

WEST DEVON OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE



Minutes of a meeting of the **West Devon Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Tuesday, 8th October, 2019 at 2.00 pm** at the **Chamber - Kilworthy Park**

Present: **Councillors:**

Chairman Cllr Ewings
Vice Chairman Cllr Kimber

Cllr Bolton
Cllr Heyworth
Cllr Moyse
Cllr Ratcliffe
Cllr Southcott
Cllr Wood

Cllr Daniel
Cllr Kemp
Cllr Musgrave
Cllr Ridgers
Cllr Spettigue

In attendance:

Councillors:

Cllr Cheadle
Cllr Davies
Cllr Jory
Cllr Mott
Cllr Renders
Cllr Vachon

Cllr Crozier
Cllr Hipsey
Cllr Leech
Cllr Pearce
Cllr Samuel
Cllr Yelland

Officers:

Section 151 Officer
Head of Place Making Practice
Senior Specialist – Democratic Services

36. **Apologies for Absence**
*O&S 36
Apologies for absence for this meeting were received from Cllrs K Ball and A Coulson.
37. **Confirmation of Minutes - Meeting held 3 September 2019**
*O&S 37

The minutes of the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 3 September 2019 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

38. **Declarations of Interest**

*O&S 38

Members and officers were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of this meeting but there was none made.

39. **Public Forum**

*O&S 39

The Chairman informed that no formal requests had been received in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

40. **Hub Committee Forward Plan**

*O&S 40

It was noted that no prior requests had been received for updates on any future Hub Committee agenda items at this meeting.

By way of an update, the Section 151 Officer informed that a proposal was to be put forward that would seek to recommend that, at the Special Council meeting on 5 November 2019, a joint IT Procurement Member Working Group (with Members from South Hams District Council) be established. The Committee was supportive of this item coming forward and noted that the main focus of work for the Group would be to give consideration to all aspects of future IT provision for the two Councils.

41. **A386 Transport Corridor/Tavistock Rail: Verbal Update following last Committee Meeting (Minute *O&S 26 refers)**

*O&S 41

The Head of Place Making Practice provided an update and made particular reference to:-

- the costs breakdown. The officer confirmed that he had now received the cost projections of reinstating a railway from Tavistock to Bere Alston and he would circulate these to all Members. In addition, it was agreed that a copy of the referred to report on the benefits between a light and heavy rail solution in the area would be distributed to all Members;
- the Economy Working Group lead Member for the A386 and Rail. After the last Panel meeting, the officer had met with the assigned lead Member and it was agreed that a submission would be sent to the Department for Transport (DfT). In the subsequent response, the DfT had signposted the Council back to Devon County Council (DCC) which indicated that this was seen as a local issue and there was no central government monies available for any alternative route to the Dawlish to Teignmouth rail line;

- ensuring that the Council focused on what it could deliver and achieve during this administration. In so doing, the importance of the Council giving consideration to its preferred options was stressed; and
- an electric vehicle route along the A386 being a realistic long-term prospect.

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

- (a) The Chairman advised that a formal request had been made by a local resident called Mr Paul Mercer for a submission that he had made to be read out to the Committee meeting. In his submission, Mr Mercer had stated that:
- he had read with some dismay the last set of Committee minutes that had highlighted the cost projections of reinstating the Tavistock to Bere Alston link had now risen to £93 million;
 - it appeared that DCC had now seemingly no interest in reinstating the whole line to Exeter via Tavistock and Okehampton. Mr Mercer was also of the view that the benefits of reinstating the Tavistock to Bere Alston link were minimal without it then carrying on to Okehampton;
 - he had concluded that the 'Jacobs Report' had downplayed the potential benefits and had overlooked the significant public support in this area;
 - the warnings of tidal rises due to global warming could have major implications on the Dawlish to Teignmouth line; and
 - it was his hope that no planning permission would be granted for development on or near the old rail line formation in case it was needed in the future;
- (b) Due to their concerns, the Committee reached the following conclusions:
- That local Ward Members and Officers should keep lobbying both DCC and the DfT;
 - That a sub-group of the Economy Working Group be set up and solely tasked with considering the issue of the A386 / rail provision;
 - That the Head of Place Making Practice, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee, send a strongly worded representation to DCC colleagues outlining the concerns of Members; and
 - That the lead DCC Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, Development and Waste be invited to attend the next Committee meeting on 19 November 2019 and respond to Member questions;
- (c) The Leader of Council highlighted correspondence that he had recently received from DCC colleagues. Of particular note, the correspondence had stated that:

- the current focus was on the Okehampton to Exeter line and it was felt that this could be seen as the first phase as part of the wider project; and
- DCC remained conscious of the need to develop a sustainable solution between Tavistock and Plymouth and was committed to investigating all possible options.

(d) The scale of the proposed future development and expansion of Tavistock was directly linked to improving the rail solution in the area.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That local Ward Members and Officers should keep lobbying both DCC and the DfT;
2. That a sub-group of the Economy Working Group be set up and solely tasked with considering the issue of the A386 / rail provision;
3. That the Head of Place Making Practice, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee, send a strongly worded representation to DCC colleagues outlining the concerns of Members; and
4. That the lead DCC Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, Development and Waste be invited to attend the next Committee meeting on 19 November 2019 and respond to Member questions.

42. Joint Local Plan: Quarterly Update -Verbal Update

*O&S 42

During her quarterly update, the lead Hub Committee Member for Environment informed that:

- a) A number of Members had attended the recent Joint Workshop with colleagues from Plymouth City Council and South Hams District Council on the emerging Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs); and
- b) Reports that sought approval to commence a public consultation exercise on the draft SPDs and the Statement of Community Involvement were to be presented to the Hub Committee at its meeting on 5 November 2019.

43. Financial Stability Review Group - Member Briefing Note

*O&S 43

The Section 151 Officer presented her Briefing Note that had informed that the first Group meeting of this Council had been held on 24 September 2019, with the next meeting scheduled to take place on 22 October 2019. In addition, the officer also highlighted that it was now considered timely for the Group Terms of Reference to be updated and a recommendation to that effect would be considered at the next Hub Committee meeting on 5 November 2019.

During the ensuing discussion, reference was made to:-

- (a) the potential significant implications to the Council of the Council Tax Referendum limit being reduced from 2.99% to 1.99%;
- (b) the technical consultation on the Local Government Finance Settlement 2020/21. It was noted that Town and Parish Council Clerks had been contacted by officers and encouraged to respond (before the deadline of 31 October 2019) on the Government proposal to continue with no referendum principles for Town and Parish Councils in 2020/21.

44. **Task & Finish Group Updates:**

*O&S 44

(a) Leisure Review

Members noted that the first Group meeting had been held earlier in the day and Cllr Daniel had been appointed as Group Chairman.

The main outcomes of the meeting had been that the Group had approved the Terms of Reference for the Review and the next meeting had been scheduled to be held on 15 October 2019.

45. **Annual Work Programme 2019/20**

*O&S 45

The Committee considered the latest version of its Work Programme for the 2019/20 Municipal Year. In discussion, it was confirmed that the Work Programme would be amended to reflect the decision to invite the DCC Cabinet lead Member for Infrastructure, Development and Waste to attend the next Committee meeting on 19 November 2019.

46. **Member Learning and Development Opportunities Arising from this Meeting**

*O&S 46

The Committee was reminded of the importance of Member attendance at the draft 2020/21 Budget Workshop on the afternoon of Tuesday, 12 November 2019.

The Meeting concluded at 2.50 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
