

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **ECONOMY POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP** held on 16 March 2017 at 6.00 pm

Present

Councillors

Mrs B M Hull (Chairman)
Mrs A R Berry, J M Downes, R Evans,
S G Flaws, Mrs S Griggs, F J Rosamond
and Mrs N Woollatt

Apology

Councillor

Mrs J B Binks

Also Present

Councillors

K Busch, R J Chesterton and N V Davey

Also Present

Officers

Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Andrew Jarrett (Director of Finance, Assets and Resources), John Bodley-Scott (Economic Development & Regeneration Manager), Chris Shears (Economic Development Officer), Catherine Yandle (Internal Audit Team Leader) and Sarah Lees (Member Services Officer)

61 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs J B Binks who was substituted by Cllr Mrs S Griggs.

62 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no members of the public present.

63 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2017 were confirmed as a true and accurate record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

64 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman stated that this would be the last meeting of the Group for the current municipal year and thanked Members for their contributions.

65 **MEETING MANAGEMENT**

The Chairman stated that the Performance and Risk item would be taken as the next item of business, all other items to follow in the order on the agenda.

66 **PERFORMANCE AND RISK FOR 2016-17 (00:05:00)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Chief Executive and Director of Growth providing Members with an update on performance against the Corporate Plan and local service targets for 2016/17 as well as providing an update on the key business risks.

It was explained that performance and risk data was now collated on a monthly basis rather than quarterly. The Performance indicator in relation to the number of apprentices would be corrected for the next meeting as it currently showed the number of apprentices at the Council but should state the number of apprentice starts.

A brief discussion took place regarding what metrics could be used to measure economic progress in the future. Nationally produced economic measures were mainly produced on an annual basis and therefore did not coincide with the performance reporting regime at the Council so are instead included in the Economic Profile item.

Note: * Report previously circulated, copy attached to the signed minutes.

67 **RESPONSE TO THE HEART OF THE SOUTH WEST PRODUCTIVITY PLAN CONSULTATION (00:06:00)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Chief Executive and Director of Growth providing Members with an opportunity to steer the Council's response to the Heart of the South West Productivity Plan Consultation.

The Economic Development Officer explained that whilst it was a partnership Productivity Plan it would be the Council's strategy as well and it was important that the Council's views were represented. The Plan would be the mechanism by which the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) would draw money down from government. It was a fact that a productivity gap was recognised nationally; the challenge was to identify what actions could be taken to create quality jobs.

The following matters were discussed:

- A comment in the report regarding the agricultural sector being viewed as a weakness in the South West. It was explained that this view related to productivity in terms of low skill levels and salaries. However, some of the more technical elements of agriculture could be seen as high productivity.
- Passivhaus developments being carbon neutral buildings and one of a number of key factors in promoting a green economy in the South West. There was the potential to train people at Petroc in this subject area.
- The LEP Business Board did consult with other business groups although these tended to be the larger organisations. It was hoped that the final response would be reflective of local businesses.
- The view was expressed that it was not only about creating jobs at the higher end but it was vitally important to have reliable Broadband. If this wasn't in place businesses would go elsewhere. It was explained that the Council was not by any means the only authority raising this as a significant issue. It represented a significant barrier to growth. It was expected that one of the

results of this process was that connectivity would come out high on the agenda.

- It was suggested that a study be made mapping out where the connecting distribution points were in terms of water, gas, electricity and fibre networks. These could represent important infrastructure sites with the potential for huge development. It was explained that much was already being done through the Connecting Devon and Somerset programme.

The Chief Executive and Director of Growth informed that Group that at this stage the questions in the consultation were conceptual. Responses would be analysed during the period of the Devon and Somerset county elections, after that a white paper would be published with much more detail.

Note: * Report previously circulated; copy attached to the signed minutes.

68 **TIVERTON PANNIER MARKET POSITION STATEMENT (00:25:15)**

The group had before it, and **NOTED**, a briefing paper * from the Market Manager outlining the findings from a review. It also provided information on the background governance work at the Pannier Market and progress on actions to date to improve the market environment, trader retention and customer footfall.

The Market Manager explained that the report provided background information in relation to many of the issues discussed at previous meetings of this Group. A thorough review had taken place identifying the issues and proposed actions needed in order to achieve improvements in relation to increasing income, reducing expenditure, increasing footfall and improving the market governance.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Painting would shortly commence in the market.
- A feasibility study would be undertaken in May to ascertain the best time to hold a farmers market. Demographics needed to be looked at as well as what would be the best day of the week and time of day.
- The market could be the centre for regeneration.
- There were still some outstanding payments due to the Council from traders attending recent events.
- WiFi connectivity was not currently stable throughout the site.
- The measurement of pitches between pillars.
- There were old rights for long standing traders although these agreements were verbal.
- Competition between businesses within the town

Note: * Briefing paper previously circulated; copy attached to the signed minutes.

69 **TIVERTON MARKET SCHEDULE OF TOLLS (00:48:40)**

The Group had before it a report * from the Chief Executive and Director of Growth presenting the standardisation of the Market's pricing policy in a formal agreed Schedule of Tolls.

Discussion took place with regard to:

- Small community charity events in village halls would not incur a fee.
- Pop-up art stalls and charity stalls would be promoted to a greater extent once the Schedule of Tolls had been approved.
- The level of fees appeared to be low, however, it was explained that footfall figures needed to be increased before reviewing this.

The question was asked as to why the Council was waiting until 1 April 2018 to implement the new rates for existing traders? It was explained that there needed to be a period of consultation and legal requirements needed to be complied with.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that:

- a. The Schedule of Tolls be approved with adoption from 1 April 2017;
- b. The Schedule of Tolls be reviewed annually with the next review presented to the Economy PDG in March 2018.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Note: * Report previously circulated; copy attached to the signed minutes.

70 **MID DEVON WALKING GUIDES (00:58:20)**

The Group had before it a report * from the Chief Executive and Director of Growth as a response to a request for the Economic Development Team to look into the feasibility of reformatting / republishing the village walking leaflets.

The Community Development and Regeneration Manager explained that the Group had four options before them. Even the simplest of updates to the leaflets would require quite a bit of work as they needed to be completely reformatted. Merely reproducing the leaflets would not be enough however as they would need to be linked to local businesses and the economy. The most labour intensive option related to full digitalisation. A fifth option existed whereby the council could do nothing and continue to focus its attention on the priorities within the Corporate Plan.

Discussion took place with regard to:

- Devon County Council budgets being severely limited and parish councils taking on the responsibility for footpaths in their area.
- Opportunities to ask walking groups for updates and assistance although even this would require officer resource.
- Such walking guides already existed on websites and would this be 'reinventing the wheel'?
- The Council was not a tourist association.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that the Council does not update and reprint the walking leaflets as originally produced by the Council in the 1990's, but that contact be made with town and parish councils to offer them any source material/copyright possible in order to allow them to use local knowledge to update and then reprint as they feel appropriate.

(Proposed by Cllr Mrs N Woollatt and seconded by Cllr R Evans)

Note: * Report previously circulated, copy attached to the signed minutes.

71 **ECONOMIC PROFILE (01:12:55)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a briefing paper * from the Chief Executive and Director of Growth providing it with an update on the economic situation in Mid Devon. It also provided a summary of the present state of the Mid Devon economy based on the latest economic statistics for the district.

Note: * Briefing paper previously circulated; copy attached to the signed minutes.

72 **FINANCIAL MONITORING - 9 MONTHS TO DECEMBER 2016 (01:15:36)**

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 contents of the report were outlined with the key messages being:

- There was a predicted General Fund overspend of £64k.
- Car parking income was up on last year.
- Market income was lower than budgeted for although this would be realigned in the following financial year.
- The financial year end was imminent and the Finance team would start working on the accounts in the next few weeks.

Note: * Report previously circulated, copy attached to the signed minutes.

73 **CAR PARKING UPDATE FOR THE TEN MONTHS TO 31 JANUARY 2017 (01:18:57)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Director of Finance, Assets & Resources presenting a car parking update after the first 10 months of the new charging strategy.

It was explained that this report had been discussed at the Scrutiny Committee earlier in the week. The Committee had been interested to know whether there was any cause and effect between footfall figures and car park vends. The Director of Finance, Assets & Resources explained that it was very difficult to determine this as factors such as the weather, fuel and the economy were additional variables that needed to be born in mind.

Income received to date in the current financial year was £59k up on the previous year despite some tariffs being reduced in some of the town car parks.

It was his intention to revive the Car Parking Working Group in the summer to continue to monitor this important area.

Discussion took place with regard to:

- The necessity to replace all of the car park vending machines during April as a result of the new one pound coin. These would be able to take cards and would require the last three digits of each number plate to be entered.
- It was requested that information in relation to night time vends both pre and post the new charging schedule be provided to Members.
- A review of car park charges in the Multi-storey Car Park would be undertaken once works on the Premier Inn had been completed.

Note: * Report previously circulated, copy attached to the signed minutes.

74 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2016/17 (01:27:45)**

The Group had before it a draft annual report * by the Chairman on the work of the Policy Development Group during 2016/17. There being no suggested amendments to the report it was **AGREED** that it would be included with the Council Summons for the meeting on 26 April 2017.

75 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (01:28:00)**

In addition to the items already listed in the work programme, the following items were requested for the agenda for the next meeting:

- Update on projects from the Economic Development Officer
- Market update
- Manufacturing and Engineering sector analysis for Mid Devon
- Broadband update

(The meeting ended at 7.30 pm)

CHAIRMAN