

**MINUTES of a MEETING of the SERVICE DELIVERY & CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP** held on 15 September 2025 at 5.30 pm

**Present**

**Councillors**

J Buczkowski (Chair)  
M Farrell, C Harrower (Vice-Chair), L Knight,  
R Roberts and M Stratton

**Apologies**

**Councillors**

M D Binks, B Fish, M Jenkins and J Poynton

**Also Present**

**Councillors**

G Duchesne and J Wright

**Also Present**

**Officers**

Paul Deal (Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience), Matthew Page (Head of People, Performance & Waste), Lisa Lewis (Head of Digital Transformation & Customer Engagement), Darren Beer (Operations Manager for Street Scene), Luke Howard (Environment and Enforcement Manager) and Sarah Lees (Democratic Services Officer)

**Councillors**

**Online**

E Buczkowski, L G J Kennedy and D Wulff

**17 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

The following apologies were received:

- Cllr M Binks who was substituted by Cllr R Roberts
- Cllr B Fish
- Cllr M Jenkins
- Cllr J Poynton

**18 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

## 19 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

No interests were declared under this item.

## 20 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2025 were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chair.

## 21 **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair informed the Group that Active Mid Devon, the Council's new look Leisure Service, had been shortlisted for a national award. The awards recognised organisations and individuals who were driving innovation and making a positive change to the physical activity sector across the UK. He wished them good luck!

## 22 **DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION UPDATE (00:04:00)**

The Head of Digital Transformation and Customer Engagement provided the Group with a verbal update on several projects which fell under the umbrella of Digital Transformation.

This included the following information:

### In-cab project

- This was a significant piece of digital transformation work designed for the Waste Service and its heavy goods vehicles.
- It would be able to provide real time evidence and capture communications for the waste crews.
- It would help with routing and in identifying missed collections.
- It would be integrated with the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.
- Service requests would be able to be directed straight through to the waste crews.
- Ultimately there would be a significant efficiency gain, improvements to service received by customers and a large reduction in the use of paper.

### Resident App

- Residents would be able to download the App onto their smart devices.
- Waste collection information would be instant rather than sent via email as it was now.
- It would have a 'Find my nearest' function to allow residents to search for Leisure Centres or car parks for example.
- Nearby planning applications could also be searched for.
- Communications could be targeted such as adverse weather conditions.
- The timescale for implementation was in the next few months, probably after Christmas all being well.

### AI trial

- The Council had an opportunity to take part in an Artificial Intelligence (AI) trial.
- It could provide a voice solution to customer questions.
- The trial itself would be for a single service and would explore the possibilities at this stage.
- The trial would not cost the Council anything as it was free to participate.
- Councillor volunteers, along with others, were requested to take part in the trial.
- It was an 'off the shelf' solution designed specifically for local authorities.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The Councillors past experience with AI, both positive and negative.
- There would need to be some initial investment for the In-cab project but efficiency savings would quite quickly recoup these costs, reduce the number of complaints and ultimately improve the service for customers. Added to this was less officer time and a reduction in the volume of paper used.
- The Resident App would be free to use.

The following Members agreed to take part in the trial:

- Cllr C Harrower
- Cllr M Farrell
- Cllr R Roberts

The Group **NOTED** the information and thanked the officer for such a thorough explanation of some exciting projects.

## 23 **PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD Q1 (00:17:00)**

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

The dashboards aimed to give an 'at a glance' understanding of how services were performing in terms of performance measures, finance and risk. Any measures that were also part of the Corporate Plan were listed in yellow text.

The indicators were presented with current performance, the annual target and a RAG (red/amber/green) rating to indicate whether or not the Council was on track to meet its target. Overall performance was presented in a pie chart which combined the RAG ratings for both the performance and the finance measures.

For the measures showing as Amber or Red:

- Household waste collected per household (Amber) was just behind what was a stretching target. There had been a 3.77% decrease in household waste collected compared to June 2024. Efforts to identify unauthorised additional bins and provide ongoing education supported this positive trend.

- Household recycling rate (Amber) - As with the previous indicator, there was a stretching target in place. The service had seen an improvement of almost 2 percentage points compared to June 2024.
- Staff turnover (Red) - There was an increase in turnover in April, in particular in the Leisure Service with a number of fixed term contracts coming to an end.
- Public survey engagement rate (Red) – there had been a small drop in performance since Q4. This survey was now being run against the small number of new processes on the Customer Relationship Management system, and only since August 2024. As such there would soon be a complete year of data.
- Households on chargeable garden waste (Amber) - only 12 households were behind target, so only by a very fine margin was the Council behind the internal performance target.
- Agency Spend (Red) – an overspend was forecasted based on Qtr 1 figures. This cost was forecast to be offset by underspend in the main staffing budget.
- SD&CI PDG – Projected Capital Outturn (Red) - the main underspend reflected the change in approach for the waste depot: changing from building a new depot to remodelling the current depot. This saved almost £2m from the 2025/26 budget. There were also a number of projects, particularly in leisure and waste with variance which largely offset each other. These included slippage on the replacement of a skatepark, additional spend on energy saving projects, and the additional cost of the new baler within Waste Services.
- SD&CI PDG – Capital Slippage % of projects (Red) - this affected 4 out of 20 projects.

A brief discussion took place regarding whether or not the Red RAG rating should be changed to Green for the Projected Capital Outturn position for the Service Delivery & Continuous Improvement PDG. There had been a conscious decision by the Cabinet to set the target where they had but in light of recent decision regarding the waste depot it would be more correct to show this rating as Green. The officer agreed to reflect on this before reporting to the next meeting.

## 24 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN (00:21:00)

The Group had before it a report \* from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) presenting the updated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) which covered the period 2026/27 to 2028/29 and which discussed initial options for cost pressures/savings or income related to the services covered by the Policy Development Group.

A summary of the report and the relevant factors was provided as follows:

- The report was a little different to that provided in previous years. This was due to the raft of changes expected from 2026/27 and the longer term restrictions placed upon the Council by Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). The report didn't give a forecast shortfall to be addressed. Instead it highlighted the unprecedented level of uncertainty faced by all councils in respect of funding from 2026/27 onwards and estimated a range that the shortfall could fall within.

- The Chancellor's Autumn Budget would not be available until the end of November 2025. This would have a knock on effect of delaying the detail at individual local authority level. The uncertainty regarding future funding could not be overstated.
- Over the summer officers had identified a range of budget options to address the budget shortfall, using the Red, Amber and Green (RAG) assessment, which were being presented to the relevant Policy Development Groups for discussion, with the recommendation to support the Green and Amber options.

Discussion took place regarding:

- A definition of EPR (Extended Producer Responsibility) was provided which in basic terms meant that the Council would receive funding based upon the amount of packaging it collected. The draft budget included an estimated figure of how much that was likely to be.
- Devon County Council Shared Savings funding would cease to be paid after 2025/2026, this would be a pressure.
- The PDG walked through each of the cost pressures under its remit:
  - Solar panels on top of the waste depot provided a large proportion of the electricity needed to charge the electric vehicles it used, therefore no significant savings could be found there.
  - The Council bought its fuel in bulk and at the cheapest price at the time in order to reduce costs. Alternative cheaper solutions were being investigated such as HVO (homogenised vegetable oil).
  - The Governments emissions tax from 2028/2029 onwards.
  - Many of the cost pressures were outside of the Council's control.
- The PDG then discussed each of the savings options identified by officers in Appendix 3. This assumed that Option 1 (generally green) would be considered and Options 2 and 3 were included separately should the PDG wish to recommended the savings proposals be stretched even further. Option 2 (Amber) were recommended by officers but were proposed with a health warning. Option 3 (Red) were 'doable' but not recommended by officers:
  - There was no guarantee of a full year's income in relation to the tennis/paddle court.
  - The proposed increase of 5% in car park fees had been discussed by the Car Parking Consultative Group.
  - Capacity issues in each of the Tiverton car parks.
  - There was no correlation between an increase in fly tipping costs and the amount that was subsequently fly tipped.
  - Uncertainty of fuel prices in the future.
  - Concerns regarding the impact on town centres of a 5% increase in car parking fees and the sensitivity around leisure upgrades.
  - Whether at the current time there was an appetite for Options 2 and 3?
  - It was still early in the budget setting process and the draft budget would need refining and further discussion at the next meeting. Additional savings may need to be discussed at that time.

**RECOMMENDED** to the Cabinet that:

- a) The updated MTFP position be **NOTED**.
- b) Savings Option 1 in Appendix 3 be approved.

(Proposed by the Chair)

Reason for the decision

By undertaking regular reviews of the MTFP the Council can ensure that its Corporate Plan priorities are affordable. The implications of the budget gap are set out within the paper. Many areas require greater clarity, particularly around national funding and possible changes to Government Policy. Therefore a number of key assumptions underpin the reported position, which will be refined as greater clarity is received through the budget setting process.

Note: \* Report previously circulated.

**25 PLAY AREA RISK ASSESSMENT AND SAFETY INSPECTION REVIEW  
(01:01:00)**

The Group had before it a report \* from the Head of Finance, Property and Climate Resilience reviewing the Council's management of play area risk assessment and safety.

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

- This was a tri-annual review of the play area inspection process.
- It was routine in nature and largely operational.
- The process was overseen by a regulator providing added reassurance to Members.
- Inspections were carried out on a cost recovery basis only.

**RECOMMENDED** to the Cabinet that:

The approach for the inspection and risk assessment of the Council's play areas and that these are brought back for future review no later than 2028 be approved.

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

Reason for the decision

The Council must have an inspection and maintenance regime for its play areas as stated within the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

There is a potential cost of litigation and loss of reputation should the Council be found negligent with regards to inspection and maintenance of its play areas in the event of injury or death of a child or any other person.

Notes:

- (i) Cllrs J Buczkowski and L Knight declared personal interests as they were members of Cullompton Town Council which was a leasee of a number of play parks.
- (ii) Cllr M Farrell also declared a personal interest in that he was a member of Tiverton Town Council which also managed local play parks.

(iii) Cllr C Harrower declared a personal interest in that she was a Trustee of Peoples Park in Tiverton.

## 26 **MEMORIAL SEAT AND TREE POLICY (01:04:00)**

The Group had before it a report \* from the Head of Finance, Property and Climate Resilience reviewing a proposed new policy for Memorial Seats and Trees on Council property.

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

- This was a new policy following requests from members of the public to provide trees and benches to provide somewhere for quiet reflection following the loss of a loved one.
- The availability of spaces was limited but there were some.
- Up until now there had been no policy but it was now deemed to be appropriate in order to provide consistency of approach moving forwards.
- Regarding memorial trees the Council would consult with the requestor. The tree would need to be in keeping with the others around it. It would be planted by the Council and maintained for the first couple of years until it became established. The tree would need to be funded by the requestor.
- Benches could be provided in the main parks and cemeteries and would need to be fully funded by the requestor. The Council would maintain it for a ten year period. If after ten years the bench was in a good condition, it would remain, if it was not, it would be replaced but without a plaque unless the requestor was able to fund a replacement.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The importance of this initiative to some families.
- The Grand Western Canal had a similar scheme and it worked well there.

**RECOMMENDED** to the Cabinet that it recommends to full Council the adoption of the new Memorial Benches and Memorial Tree Policy.

(Proposed by Cllr L Knight and seconded by Cllr M Farrell)

### Reason for the decision

The provision of seats where the Council may not otherwise provide them may ameliorate the experience of those users with reduced mobility and enable greater confidence to use parks and cemeteries for recreation and reflection. Seats will be compliant with Disability Discrimination legislation requirements.

Supports the use of parks and cemeteries for well-being. Supports carbon reduction targets with tree planting where appropriate and re-use of materials.

Note: \* Report previously circulated.



## 27 **BIN-IT 123 - THE FUTURE AND THE POTENTIAL TO ADD ADDITIONAL RECYCLING STREAMS (01:10:00)**

The Group had before it a report \* from the Operations Manager for Street Scene and Open Spaces and the Head of People, Performance and Waste reviewing the progress made to date by Bin-It 123 and considering the key elements of the next strategic phase that are necessary to maximise recycling rates as well as increase resident engagement and support.

As promised at the June PDG meeting, where future collections of unused metal pots and pans were recommended to Cabinet for collection (and which are now in place), this paper set out the current situation regarding Bin It 123 and future plans.

This included the following:

- A strategy to help reinvigorate Bin-It 123 to help households nudge more of their residual waste into their recycling. A 7.3 kg shift in this direction per household per annum raised the Councils recycling rate by 1%.
- Key aspects of the strategy were covered including some of the issues detailed by the Head of Digital Transformation and Customer Engagement earlier in the meeting, as well as Education and Enforcement, and a focused Communications Strategy.
- The report also set out some of the future recycling collections the Council could consider implementing, including disposable nappies and the collection of soft plastics, which was a mandatory collection to be introduced no later than 1 April 2027.

A presentation was provided which set out some of the key issues and discussion points to go alongside the report. This included information in relation to the following:

- Key household statistics
- Priority Risks
- Reinvigorating Bin-It 123: Outlining the Resident Pathway
- Components of the Bin-It 123 Strategy
- WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme)

Consideration was given to:

- How imperative it was that the recycling rate was increased since one of the benefits would be at least an additional £600k income to the Council.
- It was incumbent upon all of us to have those conversations with residents.
- Some potential income streams would be affected by what was statutory and what was flexible.
- Cabinet needed to make decisions that were based on evidence, having fully considered the costs and risks.
- Regarding the recycling of pots and pans there were some restrictions, for example, no teflon, however, the Council was trying to limit restrictions where



it could and it was confirmed that all metal kitchen appliances could be taken to a household waste recycling centre.

- The biggest challenge was in convincing residents, through communications, of the importance of increasing recycling.
- The possibility of incentivising those residents who regularly recycle large amounts, options could be investigated.
- The 'mechanics' of recycling nappies.

**RECOMMENDED** to the Cabinet that

- a) It approves the proposed strategy regarding reinvigorating resident awareness and participation with the Bin-It 123 scheme.
- b) It receives an evidence based report from the officers regarding potential additional recycling collections in order to make informed decisions moving forward.

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

Reason for the decision

An increase in recycling would further enable the Council to reduce its carbon footprint and hit its carbon net zero commitment. Recycling is one of the most 'mainstream' concepts of addressing overarching sustainability goals, therefore it is vital to make sure that the council is maximising the effectiveness of both its scheme design, but also its operational implementation.

Note: \* Report previously circulated.

28 **QUARTER 1 ENVIRONMENT & ENFORCEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT  
(01:34:00)**

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

The following was outlined within the report:

- It provided a quarterly update on key environment enforcement performance data including fly tipping, littering, PSPO and the issuing of FPNs. It also gave a brief summary of Car Parking performance and the issuing of Penalty Charge Notices.
- Information and data relating to the Council's enforcement activity around hot spot areas and other useful information pertinent to the waste strategy was also included.

A brief discussion took place regarding the difficulties involved in catching people responsible for dogs fouling.

Note: \* Report previously circulated.

29 **PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER - ALCOHOL PROHIBITION, CREDITON TOWN (01:37:00)**

The Group had before it a report \* from the Environment & Enforcement Manager and the Head of People, Governance and Waste recommending the approval of a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) in order to tackle anti-social behaviour associated with the public consumption of alcohol in Crediton Town Centre.

The Group were reassured that the proposed PSPO was supported by the local Town Council and the Police.

**RECOMMENDED** to Cabinet that it makes the following resolutions:

- a) On being satisfied that the statutory grounds for making the Crediton Order are met, the Cabinet to authorise the Operations Manager for Street Scene and Open Spaces to carry out the necessary statutory consultation, publicity and notification for the proposed Crediton Order.
- b) The Cabinet to grant delegated authority to the Director of Legal, HR & Governance (Monitoring Officer) to draft the Crediton Order to go out to consultation.
- c) The Cabinet to grant delegated authority to the Operations Manager for Street Scene and Open Spaces, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Service Delivery and Continuous Improvement, to then:
  - Consider the responses to the necessary consultation, publicity and notification.
  - Decide, in light of the responses received to the consultation, whether to not proceed with the order if there were numerous material objections, or to authorise the Director of Legal, HR and Governance (Monitoring Officer) to seal the order.
  - Authorise the Director of Legal HR and Governance (Monitoring Officer) to make any minor amendments to the draft of the Crediton Order prior to sealing.

(Proposed by Cllr M Farrell and seconded by Cllr M Stratton)

Reason for the decision

It is believed the current behaviours are having a detrimental effect on the quality of life within the area in a persistent and continuing nature. It is not believed the prohibition of alcohol is unreasonable within the scope of this proposal and it is justified as a means to extend Policing powers to manage the issues.

Note: \* Report previously circulated.

30 **PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER - DOG CONTROL (01:41:00)**

The Group had before it a report \* from the Environment & Enforcement Manager and the Head of People, Governance and Waste recommending the commencement of statutory procedures (including consultation) to vary by order the Mid Devon (Public Spaces Protection) (Dog Control) Order 2024 and to delegate authority to decide whether to make the order of variation after consultation has taken place.

A formal request had been received from a Parish Council for this variation. This had been supported by the local Ward Member.

**RECOMMENDED** to the Cabinet that it makes the following resolutions:

- a) On being satisfied that the statutory grounds for varying the Mid Devon (Public Spaces Protection) (Dog Control) Order 2024 (“the Dog Control PSPO ”) are met, as detailed in the report, to allow officers to commence statutory consultation for the following:
- b) To vary the Dog Control PSPO by including the prohibition that dogs are excluded from the area known as the recreation ground Silverton (as shown on the plan at Appendix 1). Delegated Authority to be granted to the Director of Legal, HR & Governance (Monitoring Officer) to draft the necessary order varying the Dog Control PSPO that can then go out to consultation.
- c) The Cabinet consider granting delegated authority to the Operations Manager for Street Scene and Open Spaces, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Service Delivery and Continuous Improvement etc. to:
  - consider the responses to the necessary consultation, publicity and notification
  - decide whether to refer the matter back to Cabinet for a decision or to decide in the light of the responses received whether to make the Variation Order and to authorise the Director of Legal, HR and Governance (Monitoring Officer) to seal the order
  - authorise, if it was considered appropriate, the Director of Legal, HR and Governance (Monitoring Officer) to make any minor amendments to the draft of the variation order prior to sealing the variation order
- d) That a general delegation be made to the Cabinet Member for Service Delivery and Continuous Improvement to decide any further future variations to the Dog Control PSPO proposed by the Operations Manager for Street Scene and Open Spaces following the necessary statutory consultation, publicity and notification requirements for future PSPOs.
- e) Delegation to be given to the Director of Legal, HR and Governance (Monitoring Officer) to make orders of variation, following decisions from the Cabinet Member for Service Delivery and Continuous Improvement.

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

#### Reason for the decision

The Dog Control PSPO is designed to curb anti-social behaviour arising from irresponsible control of dogs and dog fouling.

Note: \* Report previously circulated.

### 31 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (01:44:00)

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

In addition the following was requested to be on the agenda for the next meeting:

- A report detailing the business continuity plans in place for the Leisure Centres given recent events. How much resilience was there, could anything else be done to avoid the significant disruption caused by external factors.

(The meeting ended at 7.15 pm)

**CHAIR**