would be pressures caused by development and infrastructure delivery. Bearing that in mind, the review would happen in 12 months' time.
- Data from the monitoring stations would be available on line for all to see.

Discussion took place in regarding:

- How the Council could be sure that the air quality was safe when no real time monitoring had been carried out since September 2023?
- The delay in providing a railway station at Cullompton.

Note: *report previously circulated.

44 PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD FOR QUARTER 3 (2:22:05)

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a *slide showing performance information in the Community, People and Equalities area for quarter 3.

The following was highlighted by the Corporate Performance and Improvement Manager:

- The Dashboard aimed to give an "at a glance" understanding of how services were performing in terms of performance, finance, and risk. Any measures that were also part of the Corporate Plan were listed in yellow text.
- The indicators were presented with their current performance, the annual target, and a RAG (red, amber, green) rating to indicate whether the Council was on track to meet their targets.
- Overall performance was presented in a pie chart and combined the RAG ratings from both the performance and finance measures.

For the measures showing as Red:

- New subscribers to Let's Talk Mid Devon - during Quarter 3 the Communications Team used the platform once again for the Council's Residents' Survey. However, for the first time the Council asked the public to sign up to the platform before they could complete the survey questions. This meant the Council saw a big uptake in the number of people joining the platform. In Quarter 3 there were 3,729 visits to the website, 598 contributions, 123 sign ups and an engagement rate of almost 21%.
- Licenced vehicle inspections. Due to vacancies within the Licensing Team and the work associated with implementing the new Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy, the team had undertaken few taxi inspections. The new Policy introduced additional criteria as part of the vehicle inspections. While the team worked through the process to ensure consistency of approach, the number of inspections had decreased. The vacancies meant it was unlikely the target would be reached this year.
- Private water supply sampling. Additional staff were being trained to undertake the private water supply work. Each officer had to be accredited to take samples.
- Food Service - Total Inspections completed. The service was now struggling to keep up with demand due to vacancies. The Regulatory Officer role had now been filled and would concentrate on those premises rated D and E, however, this role was not competent to deal with the higher risk premises. Due to difficulty recruiting to a senior role, the Council were now unable to deliver the number of inspections per quarter that were needed to achieve the target of 100%. A review of resources and structure to deliver was underway.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Was the sign up rate of 21% on "Let's Talk Mid Devon" what the Council expected? The Council had shown that it was committed to using the tool, there

had been some successes in Housing and the Planning Team were now looking at how they could use it. The Management Team were constantly reviewing how they could encourage people to utilise the platform for the benefit of the residents as well as for the benefit of the Council.

- Were there too many public platforms and was that confusing for the public?
- Licenced vehicle inspections were lower for Quarter 3 due to some key changes in the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy which brought in new standards and new requirements. Those changes had been substantially different for operators, so whilst the operators were getting used to the new requirements there had been a 'soft touch' approach with them. This year the approach had been around education and making sure that they were familiar with the Policy and some of the new requirements.

Note: *slide previously circulated.

45 **SINGLE EQUALITIES POLICY AND EQUAL OBJECTIVES (2:31:50)**

The Group had before it a *report from the Head of People, Performance and Waste and the Corporate Performance and Improvement Manager on the Single Equalities Policy and the Equalities Objectives.

The following was highlighted within the report:

- The document had been reviewed and updated by officers over the past six months, including review at the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group.
- The Single Equality Scheme for 2025 at Appendix 1 was subject to a significant update in 2023 following the release of the 2021 Census data at a district level. It had been reviewed and improved upon in each year following this. Any changes to the document were highlighted in red text.
- This year the Council had further structured the document into four key sections:
Section one simply introduced the document. Section two was the Equality Profile for Mid Devon - this was a data rich section which pulled information from a wide range of sources to help the Council form a greater understanding of the people who lived in the district. Section three set out the Council's Equality Objectives for the next financial year. As set out in legislation, those objectives had to be specific and measureable. The Objectives were largely based on those from the previous financial year, but had been further refined by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group and the Leadership Team. Section four set out the ways in which the Council worked in support of the Equality Act.
- In addition to this, Members had before them at Appendix 2 the Equality Action Plan for the current financial year. The Action Plan was based specifically on the Equality Objectives from the current year, and data was collected and monitored in year by the EDI Group.
- A number of other initiatives related to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion that the Council was undertaking were included in the covering report for information.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Menopause Awareness. Menopause awareness training was to be rolled out to staff and the Council was looking to set up a network of Menopause champions. The Council already had a Union (UNISON), Staff Impact Group and Well-being ambassadors in place and the Council were looking to repeat this in relation to menopause awareness.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that the Single Equality Scheme together with the Equality Objectives for 2025/26 be approved.

(Proposed by Cllr D Broom and seconded by Cllr H Tuffin)

Reason for the decision:

The Equality Objectives contributed to various sections of the Corporate Plan, but in particular helped to support the Council achieve its objectives under the Community, People and Equalities theme, helping to ensure that the Council was “Involving and engaging with communities, ensuring everyone was treated with equity and respect and protecting the most vulnerable”.

Note: *report previously circulated.

46 MEET THE FUNDERS EVENT FOR THE VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE ORGANISATIONS (2:38:30)

The Chair led the group in a discussion about the possibility of organising a “Meet the Funders” event for the voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations.

- The Chair had been at an event with voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations last year where they raised a need for a platform and networking opportunity to help them build relationships and work together with similarly aligned groups.
- This event had been suggested, building upon something similar which had happened at East Devon.
- The proposal was that the Council set up a Working Group to plan an event.
- The plan would be to have 10 or 12 funders, including the Council, where Community Groups, Charities and Social Enterprise Organisations would be invited to come and meet the funders.
- The Working Group would work out details for such an event.
- The following Councillors agreed to join the Working Group: Cllr B Holdman, Cllr C Connor and Cllr H Tuffin. Cllr G DuChesne (Cabinet Member for Parish and Community Engagement), Cllr J Lock (Cabinet Member for People, Development and Deputy Leader) would attend in an advisory capacity.

The Group **AGREED** that a Working Group be formed to set up a ‘Meet the Funders’ event for the voluntary sector.

(Proposed Cllr A Cuddy and seconded Cllr C Connor).

47 **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE COMMUNITY, PEOPLE AND EQUALITIES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP. (2:42:44)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, the Chair's Annual Report * for 2024/2025.

This report along with all other Chair's reports for 2024/2025 would be presented at full Council on 23 April 2025.

The Chair thanked Members of the Committee and officers for their help and support throughout the past year.

Note: *Report previously circulated.

(The meeting ended at 3.40pm)

CHAIR