

# SOUTH HAMS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL



## **Minutes** of a meeting of the **South Hams Overview and Scrutiny Panel** held on **Thursday, 4th October, 2018 at 10.00 am** at the **Cary Room** **- Follaton House**

Present: **Councillors:**

**Chairman** Cllr Saltern  
**Vice Chairman** Cllr Smerdon

Cllr Baldry  
Cllr Cane  
Cllr Hawkins  
Cllr May

Cllr Birch  
Cllr Green  
Cllr Huntley  
Cllr Pennington

### **In attendance:**

Councillors:

Cllr Bastone  
Cllr Brazil  
Cllr Hopwood  
Cllr Rowe  
Cllr Wright

Cllr Bramble  
Cllr Holway  
Cllr Pearce  
Cllr Vint

Officers:

Group Manager – Customer First & Support Services  
Group Manager – Commercial Services  
Commissioning Manager  
CoP Lead – Place Making  
Case Management Manager  
Senior Specialist – Environmental Health  
Specialist – Community Safety & Safeguarding

43.

### **Minutes**

O&S.43/18

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 6 September 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

44. **Declarations of Interest**  
O&S.44/18  
Members and officers were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of the meeting. These were recorded as follows:-
- Cllr B F Cane declared a potential Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) in Item 7: 'Executive Forward Plan' (Minute O&S.47/18 below refers) and advised that, in the event of any questions being raised or discussion taking place on the 'Brixton Community Housing Scheme' he would leave the meeting room; and
- Cllr B F Cane also declared a potential DPI in Item 9: 'Section 106 Agreements Schedule' (Minute O&S.49/18 below refers) and advised that, in the event of any questions being raised or discussion taking place in relation to Venn Farm, Brixton he would leave the meeting room.
45. **Urgent Business**  
O&S.45/18  
The Chairman informed that he had no items of urgent business to be raised at this meeting.
46. **Public Forum**  
O&S.46/18  
In accordance with the Public Forum Procedure Rules, the Chairman informed that there were no questions that had been received for consideration during this agenda item.
47. **Executive Forward Plan**  
O&S.47/18  
The Panel was presented with the most recently published Executive Forward Plan and proceeded to make the following comments:
- (a) It was noted that consideration of the agenda items entitled: 'Adoption of Clean Air Strategy' and 'Adoption of Business Continuity Plan' would be deferred to a meeting of the Executive during early 2019;
  - (b) The Panel was informed that the Peer Review Report would be presented to the Executive meeting on 7 February 2019;
  - (c) Members acknowledged that the recent Central Government announcement about lifting the borrowing limit for Councils who owned their own housing stock was not relevant to the Council;
  - (d) Some Members made the point that there were a number of particularly significant agenda items that were scheduled for consideration at the Executive meeting on 22 November 2018.

48.

### **Customer Satisfaction Survey**

O&S.48/18

The Panel considered a report that detailed the scores that had been achieved by the Council as part of a recent Institute of Customer Service Customer Satisfaction Survey.

The lead Executive Member introduced the report and highlighted the recent all staff training days that had focused on Customer Satisfaction. Following these sessions, the Member informed that an Action Plan would be developed and, subject to agreement at this meeting, it was intended that it would be presented to the next Panel meeting.

Finally, once this Plan had been adopted, it was the wish of the Member for the Executive Forward Plan to be updated to ensure that 'Progress on the Action Plan' was a standing agenda item at future Executive meetings.

In the ensuing discussion, the following points were raised:-

- (a) For clarity, the Panel was informed that the 'Net Promoter Score' could be defined as being the likelihood that a respondent would recommend the organisation to somebody else;
- (b) When questioned, officers confirmed that 538 responses had been made to the Survey. Of these 538, 318 respondents had made a comment. However, Members were also advised that some of these written responses had referred to functions and services that were not within the remit and/or responsibility of the District Council (e.g. potholes). It was noted that a common theme throughout these responses had been identified as the need for the Council to improve its communication methods;
- (c) A number of Members were of the view that the Survey results had simply confirmed what they had already known. In expressing their disappointment and concerns over the Survey results, particular reference was made to:-
  - the results supporting the longstanding (and continued) failings in some officers not responding to their customers. Members reiterated their repeated frustrations that certain officers did not respond to calls, acknowledge emails or provide progress updates to customers;
  - the Survey illustrating the systemic failures of the Transformation Programme. Some Members felt the need to change the current systems was of paramount importance and, whilst the financial objectives of the Transformation Programme had been achieved, this had sadly resulted in a negative impact upon customer services;
  - the removal of individual service areas resulting in a complete lack of ownership and accountability; and
  - the Programme placing too great an onus upon channel shift and the ability (and willingness) of customers to self-serve;

- (d) A Member took exception to the term 'customers' and, in emphasising the lack of choice available to them, felt that the Council should consider its customers to be 'residents'. Indeed, such was the lack of choice, that some Members were of the view that this tended to breed a certain degree of resentment that in fact resulted in residents having an even higher expectation of customer service from their local council(s);
- (e) Having been informed that the Salcombe Harbour Authority had not been included as part of the Survey, some Members felt this to be unfortunate. These Members made reference to the exemplar Customer Service standards that were achieved by the Harbour staff and it was felt that lessons could be learned from them that would benefit the wider organisation;
- (f) Some Members were of the view that, in response to concerns being raised from Town and Parish Council Clerks, they should be encouraged to make contact with the Council through the Localities Team. Furthermore, a Member questioned whether the wider membership had got to grips with the Transformation Programme and specifically the working methods that underpinned the Operating Model;
- (g) In respect of the formal complaints process, a Member felt that the corporate timescales to resolve a complaint (30 days) was excessive and sent the wrong message. As a consequence, the Member requested that this matter be reviewed imminently;
- (h) An alternative recommendation was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** as follows:-

*'That the Panel notes with concern the results from the Council's recent Customer Satisfaction Survey and requests the production of a comprehensive Action Plan that will include the measures outlined between Sections 5.1(b) and 5.1(e) of the presented agenda report. In so doing, the Panel requests that this Action Plan be presented to its next meeting on 1 November 2018.'*

In discussion, Members considered this alternative wording to be more reflective of the general view of the Panel and, when put to the vote, it was declared **CARRIED**.

It was then:

### **RESOLVED**

That the Panel notes with concern the results from the Council's recent Customer Satisfaction Survey and requests the production of a comprehensive Action Plan that will include the measures outlined between Sections 5.1(b) and 5.1(e) of the presented agenda report. In so doing, the Panel requests that this Action Plan be presented to its next meeting on 1 November 2018.

49.

## **Section 106 Agreements Schedule**

O&S.49/18

The Panel considered a report that provided an update on the latest position regarding Section 106 Agreements.

In discussion, reference was made to:-

- (a) the 'Review into the Process for Spending Section 106 Deposits for Affordable Housing'. The Panel was reminded of the debate at the Executive meeting held on 14 June 2018 (Minute E.04/18 refers) and the subsequent recommendation arising from this meeting:

*'That the Overview and Scrutiny Panel be asked to undertake a review into the process for Spending Section 106 Deposits for Affordable Housing.'*

In light of this request, the Panel agreed that this matter should be added to its Work Programme for consideration at its next meeting on 1 November 2018.

- (b) the local town and parish council for each development site. The Panel requested that an additional column be added to the Schedule that listed the local town and parish council for each site. Furthermore, Members asked that consideration be given to the Schedule being revised to include the Devon County Council requirements and their respective trigger points.

The point was also made by the Panel that there was a need for Members and town and parish councils to be able to access (and/or obtain copies of) the Schedule as it evolved. To reflect this view, it was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** and on being put to the vote declared **CARRIED**:-

*'That officers consider the most appropriate means of disseminating the Schedule to all Members and Town and Parish Councils.'*

- (c) the non-compliance issues. Having been informed that officers were monitoring non-compliance issues, the Panel requested that this information also be made available to the wider membership;
- (d) pursuing Section 106 monies. In response to a question, officers gave a firm commitment that outstanding funding contributions from Developers were robustly pursued via the Council's Debtor Systems;
- (e) the Langage Energy Centre. During the debate, it became apparent that a number of Members would find an update on the Langage Energy Centre useful. As a consequence, it was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** and when put to the vote declared **CARRIED** that:-

'A 'Langage Energy Centre Update' be considered by the Panel at a meeting during early 2019.'

- (f) the Member role in the process. Some Members emphasised the important role to be played by Members in this process. In particular, the importance of Members regularly checking and monitoring the schedule and ensuring that their local town and parish councils were kept fully informed was highlighted.

In conclusion, a number of Members welcomed the report and it was requested that this be reflected in the Panel resolution.

It was then:

### **RESOLVED**

1. That the report, progress and improvements made in monitoring and administering Section 106 Agreements be welcomed;
2. That, in the future, the monitoring of administration of Section 106 Agreements be reported through the Internal Audit Reporting Cycle;
3. That the Panel Work Programme be updated to include a 'Review into the Process for Spending Section 106 Deposits for Affordable Housing' at its meeting on 1 November 2018;
4. That a 'Langage Energy Centre Update' be considered by the Panel at a meeting during early 2019; and
5. That officers consider the most appropriate means of disseminating the Schedule to all Members and Town and Parish Councils.

#### 50. **Business Continuity Plan - Verbal Update**

O&S.50/18

The Senior Specialist – Environmental Health attended the meeting to provide verbal assurances that the Council was undertaking its responsibilities in relation to Business Continuity planning. In so doing, the officer advised that:-

- work was ongoing to update the Plan in line with the Council's Transformation Programme and Future Operating Model;
- a training session on Business Continuity had recently been arranged for members of the Senior Leadership Team and Extended Leadership Team;
- work was being undertaken in partnership with colleagues at Devon County Council and the Emergency Planning Partnership;

- the extreme winter weather earlier in the year had provided an ideal demonstration that the Council's resilience was very good;
- once the Plan was ready for formal adoption, it was recommended that, in the first instance, the final draft version should be considered by the Audit Committee before further consideration by the Executive. The Panel proceeded to express its support for this proposal and noted the intention for the draft Plan to be formally presented to Members during early 2019.

Upon the conclusion of his update, the Panel thanked the lead officer for all his hard work in this area and was suitably assured that adequate progress was being made.

51.

### **Task and Finish Group Updates (if any)**

O&S.51/18

#### **a) Drug and Alcohol Abuse – Outcome Report**

A report was presented that outlined the conclusions of the Drug and Alcohol Abuse Task and Finish Group.

During the ensuing debate, reference was made to:-

- recognition of the hard work that had been put into the Review by lead officers and the Task and Finish Group Members;
- the re-establishment of the Youth Leisure Nights at Totnes Pavilions. Whilst it was still very much in its infancy, the general feedback had been positive;
- the severity of drug misuse in Totnes. A Member felt that the Group recommendations were particularly helpful and specifically highlighted an upcoming meeting between community representatives, the local MP and the local Police and Crime Commissioner to discuss this matter further;
- the responsibilities undertaken by the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Officer;
- the potential Budget implications arising from the Group recommendations. To ensure that the Group recommendations were taken into account as part of the Council's wider budget setting exercise, some amendments were **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** and when put to the vote were declared **CARRIED**.

It was then:

#### **RESOLVED**

1. That the Executive **RECOMMEND** to Council that it support and participate (wherever possible) in Police and Public Health England campaigns around drug reporting, harm minimisation and education;
2. That the Panel acknowledge the response from the Task and Finish Group that CCTV linking into a central hub is cost prohibitive;

3. That the Member Budget Workshop explore the possibility of obtaining annual funding for youth activities / engagement as a diversionary approach to Crime and Disorder (including drug use) within the South Hams District;
4. That the Member Budget Workshop explore the possibility of obtaining funding from Outside Bodies so to enable the Council to support recommendation 3 (above) by a part-time post or by other means;
5. That, subject to the availability of funding, the Council proactively supports and participates in Junior Life Skills as part of a preventative approach and early intervention / education for young people; and
6. That the Council supports and proactively participates in partnership working with multi agencies and other initiatives relating to the prevention of drug use and anti-social behaviour amongst young people. Such support and activity to be explored by Members of the Task and Finish Group with subsequent referral back to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

52. **Actions Arising / Decisions Log**  
O&S.52/18

The contents of the latest version of the Log was presented for consideration and was duly noted without further comment.

53. **Draft Annual Work Programme**  
O&S.53/18

The Panel noted the contents of its latest Annual Work Programme and made the following comments, additions and amendments:-

- It was agreed that the Panel meeting that had been initially scheduled for 14 February 2019 should be moved to take place on the afternoon of 24 January 2019 (1.30pm start);
- The Panel then agreed that the meeting on the afternoon of 24 January 2019 should include the following agenda items:
  - o The Peer Review;
  - o Community Safety Partnership Annual Report;
  - o An update on Safeguarding;
  - o A review into the Standards Complaints Procedure;
  - o An update on Universal Credits; and
  - o A Langage Energy Centre Update;
- Members also endorsed the proposal for the following additional items to be added to the Work Programme for the next Panel meeting agenda on 1 November 2019:
  - o Customer Satisfaction Action Plan;



- Draft Member Induction Programme 2019/20;
- RIPA Annual Review; and
- Review into the process for spending Section 106 Deposits for Affordable Housing.

The Meeting concluded at 12.30 pm

**Signed by:**

**Chairman**

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