

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a MEETING of the MANAGING THE ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held on 12 July 2016 at 2.00 pm

Present

Councillors

R F Radford (Chairman)
D R Coren, Mrs C P Daw, R Evans,
Mrs E J Slade, J D Squire, R Wright,
J L Smith and F W Letch

Also Present

Councillor(s)

C J Eginton

Also Present

Officer(s):

Andrew Jarrett (Head of Finance), Nick Sanderson (Head of Housing and Property Services), Joe Scully (Operations Manager) and Julia Stuckey (Member Services Officer)

15 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no apologies.

16 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public in attendance.

17 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the last meeting were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

18 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman congratulated the Head of Finance on his recent charity cycle ride from John O Groats to Land's End and welcomed Operations Manager Joe Scully to the meeting.

19 HIGH HEDGES POLICY

The Group had before it a report * from the Head of Housing and Property Services regarding High Hedges.

The Operations Manager outlined the contents of the report explaining that the law giving Local Councils power to deal with complaints about high hedges came into force on the 1st June 2005 and was contained in the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003. This allowed local Councils to determine complaints by the owners/occupiers of domestic property adversely affected by evergreen hedges over two meters high.

The Officer informed the Group that one high hedge intervention had taken place between 2012 and 2016. Mid Devon charged the same fee as neighbouring

authorities but gave a discount for those on benefits, which was not given by the other authorities. The process to be carried out was clearly identified within the policy.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The fees charged and whether a discount for those on benefits should be applied;
- Mediation and the cost of this which had to be paid by the complainant.

It was **AGREED** that the word 'determining' be changed to 'processing' within the table at 6.1.

It was **AGREED** that within the flow chart the wording 'refund fee' should read 'consider refund'.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that a flat fee of £350 should apply to all applicants with no discount given for those on benefits.

(Proposed by Cllr R Evans and seconded by Cllr J D Squire)

It was **RECOMMENDED** to the Cabinet that the authority continues to adopt the current High Hedge policy and processes outlined in Annex A subject to the changes agreed above.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Note:- * Report previously circulated and attached to Minutes.

20 **UPDATE FROM THE EDIBLE FOOD WASTE WORKING GROUP**

Cllr R Evans updated the Group regarding the Edible Food Waste Working Group. He reminded the Group that the Working Group had been set up at the request of Members following various media reports regarding the matter. The Head of Communities and Governance had looked into the matter and provided the Group with a considerable amount of information regarding how local supermarkets and charities were dealing with the issue. She found that local stores were taking their lead from head offices and a number of local schemes had been put in place. A White Paper was being processed but the reading in Parliament had been delayed. The Officer had found that local charities had systems in place, were receiving and distributing food waste and that their supplies were adequate. In conclusion the Group had found that there was little the authority could do at this stage to enhance what was already taking place. The Group had therefore concluded that there was no need to meet at the current time but that the subject should be revisited if required in the future.

21 **UPDATE ON DEPOT MOVE**

The Head of Finance provided an update on the recent waste and recycling depot move. He explained that the move went well and that the work undertaken by the

officer/Member project group had proved successful. Several services had been merged and 100 staff had now relocated to the new depot.

Recycling bays had been built, the bailer was working and 9 porta cabins had been put in place for officers. Working in the same depot meant that there were synergies with waste and recycling services and that staff could be moved from one area to the other as recycling performance improved and waste to landfill reduced. Operations commenced from the new depot on 13 June and there had been no adverse effect on collections. Licences and permits were all in place and there was security of tenure with a 15 year lease in place.

An opening event had been held on Friday 8th July which was attended by a number of Members and Neil Parish MP.

The Head of Finance informed Members that the merged service would have slightly cheaper running costs than the two separate depots and that discussions were still ongoing with Devon County Council regarding shared savings.

The officer reminded Members that a Member Briefing was in place for 9th August when the Waste and Transport Manager would provide an update on the recycling scheme, tonnages, the new depot and savings agreements.

22 UPDATE ON GRASS CUTTING IN THE TOWNS AND PARISHES

The Operations Manager reminded the Group that discussions with Devon County Council (DCC) and town and parish councils had taken place during the last 12 months to determine the grass cutting regime that would be put in place following a reduction in budget from DCC.

The officer informed the Group that there had been some confusion regarding the start dates for cutting, both with the town and parish councils and within the cutting teams. These issues had now been resolved. There was a need for further discussion with DCC and the town and parish councils to seek additional funding to improve the situation. Different town and parish councils had provided varying levels of funding so were receiving varying numbers of cuts.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The need for information regarding when and where cuts would be taking place. It was unclear which authority was responsible for some areas of land;
- Long grass being left following cutting which was unsightly;
- The possibility of undertaking less cuts to encourage wildlife;
- The condition of pavements;
- The potential to sow wildflower beds.

The Operations Manager was asked to provide a report regarding wild flower beds for the next meeting of the Group.

23 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

Gypsy and Traveller Policy
Performance and Risk
Financial Monitoring
Wild Flower Beds
Verbal Waste Update

(The meeting ended at 3.15 pm)

CHAIRMAN