

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP**
held on 7 March 2017 at 2.00 pm

Present

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

Apologies

Councillor(s) J L Smith

Also Present

Councillor(s) K Busch

Also Present

Officer(s): Andrew Jarrett (Director of Finance, Assets and Resources), Andrew Pritchard (Director of Operations), Simon Johnson (Legal Services Manager), Stuart Noyce (Waste and Transport Manager), Suzanne Kingdom (Auditor), Lorraine Durrant (Waste and Recycling Officer), Jan Norman (Environment and Enforcement Manager) and Julia Stuckey (Member Services Officer)

53 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Apologies were received from Cllr J L Smith.

54 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

Mr B Warren, Chairman of Willand Parish Council stated that this question relates to item 8 (Street Cleansing review) on your agenda but of necessity consists of a number of elements as it is dealing with a complex document. It is appreciated that in some areas generalised comments have been made but my questions relate to that which happens in or affects Willand.

Will Members please note that in relation to paragraph 6.2 and recommendation 7 that Willand Parish Council employ a part time litter picker who does the whole of the village, including MDDC and DCC areas and verges? This costs the Parish in excess of £300 per month. MDDC do currently empty bins and remove bags of litter left at agreed spots by the litter picker. This activity is a saving for MDDC and gives a better service than that currently given or planned by MDDC. We do not get any hand sweeping other than when the operator of the small sweeper does around the centre island.

In relation to 6.3 and recommendation 8 one has to ask what is the purpose of this Group discussing this when according to an entry on Twitter and the Crediton Gazette the Council Leader is pictured depositing litter in a bin and reporting that the decision had already been made.

In paragraph 10.2 it refers to each new bin installed being a financial commitment for the District Council.

- (a) What is the figure placed on the supply and fitting of a new litter bin?
- (b) What is the cost placed on the supply and fitting of a new dog bin?
- (c) What figure is placed on the commitment of emptying if the Parish Council supply and fit the new or replacement bin?
- (d) If bins are located where a Parish Council through local knowledge and consultation know they are needed and most effective what criteria is used for the District Council to decide that a bin is at an unsuitable location for collection?

Paragraph 10.6 refers to maps and consultations. In February 2016, in spite of there being no policy, certain officers refused to empty two new bins supplied by the Parish. This issue was resolved by Mr Noyce and Willand Parish Council sent in two schedules as to where all the bins in Willand were situated as the result of two Parish Councillors surveying the village. When the consultation was carried out in September 2016 a map was supplied with the letter and questionnaire showing the bins in Willand. It was inaccurate and did not reflect the information provided earlier in the year. It even fails to record a number of litter bins placed in MDDC managed play areas. The impression given in the report is that Parishes were at fault for not responding. Will officers please accept that in relation to Willand the fault would appear to lie within systems or procedures at MDDC?

Paragraph 13 refers to service recharges to other departments. Why is it necessary to incur administrative charges by paying staff to move money around within MDDC?

Paragraph 14.15 is misleading in that the wrong impression is given, certainly as far as the Willand response is concerned. Our concern was that our 9 fenced play areas for small children have litter bins in them and we were concerned/opposed to dog mess being put into these bins as dogs are banned but some could be accessed by leaning over the fence. Small children are encouraged and do use the litter bins and so could have their hands contaminated by dog mess. Will more thought be given to this point before deciding policy please?

Mr K Grantham from Willand Parish Council said that these questions related to Item 8 on the Agenda and in particular Appendix 'D'.

In the third paragraph of 1.1 it states that new bins will only be located in areas where it can be demonstrated that there is a genuine need for one. If the Parish Council has decided that there is a need as the result of local observation and reports from the 'litter picker' who will have visited the site at least once per week:

- What other surveys or consultations will take place before MDDC make the decision?
- Are parishes to be discriminated against for having better standards of cleanliness than MDDC who have shown in a number of areas that their standards have been reduced to save money?

Requests for new or replacement bins have to be made to MDDC who will take 3 months to survey the need.

- Who will do this?
- What will it cost?
- Who will be expected to pay?

Currently Council Tax Payers pay DCC regarding waste disposal, MDDC charge for collection and because their service does not come up to expectations the Parish employ a litter picker who is likely to have his work increased if bins are removed. We have been unable to get any enforcement visits as the officers seem to be concentrated on the towns and car parking where income can be more easily generated.

Who will be making the decisions at MDDC and what right of appeal or redress will Town or Parish Councils have and to whom?

Willand Parish Council have leased two play areas and an area of public green open space and are offering to take on a third. This was done to save them from closure and/or to improve their maintenance to make them more useable. This saves MDDC money.

- Are we to now be charged for emptying dog and litter bins on these areas?
- Do we have to obtain approval from MDDC to replace a damaged or unserviceable bin on these sites?
- Does this policy mean that the earlier agreements with the Estates Department to have the bins emptied by MDDC will cease to have effect thereby putting more cost onto the Parish?
- If arbitrary charges are to be made what will they cost and what will be the additional administrative costs?

Will Members please take time to really question the detail of the proposed policy as at present it looks more dictatorial rather than meaningful consultation with Town and Parish Councils?

The Chairman informed Cllrs Warren and Grantham that their questions would be answered at the agenda item.

55 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

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

56 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Andrew Pritchard, who had just joined the authority as Director of Operations, to the meeting.

The Chairman also welcomed Mr V Alison and Mr J Cochran who were visiting the authority to undertake a peer review.

57 PERFORMANCE AND RISK

The Committee had before it and **NOTED** a report * from the Director of Corporate Affairs and Business Transformation providing Members with an update regarding

performance against the corporate plan and local service targets for 2016-17 as well as providing an update on the key business risks.

The Audit Officer outlined the contents of the report.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The number of garden waste permits that had been purchased and what potential action could be taken to increase take up.
- A flyer regarding garden waste which was being sent out with Council Tax bills;
- The possibility that further permits would be purchased when the gardening season started;
- The number of missed collections and some changes to staffing which may have contributed to a minor increase in numbers during December and January.

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

58 **FINANCIAL MONITORING (00:23:00)**

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a report * from the Director of Finance, Assets & Resources presenting a financial update in respect of the income and expenditure so far in the year.

The Director explained that this was a generic report that was seen by all Policy Development Groups and the Cabinet. He informed the Group that little had changed with regard to areas that were within its remit since his last report and that the predicted overspend for the year was currently £64k, this was approximately 0.75% of the overall budget.

An overspend of £136k was due to the relocation of the waste and recycling depots and talks were now taking place to allocate some of that land as a waste transfer station which would generate some income.

Discussion took place regarding the Capital Programme and the need to ensure that schemes were moved forward or that other projects were brought forward to replace them and shared savings for waste with Devon County Council.

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

59 **WASTE UPDATE**

The Waste and Transport Manager updated the Group regarding waste and recycling following the changes that had been implemented 18 months previously.

The Officer explained that the overall recycling rate had increased from 44% (2006/7) to 50.8 (2015/16) and at the end of quarter 3 for 2016/17 was at 53.7%. The dry

recycling rate had increased from 17.77% (2006/7) to 21.93% at the end of quarter 3 in 2016/17.

In the previous year Mid Devon had shown the biggest increase in recycling rates within the Devon authorities and total waste arising's had reduced from 989kg per household in 2006/7 to 796kg per household (estimated end of 2016/17).

The officer informed the Group that the cost of the service per household had decreased from £60.56 (2014/15) to £50.35 (2017/18, estimated).

The officer outlined the waste and recycling collections provided in other Devon authorities and explained that services were moving to an aligned scheme which would help with any future working together.

Discussion took place regarding the limiting of residual waste and the officer informed the Group that this was an area of work that would be looked at in the coming year.

60 **STREET CLEANSING REVIEW (00:48:30)**

The Group had before it a report * from the Waste & Transport Manager providing Members with an update on the Street Cleansing Service Review undertaken in 2016 and proposed actions from that review. The Waste and Transport Manager explained that the review had been undertaken as a desktop exercise.

The officer explained that the recommendations within the review included the appointment of an extra litter picking team, which was highlighted within the Corporate Plan, and that he intended to report back to the Group in 12 months time with further options to move the service forward.

The officer explained that there were no performance indicators for street cleansing but that benchmarking had been undertaken along with consultation with Town and Parish Councils. This report was a starting point for a service that had not had any major work undertaken for several years.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The bench marking data provided and the difficulty in comparing costs due to different authorities using differing accounting methods;
- The different levels of cleansing provided to towns and parishes;
- The additional litter picking 'blitz' team and the works that it was envisaged would be allocated to them;
- The recommendation that 'any bin will do' and the fact that this would not be appropriate in play areas;
- The 'any bin will do' campaign could free up bins to be placed in areas identified as being in need.

It was **AGREED** that the Litter and Dog Bin Policy be brought to the next meeting of the Group for further review.

It was **AGREED** that the questions asked by Willand Parish Council at public question time would be responded to in writing.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the Cabinet approve the recommendations below, with the additional wording 'where appropriate' to be added to recommendation v) regarding dog bins.

- a) Categorise land according to EPA.
- b) Measure current productivity of service.
- c) Cost option for output frequency rather than input.
- d) Cost different frequencies options (less and more) for the mechanical street sweeping service.
- e) Check schedules against adopted highways maps and address any anomalies.
- f) Reroute schedules into zones so all mechanical sweepers work in the same area at the same time.
- g) Map and review Parish Sweeper routes and evaluate efficiency.
- h) An additional two person parish sweeper team is introduced at cost of £54,500 p.a.
- i) Risk-assess all high speed roads that are litter picked.
- j) Litter picking of the two high speed road verges is reinstated and undertaken twice per year and layby every two months.
- k) A Review of weekend sweeping is undertaken and costed.
- l) Benchmark the cost effectiveness of town council work/grants and review the routes to ensure that is not duplicating work done by the District Council's cleansing service.
- m) If these working arrangements are to continue, provide a service level agreement for three years from April 2018.
- n) If these working arrangements are to continue, inform Town Clerks of future training so their operatives may attend also.
- o) Re-introduction of using NI195 criteria to assess street cleanliness by District Officers once a quarter.
- p) New transfer station to include a skip for road sweepings so they can be composted.
- q) Purchase three split recycling litter bins one for each town centre to assess their success.
- r) Continue to encourage voluntary groups and investigate whether litter picking groups would be happy to litter pick where advised by Parish/Town/District Councils.
- s) Adopt New dog and litter bin policy (Appendix D).
- t) Review all existing bin locations and conduct a condition survey.
- u) Pressure wash clean all bins once a year.
- v) Introduce "Any bin will do!" stickers on litter bins.
- w) Street Cleaners to report any bins that are frequently filled with household waste, for District Officers to investigate.
- x) Regular contact with estates to effective joint working.
- y) District Officers and Town Councils to meet once a month to discuss issues.
- z) That MDDC sign the Memorandum of Understanding with Highways England.
- aa) Create an "online look up" for street sweeping schedules.

(Proposed by Cllr D R Coren and seconded by Cllr B Evans)

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

61 **STREET SCENE ENFORCEMENT POLICY (01:16:11)**

The Group had before it a report * from the Waste & Transport Manager providing a review of the Street Scene Enforcement Service that had been undertaken over the last twelve months. The report outlined the findings of the review and gave Members an opportunity to comment on proposed new ways of working and agree the priorities of the service going forward.

The Waste and Transport Manager explained that the District Officer role had not been changed for a number of years and that as part of the review he had taken the opportunity to look at how the service was delivered. Shift patterns had been changed to a four day working week which allowed for longer days, less time spent travelling and some flexibility outside of normal working hours. This had allowed for some time to be identified for undertaking discretionary work and the officer asked that Members review the proposed allocation of work on page 77 of the report.

Discussion took place regarding the allocation of these hours and it was **AGREED** that the condition survey of litter/dog bins could be undertaken by the waste operative emptying them, freeing up 10% of officer time which would be added to dog fouling patrols, which would then total 30% of officer time.

The officer informed the Group that IT systems were being explored to save time and allow for mobile working.

It was **RECOMMENDED** to the Cabinet that Council be asked to review the report and approve the Street Scene Services Enforcement Policy at appendix A.

(Proposed by Cllr B Evans and seconded by Cllr C P Daw)

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

62 **CHAIRMANS ANNUAL REPORT**

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a draft report * by the Chairman on the work of the Group since May 2016, a final copy of this report would be submitted to Council on 26 April 2017.

Note: - Report previously circulated and attached to Minutes.

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

Performance and Risk
Financial Monitoring
Litter and Dog Bin Policy

(The meeting ended at 3.30 pm)

CHAIRMAN