

WEST DEVON OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE



West Devon
Borough
Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **West Devon Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Tuesday, 26th June, 2018 at 2.00 pm** at the **Chamber - Kilworthy Park**

Present: **Councillors:**

Chairman Cllr Yelland
Vice Chairman

Cllr Cloke
Cllr Kimber
Cllr Musgrave
Cllr Pearce
Cllr Sellis

Cllr Evans
Cllr Moyse
Cllr Parker
Cllr Ridgers
Cllr Sheldon

In attendance:

Councillors:

Cllr Edmonds
Cllr Mott

Cllr Lamb

Officers:

Head of Paid Service
Group manager – Customer First & Support Services
Section 151 Officer
Commissioning Manager
CoP Lead – Environmental Health

1. **Apologies for Absence**

***O&S 1**

Apologies for absence for this meeting were received from Cllrs R E Baldwin, R Cheadle, J R McInnes and J B Moody.

2. **Confirmation of Minutes**

***O&S 2**

The minutes of the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 8 May 2018 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

In respect of Minute *O&S 94 (*'Fusion Annual Review Presentation: January to December 2017'*), a Member informed that he had still to receive a response to his query for greater clarity over the £27,882 funding that had been achieved in 2017 and particularly the £13,500 to the Okehampton Community Recreational Association (OCRA). In response, officers gave a commitment to follow up this meeting outside of this Committee meeting.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

***O&S 3**

Members and officers were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of this meeting. These were recorded as follows:-

Cllr J Yelland declared a personal interest in Item 13(a): 'Task and Finish Group Updates – Partnership Grant Funding Review' (Minute O&S 12(a) below refers) by virtue of knowing of a number of individuals who were involved in Partnerships and remained in the meeting during the debate and vote thereon; and

Cllr G Parker declared a personal interest in Item 13(a): 'Task and Finish Group Updates – Partnership Grant Funding Review' (Minute O&S 12(a) below refers) by virtue of being the President of the Rotary Club, which was instrumental in the running of the South West Rotary Youth Games and remained in the meeting during the debate and vote on this agenda item.

4. **Public Forum**

***O&S 4**

There were no issues raised during the Public Forum session at this meeting.

5. **Draft Hub Committee Forward Plan**

***O&S 5**

During consideration of the most recently published Hub Committee Forward Plan, the Committee was advised that:-

(a) the following Hub Committee agenda items were to be deferred to the meeting on 11 September 2018:

- GDPR / Data Protection 2018 Compliance;
- Council Tax Reduction Draft Scheme; and
- Policy for Civil Penalties for breaches of Housing Standards Enforcement Notices.

(b) the Annual Treasury Management Report 2017/18 would now be considered by the Audit Committee instead of the Hub Committee;

(c) the following reports that were linked to the Joint Local Plan (JLP) would need to be added to the Hub Committee Forward Plan:

- a recommendation to Council to approve the JLP itself;
- proposed future governance arrangements for monitoring the progress of the Plan; and
- the preparation of the Tavistock Conservation Area Management Plan.

6. **Exclusion of Public and Press**

***O&S 6**

RESOLVED

That in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business as the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Act is involved.

7. **Financial Stability Review Group: Progress Update**

***O&S 7**

The Committee considered an exempt Briefing Note that had also been presented to the Hub Committee meeting on 5 June 2018 for consideration (Minute *HC 5 refers).

Following an introduction by the lead Hub Committee Member, reference was made to:-

- (a) the role of the wider membership in the work of the Review Group. In agreement with the lead Hub Committee Member, the Committee recognised that there was a need for wider engagement with all Members as the work of the Group continued to evolve;
- (b) the Public Toilet Review. It was confirmed that more information on the Review would be considered by the Hub Committee at its next meeting on 17 July 2018.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the contents of the Briefing Paper be received and noted.

8. **Re-admittance of Public and Press**

***O&S 8**

RESOLVED

That the public and press be re-admitted to the meeting.

9.

Update Report on Food Safety Audit Action Plan

***O&S 9**

Members considered a report that provided an update on the Food Safety Audit Action Plan and gave an opportunity for the Committee to comment upon the Food Safety Service Plan for 2018/19.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- (a) Committee Members wished to thank and pay tribute to the achievement whereby 100% of due food safety inspections had been completed during 2017/18. In expressing their thanks, the Committee asked that their congratulations be passed on to lead officers;
- (b) When questioned, it was confirmed that resources had been reallocated from External Health and Safety activities to Food Safety work. The Committee was also informed that resources would need to be reappraised upon the conclusion of the twelve month temporary specialist post that had been referred to in the presented agenda report;
- (c) With regard to fees and income, officers advised that, in line with Better Business for All guidance, the Council charged between £60 and £80 per hour to deliver the service. Furthermore, the Committee was informed that there was potential to generate income through the delivery of higher education training.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the Committee welcomes the update on the Food Safety Audit Action Plan and has been given the opportunity to comment upon the Food Safety Service Plan 2018/19.

10.

Overview and Scrutiny: Draft Annual Report

O&S 10

The Committee considered a paper that presented its draft Annual Report for 2017/18.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- (a) Some minor typographical errors were highlighted and, as a way forward, it was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** that delegated authority be given to the Senior Specialist – Democratic Services, in consultation with the Committee Chairman, to make the necessary amendments;
- (b) Members were of the view that the Annual Report helped to illustrate the amount of work (and added value) that the Committee had undertaken during 2017/18. In addition, Members expressed the view that the Overview and Scrutiny function was

now much more effective and efficient than it had been in previous years;

- (c) A Member queried the reference in the Annual Report to the principle of holding the Hub Committee to account. In expanding upon the point, it was noted that the Leader was particularly keen on the Committee monitoring and scrutinising the work of the Hub Committee. Furthermore, officers made the point that, with almost half of the Council membership serving on it, the levels of influence that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could exert were very significant.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the Council be **RECOMMENDED** to approve the Overview and Scrutiny Draft Annual Report for 2017/18, subject to delegated authority being given to the Senior Specialist – Democratic Services, in consultation with the Committee Chairman, to make the necessary amendments as referred to above.

11. Joint Local Plan: Standing Agenda Item *O&S 11

By way of an update, one of the Joint Steering Group (JSG) Members advised the Committee that:-

- Due to illness, it was noted that there had been a delay in the receipt of the interim findings from the Examination in Public. It was now hoped that the report would be received during mid-July; and
- In respect of the current status of the Plan, whilst it depended upon the specific policy (and the context), elements of it could now be given 'significant weight' in planning terms.

During the ensuing discussion, reference was made to the Neighbourhood Planning process and the current disillusionment amongst Groups and parish councils. The JSG Member shared the frustrations that were being raised but emphasised the importance of the Groups continuing to plough on. The Member also gave an assurance that things would begin to get easier once the Plan had been formally adopted.

12. Task & Finish Group Updates (if any) O&S 12 (a) Partnership Funding Review

A report was considered by the Committee that presented the final report of the Partnership Funding Review Task and Finish Group.

The Group Chairman introduced the report and informed that the membership of the Task and Finish Group had been expanded following Council consideration of the draft Budget for 2018/19. In addition, the Chairman wished to thank those 26 Members who had recently completed the Member Survey and emphasised that the results of this Survey had been given great recognition by the Group when it reached its final recommendations.

During the ensuing debate, particular reference was made to:-

- (i) the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). Widespread disappointment was expressed amongst Committee Members that the Group had not recommended any reduction to the £5,000 annual grant allocated to the LEP. Further doubts were raised over whether the Council was obtaining value for money for its £5,000 annual grant and the point was also made that these monies would be much better used to support other more local partnership arrangements that were being proposed to face reductions (e.g. the Youth Games; Junior Life Skills; Okehampton Community Transport; and Tavistock Ring and Ride);
- (ii) interpretation of the supporting comments in the presented agenda report that underpinned the Member Survey results. Some Members took issue with some of the comments and felt that, in certain instances, they were rather misleading and therefore made it difficult to reach definite conclusions;
- (iii) those Partnerships deemed as being 'statutory'. A number of Members were unconvinced that those partnerships that were listed as being 'statutory' (Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum; Tamar Valley AONB; and the World Heritage Site) provided sufficient value for money. In addition, discontent was expressed that the Task and Finish Group had seemingly accepted that the funding for these was 'fixed' and therefore unable to be reduced. Such was the strength of feeling that some Members were firmly of the view that there was scope to reduce the funding allocated to these instead of some of the other partnerships that were proposed to lose monies;
- (iv) the work undertaken by the Task and Finish Group to reach this point. A Member of the Group expressed his deep frustrations at the general direction that the debate had taken and, once again, highlighted the amount of time and effort that had been put in to produce this set of recommendations. In addition, the Member reminded his fellow Committee Members that the Council was faced with meeting a significant budget gap and there was a need to take difficult decisions now;
- (v) the recommendations being to 2023/24. Such were the difficulties in predicting the future financial position for the Council (coupled with the vast difference in Member opinions

expressed), that a number of Committee Members questioned the actual need to make a series of recommendations that were looking so far in advance (i.e. to 2023/24).

As a consequence, it was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** and on being put to the vote declared **CARRIED** that the future funding should at this time only be agreed for 2019/20.

It was then:

RECOMMENDED

That the Hub Committee **RECOMMEND** to Council that:

1. the Task and Finish Group future funding recommendations should at this time only be agreed for 2019/20; and
2. all organisations be encouraged to seek alternative funding by drawing their attention to other potential income streams that are funded by WDBC.

(b) 'Digital by Default' Proposal

The Committee considered the merits of setting up a Task and Finish Group to review access to the Council's services. In conclusion, the Committee recognised the intention of this proposal, but felt that it should be deferred for further consideration after the results of the Customer Satisfaction Survey had been published.

(c) Performance Measures and Targets Review Proposal

Members were informed that the lead Hub Committee Member was currently undertaking a review into both the measures reported and the appropriateness of the targets that were aligned to these measures. As a result, the Committee was assured that it would be in receipt of the concluding report following this review and it was therefore agreed that the proposal to establish a Task and Finish Group in this regard would not be pursued any further at this time.

13. Rural Broadband Working Group Update (if any)

***O&S 13**

During the update, reference was made to:-

- (a) an invite having been extended to the Connecting Devon and Somerset Programme Manager to attend a future Committee meeting. At the time of this meeting, it was noted that officers were still awaiting a response to this invitation;
- (b) a meeting of the 'Connecting Dartmoor and Exmoor' Board had been scheduled to take place on 14 August 2018;

- (c) Ultrafast Broadband rollout. A Member informed that he had met with representatives from BT and he was hopeful that a couple of cabinets would be upgraded in the Borough to ensure that nearby residents could be in receipt of Ultrafast Broadband provision.

14. **Annual Work Programme 2017/18**

***O&S 14**

The Chairman introduced the latest version of the Work Programme for the next 12 months. In discussion, it was agreed that an update on the IT Procurement project would be presented to the Committee meeting on 4 September 2018.

15. **Member Learning and Development Opportunities Arising from this meeting**

***O&S 15**

In discussion, the Committee was reminded of the contacts details for the recently appointed Member IT Support Officer and Members were urged to utilise his expertise.

The Meeting concluded at 4.20 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
