

WEST DEVON HUB COMMITTEE



West Devon
Borough
Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **West Devon Hub Committee** held
on
Tuesday, 11th September, 2018 at **2.00 pm** at the **Chamber**
- Kilworthy Park

Present: **Councillors:**

Chairman Cllr Sanders
Vice Chairman Cllr Samuel

Cllr Edmonds
Cllr Mott

Cllr Jory
Cllr Leech

In attendance:

Councillors:

Cllr Cann OBE
Cllr Lamb
Cllr Moyse
Cllr Yelland

Cllr Cheadle
Cllr Moody
Cllr Pearce

Officers:

Head of Paid Service
Group Manager – Customer First and Support Services
Group Manager – Business Development
Group Manager – Commercial Services
Section 151 Officer
CoP Lead – Environmental Health
Cop Lead – IT
Benefit Specialist
Specialist – Assets and Place Making

21. **Apologies for absence**

***HC 21**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Oxborough, Roberts and Sampson.

22. **Declarations of Interest**

***HC 22**

Members were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be discussed and the following were made:

Cllr Samuel declared a personal interest in Item 12: Civil Penalties for breaches of Housing Standards Enforcement Notices, by virtue of being a landlord.

23. **Confirmation of Minutes**

***HC 23**

The Minutes of the Hub Committee meeting held on 17 July 2018 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

24. **Financial Strategy Review Working Group - Cllr Jory**

***HC 24**

In accordance with the Council decision at its meeting on 27 March 2018 (Minute CM 73 refers) for updates to be included as a standing agenda item, the Lead Member for Assets and Environment circulated to Members an update on the work of the Financial Stability Review Group. The Group were due to meet again on 18 September, 2018.

The Lead Member for Assets and Environment had also circulated a note that outlined the intention of Plymouth City Council (PCC) to consult on the possibility of establishing a Marine National Park based on the Plymouth Sound. The Committee endorsed the view that West Devon Borough Council should seek to engage in a collaborative partnership with PCC and as a formal consultee.

25. **Medium Term Financial Strategy 2019/20 to 2023/24 - Cllr Sanders**

HC 25

Members were presented with a report that set out the Council's Medium Term Financial Position over a rolling five year timeframe to 2023/24. The Council, along with other local authorities, had faced unprecedented reductions in Government funding since the Comprehensive Spending Review in 2010.

The Leader presented the report and the s151 Officer and Head of Paid Service responded to questions that arose. Recommendations relating to pensions and staff terms and conditions had caused some concern but the Leader explained the rationale for the recommendations.

During discussion, some Members felt that Recommendation 9 within the presented report that related to Treasury Management and Borrowing Strategy should be amended to reflect that Council should set the upper borrowing limit. The s151 Officer outlined the external advice that had been received that led to the presented recommendation, and in response to a question, the ramifications of ignoring that advice. Other Members felt it was appropriate to accept the advice given.

It was then **PROPOSED, SECONDED** and on being put to the vote declared **LOST**, that the Hub Committee does not make a recommendation on the Upper Limit for External Borrowing (for all Council Services) and instead defers that decision to Council as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy as per Exempt Appendix G. As a result, the recommendation as set out in the presented report was approved as part of recommendation 3 below, which stated that the Hub Committee recommend to Council an Upper Limit of £50 million on External Borrowing.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the Hub Committee:

1. note the forecast budget gap for 2019/20 of £0.45 million and the position for future years;
2. notes the current options identified and timescales for closing the budget gap in 2019/20 and future years, to achieve long term financial sustainability; and
3. **RECOMMENDS** to Council to approve recommendations 1 to 10 as set out in the presented report.

26. **Commercial Property Strategy Amendment - Cllr Jory HC 26**

Members were presented with a report that sought approval and implementation of a new commercial property strategy which combined the ability to make property acquisitions with in-borough asset developments, in line with the 'Enterprise' corporate strategic objective of creating places for enterprise to thrive and business to grow.

The Lead Member for Assets presented the report.

It was then **RESOLVED** that Council be **RECOMMENDED** to:

1. Approve and Implement the commercial property strategy as detailed in Appendix A of the presented report; and
2. Rescind the currently adopted commercial property acquisition strategy as detailed in presented Appendix E.

27. **Quarter 1 Revenue Budget Monitoring 2018/2019 - Cllr Edmonds *HC 27**

Members were presented with a report that enabled monitoring of income and expenditure variations against the approved budget for 2018/19, and provided a forecast for the year end position.

The Lead Member for Resources and Performance presented the report.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the Hub Committee note the forecast income and expenditure variations for the 2018/19 financial year and the overall projected underspend of £19,000.

28. **Write Off Report - Cllr Edmonds**

***HC 28**

The Lead Member for Resources and Performance introduced a report that informed Members of the debt written off for revenue streams within the Revenue and Benefits service. Debts up to the value of £5,000 were written off by the s151 Officer under delegated authority. Permission was sought to write off individual debts with a value of more than £5,000. The Lead Member advised the Committee of the background to the debt for which permission was sought. The s151 Officer confirmed that the debt was written off as a whole but that the cost to the Council was a portion of that debt.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. in accordance with Financial Regulations, that the s151 Officer had authorised the write-off of individual West Devon Borough Council debts totalling £27,950.96 as detailed in Tables 1 and 2 be noted; and
2. the write off of individual debts in excess of £5,000 totalling £26,564.80, as detailed in Table 3 of the presented report, be approved.

29. **Council Tax Reduction Scheme - Cllr Leech**

***HC 29**

Members were presented with a report that set out the annual requirement for Councils to revisit their existing council tax support scheme and decide whether to replace or revisit their scheme, the requirements for changing the scheme and the associated time constraints.

The Lead Member for Health and Wellbeing presented the report. The Benefit Specialist responded to questions of clarity.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. The proposal to consult on Option 1 (as set out in section 4 of the presented report) on a banded scheme which would assess the maximum level of Council Tax Reduction based on the net income of the claimant and partner, be approved; and
2. The results of the consultation exercise be presented back to the Hub Committee prior to a revised scheme being considered for approval by the Council.

30. **Civic Penalties for breaches of Housing Standards Enforcement Notices - Cllr Leech**

HC 30

Members were presented with a report that outlined how Civil Penalties had been introduced by government legislation as an alternative to traditional criminal law enforcement against landlords, mostly relating to Housing offences. Local Authorities had the power to set civil penalty amounts locally up to a statutory maximum. Civil Penalties allowed for a higher financial penalty than the currently low court fines,

they would provide an effective deterrent and protect residents against rogue landlords, unscrupulous letting agents and other poor business practices. Civil penalties would also deliver more cost efficient and faster enforcement in the area of housing disrepair.

The Lead Member for Health and Wellbeing presented the report. The COP Lead Environmental Health responded to questions and confirmed that there was statutory guidance that provided details on the considerations to be taken into account as part of the fine setting process.

It was then **RESOLVED** that Council be **RECOMMENDED** to update the existing Enforcement Policy with the Civil Penalty Policy.

31. **Tamar Valley AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 Consultation Draft - Cllr Jory**

***HC 31**

Members were presented with a report that outlined the process of the review of the Management Plan for the Tamar Valley AONB, the issues identified for consideration within the Plan review, and detailed the method by which members could contribute to the formal consultation response by the Council, with a view to bringing the final Plan to Hub Committee for adoption in early 2019.

The Lead Member for Assets and Environment presented the report, and the Specialist Assets and Place Making responded to questions. During discussion, it was confirmed that the Management Plan would have a separate annex that would cover planning matters and would interact with Neighbourhood Plans and the emerging Joint Local Plan. It was also confirmed that the annual contribution paid to the TVAONB was towards production and delivery of the Management Plan, and the majority of projects were separately grant funded.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. The content of the Consultation Draft of the Management plan be noted, and members send any comments to the author of the report for incorporation into a formal Council consultation response before the end of October 2018;
2. Authority be delegated to the COP Lead Place making the final content of the formal Council consultation response; and
3. The final version of the Management plan for 2019-2024 be brought to Hub Committee prior to adoption in early 2019.

32. **IT Systems Procurement - Cllr Edmonds**
HC 32

(Paragraph 3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information))

Members were presented with an exempt report that sought direction on a preferred option in respect of the IT systems procurement.

The Lead Member for Resources and Performance presented the report.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the Hub Committee endorse the ICT systems procurement and recommendations to Council, as set out in the presented report.

(NOTE: THESE DECISIONS, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF HC 25, 26, 30 and HC 32 WHICH ARE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COUNCIL MEETING TO BE HELD ON 25 SEPTEMBER 2018, WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE FROM WEDNESDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 2018 UNLESS CALLED IN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULE 18).

The Meeting concluded at 4.07 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
