

WEST DEVON HUB COMMITTEE



West Devon
Borough
Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **West Devon Hub Committee** held on **Tuesday, 8th March, 2022 at 2.00 pm** at the **Chamber - Kilworthy Park**

Present: **Councillors:**

Chairman Cllr Jory
Vice Chairman

Cllr Edmonds
Cllr Leech
Cllr Crozier
Cllr Ratcliffe

Cllr Mott
Cllr Pearce
Cllr Daniel

In attendance:

Councillors:

Cllr Cheadle
Cllr Sellis
Cllr Yelland

Cllr Ewings
Cllr Southcott

Officers:

Chief Executive
Section 151 Officer
Director - Place & Enterprise
Democratic Services Manager
Head of Housing
Head of Development Management
Deputy Section 151 Officer
Head of Strategy & Projects

67. **Apologies for absence**

*HC 67/21

There were no apologies for absence forwarded to this Meeting.

68. **Declarations of Interest**

*HC 68/21

Members were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be discussed and there were none made.

69. **Confirmation of Minutes**

*HC 69/21

The Minutes of the Hub Committee meeting held on 1 February 2022 were confirmed as a correct record.

70. **Public questions - a period of up to 15 minutes is available to deal with issues raised by the public**

*HC 70/21

It was noted that no Public Questions had been received in accordance with the Hub Committee Procedure Rules.

71. **Hub Committee Forward Plan**

*HC 71/21

Members were presented with the Hub Committee Forward Plan that set out items on the agenda for Hub Committee meetings for the next four months.

In discussion, it was noted that the published Plan incorrectly stated that the '*Regeneration and Investment Strategy*' (Minute HC 74/21 below refers) was within the Economy portfolio area of responsibility when in fact it fell within the Resources and Performance portfolio area. In addition, the published Plan had omitted to state that Cllr Mott was the lead Member with responsibility for Built Environment.

72. **Response to the Housing Crisis**

*HC 72/21

Consideration was given to a report that outlined the start of the response to the issues that were set out in the recent Council decision to declare a Housing Crisis at its meeting held on 15 February 2022.

In discussion, reference was made to:-

- (a) the need for ongoing monitoring and progress reporting. Having recently declared a Housing Crisis, the Committee recognised the need for regular monitoring and progress updates to be presented to the membership;
- (b) the need to respond quickly to the Crisis. In citing the time being taken to progress the Springhill project, a Member emphasised the importance of responding and taking action quickly in order to counter the Housing Crisis;
- (c) the 'Step-On' pilot scheme recently adopted by South Hams District

Council (SHDC). In highlighting the recent decision taken by SHDC, Members hoped that a similar proposal could be brought forward to a future Hub Committee Meeting;

- (d) consultation and engagement. A Member expressed his frustrations at the lack of reference in the published agenda report to consultation and engagement.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. the proposed measures to address the Housing Crisis (as set out in the published agenda report) be approved; and
2. a letter be sent outlining the Council's lobbying objectives to the Rt Hon Michael Gove MP (Secretary of State for Levelling Up).

73. **Planning Improvement Plan Update: Local Validation List and Planning Charter**

HC 73/21

A report was considered that sought to update Members on the progress of two specific actions contained in the adopted Planning Improvement Plan. These actions being: to recommend adoption of both the revised Local Validation List and the Planning Charter.

In discussion, the following points were raised:

- (a) In support of the proposals, the anticipated savings in officer time and increased emphasis on sustainability were particularly welcomed;
- (b) One the team was at full capacity, a commitment was given to Members that, in those instances when planning applications were defined as being 'out of time', then regular progress updates would be given to the planning agent or applicant.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. Council be **RECOMMENDED** to approve the Local Validation List (as set out at Appendix 1 of the published agenda report);
2. the Planning Charter (as set out at Appendix 2 of the published agenda report) be approved; and
3. authority be delegated to make any minor amendments to the Planning Charter to the Director of Strategy & Governance, in consultation with the lead Hub Committee Member for the Built Environment.

74. **Regeneration and Investment Strategy**

HC 74/21

Members considered a report that set out the first Integrated

Performance Management report since the Council had adopted its Corporate Strategy ('A Plan for West Devon') that covered the Quarter 3 period (from 1 October 2021 to 31 December 2021).

During discussion, the following points were raised:

- (a) With regard to Section 1.2 of the published agenda report, a Member felt that this was slightly misleading. As a result, the Committee agreed that it should read: '*Borrowing for investment outside of area is no longer an acceptable approach for Council investment*';
- (b) Whilst supporting the proposed updates to the Regeneration and Investment Strategy, the need to still maintain a close grip on both risk and yield was stressed.

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

1. approve the update to the Regeneration and Investment Strategy (as contained in Appendix A of the presented agenda report); and
2. change the title of the 'Invest to Earn Committee' to the 'Regeneration and Investment Committee'.

75. **Month 10 Revenue Budget Monitoring 2022/23**

*HC 75/21

Consideration was given to a report that enabled Members to monitor income and expenditure variations against the approved Budget for 2021/22. In addition, the report also provided a forecast for the year-end position.

In discussion, reference was made to:-

- (a) rising fuel costs. Given the current global crisis having a significant impact on fuel costs, a Member questioned whether this would have a consequent impact on the visitor economy this year and car parking income. In acknowledging the point, whilst the income target remain unchanged, the lead Member for Resources gave an assurance that it would be kept under regular review through the quarterly budget monitoring reports;
- (b) local food production. In respect of the Council commitment to local food production, it was noted that supporting the local agricultural industry and reducing the amount of food miles were outlined in the adopted 'A Plan for West Devon'.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the forecast income and expenditure variations for the 2021/22 Financial Year and the overall projected deficit of £43,000 (0.6% of the total Budget of £7.302 million), which is very close to a break-even position, be noted.

76. **Capital Budget Monitoring 2021/2022**

*HC 76/21

The Committee considered a report that advised Members of the financial position of the Council as at 31 January 2022.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- (a) Members stressed the importance of all local Ward Members being proactive within their local communities and town and parish councils to ensure that Section 106 monies were spent before the prescribed deadline expired.
- (b) With regard to the ongoing issues associated with the moveable floor at Parklands Leisure Centre, Members emphasised the need for a long-term engineering solution to be found.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the contents of the report be endorsed.

77. **Exempt Accommodation Update**

*HC 77/21

Members gave consideration to a report that sought to endorse the Council's current approach to managing exempt accommodation, which prioritised protecting both vulnerable residents and the public purse.

In discussion, tributes were paid to both the Leader and lead officers for their hard work and tenacity in reaching this point.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. the Council's approach to managing exempt accommodation, which prioritises protecting both vulnerable residents and the public purse be endorsed; and
2. the Council continue to engage and lobby at a local, regional and national level to ensure that the Regulations be amended to prevent exploitation of the individual tenants and the Housing Benefit System.

(NOTE: THESE DECISIONS WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE FROM THURSDAY, 17 MARCH 2022, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF MINUTES HC 73/21 PART 1 AND HC 74/21 WHICH ARE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COUNCIL MEETING TO BE HELD ON 5 APRIL 2022, UNLESS CALLED IN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULE 18)

The Meeting concluded at 3.00 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
