

WEST DEVON HUB COMMITTEE



West Devon
Borough
Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **West Devon Hub Committee** held on **Tuesday, 11th July, 2023 at 3.00 pm** at the **Chamber - Kilworthy Park**

Present: **Councillors:**

Chairman Cllr Ewings
Vice Chairman Cllr Renders

Cllr Bridgewater
Cllr Edmonds
Cllr Leech
Cllr Mott

Cllr Daniel
Cllr Jory
Cllr Moody

In attendance:

Councillors:

Cllr Dexter
Cllr Mann
Cllr Squire
Cllr West

Cllr Johnson
Cllr Oxborough
Cllr Viney

Officers:

Chief Executive
Deputy Chief Executive
Director – Place & Enterprise
Monitoring Officer
Democratic Services Manager
Head of Housing (via Teams)
Head of Revenues & Benefits
Assistant Director – Strategy & Organisational Development
Assistant Director – Waste, Recycling & Operations

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

*HC 01/23

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

2. **Declarations of Interest**
*HC 02/23
Members were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be discussed but there were none made.

3. **Confirmation of Minutes**
*HC 03/23
The Minutes of the Hub Committee meeting held on 7 March 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.

4. **Hub Committee Forward Plan**
*HC 04/23
Members were presented with the latest version of the Hub Committee Forward Plan that set out items on the agenda for Hub Committee meetings for the next four months and noted its content.

5. **Setting Priorities for the New Council**
*HC 05/23
The Hub Committee considered a report that set out an outline timeline for the development of a new strategy for the Council.

During the ensuing debate, the following points were raised:

- (a) It was recognised that the currently adopted 'A Plan for West Devon' had been a success story for the Council and the intention of the new strategy would be to build upon this success;
- (b) A number of Members highlighted that one of the main intentions of the proposed timeline was to involve all Members in the development of the new strategy. As a result, it was emphasised that all Members should embrace the opportunity to be involved in the process by attending (and actively partaking) at each respective Hub Advisory Group meeting.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the timeline and approach for development of the next iteration of the Council's Corporate Strategy be approved;
2. That, working with the Senior Leadership Team and the Assistant Director of Strategy over the coming months to refine priorities for the next four years, a new draft Corporate Strategy be ready for consideration by the Hub Committee at its meeting on 21 November 2023; and

3. That the intention be noted that, following the meeting on 21 November 2023, a period of consultation be undertaken to inform the final Strategy prior to its adoption by Full Council.

6. **Quarter 4 Integrated Performance Management Report**

*HC 06/23

A report was considered that provided a progress update on the final quarter of the 2022/23 operational year against the 'Plan for West Devon' delivery plan, which included information on key service performance and the strategic risk profile for the Council.

In the ensuing debate, reference was made to:

- (a) performance reporting in the short-term. Officers confirmed that, until a new Corporate Strategy was adopted, the Hub Committee would continue to be in receipt of quarterly performance reports on the 'A Plan for West Devon: Year 3 Delivery Plan';
- (b) the eco museum proposal. Such were the difficulties in progressing this proposal, it was noted that it had been removed at the point of adopting the Year 3 Delivery Plan;
- (c) the waste and recycling service performance. The improvements in the performance of the waste and recycling service were welcomed by the Committee;
- (d) planning enforcement cases. Members acknowledged that recent performance had been attributed to a significant increase in planning enforcement cases received by the Council.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the Quarter 4 Integrated Performance Management Report covering the period January 2023 – March 2023 be noted.

7. **Putting Housing First**

*HC 07/23

Members considered a report that set out the Council's aspirations for the new Council term in relation to Housing matters

During discussion, reference was made to:

- (a) relationships with local Housing Associations. When questioned, officers confirmed that they had positive working relationships with their Housing Association colleagues;
- (b) some concerns related to the local Housing Associations. In recognising that the draft Overview & Scrutiny Committee Work Programme included provision for senior representatives from the

local Housing Associations to attend a future Committee meeting to respond to Member questions, it was hoped that the following concerns would be adequately reflected during this session:

- the vast number of property disposals throughout the Borough;
- the apparent lack of investment in a repairs and maintenance programme; and
- the need to improve energy efficiency across the Housing Stock in the Borough;

(c) regular update reports to the Committee. In recognition of the declared Housing Crisis and there being a number of projects that had already commenced, it was confirmed that regular update reports would be presented to the Committee. Furthermore, it was confirmed that copies of the latest Housing Needs schedule and an update on the Seamoor Lettings initiative would be circulated to Members outside of this Committee meeting;

(d) the concluding comments of the Leader. Whilst not wishing to pre-empt the work into the development of a new Corporate Strategy (Minute HC 05/23 above refers), the Leader stated that Housing would be an absolute priority area for this Council administration.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the prioritisation by the Council of its resources and influence to improve affordable and social housing outcomes in the Borough be endorsed and that action to benefit the greatest number of homes and help the greatest range of residents in need, be taken.

8. Cost of Living Crisis: Plans for Household Support Fund 2023 to 2024 and Council Tax Support Fund Allocation

*HC 08/23

Members were presented with a report that sought approval for the implementation of a range of support measures to assist residents who were experiencing extreme hardship during the current Cost of Living crisis.

During debate, particular reference was made to:

- (a) the eligibility to claim Pension Credit Guarantee Credit (PCGC). When questioned, the lead officer confirmed that, despite writing to 144 pensioners living in the Borough, the response rate continued to be very low. As a consequence, the officer informed that further steps were being taken to directly contact these individuals;
- (b) offering support to Carers. It was proposed that a specific report on offering support to Carers would be presented to a future Hub Committee meeting;

- (c) an additional recommendation. Such were the number of detailed questions that were being raised on this agenda item, coupled with the complexities associated with the Benefits service, that an additional recommendation was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** as follows:

'g) That the Head of Revenues and Benefits be instructed to: arrange an all Member Briefing on Benefits in the upcoming weeks'.

Given the number of recently elected new Members, this suggestion was welcomed by the Committee.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the Head of Revenues and Benefits be instructed to:

- a) take immediate steps to progress support payments of £150 to single income households in receipt of Council Tax Reduction, and not receiving passported benefits, on 1 August 2023, with a further payment of up to £250 being made in December 2023;
- b) take immediate steps to progress support payments of £150 to residents with caring responsibilities i.e. those receiving Council Tax Reduction and Carers Allowance and/or a council tax carers disregard on 1 August 2023, with a further payment of up to £250 being made in December 2023;
- c) take immediate steps to progress support payments of £150 to residents receiving War Disablement Pension on 1 August 2023, with a further payment of up to £250 being made in December 2023;
- d) work with Armed Forces' charities and other affiliated organisations to identify other veterans the Council wishes to support;
- e) release the balance of funding in three tranches for an open application process, to cover the periods July to September 2023, October to December 2023 and January to March 2024;
- f) use the balance of the Council Tax Support Fund allocation to top-up the Exceptional Hardship Fund; and
- g) arrange an all Member Briefing on Benefits in the upcoming weeks.

9.

Waste and Recycling Services Update

*HC 09/23

The Hub Committee considered a report that provided an update on the progress and performance of the waste and recycling service since the variation of the joint contract with South Hams District Council on 3 October 2022.

During the ensuing debate, the following points were raised:

- (a) Until the content of the Environment Act 2021 was fully known, officers had considered that there was little merit in undertaking any further work on a three-weekly waste collection proposal;
- (b) With regard to the previous challenges associated with recruiting refuse vehicle drivers, since all rounds were currently being deployed, then that suggested that this issue had somewhat stabilised;
- (c) In light of Members wishing to ask a number of questions that related to the information contained in exempt Appendix A to the presented report, it was then **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** and when put to the vote declared **CARRIED** that:

RESOLVED

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.

After a twenty-five minute discussion and, once all Members were content that they had no further questions directly related to the exempt appendix, it was then:

RESOLVED

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

It was then:

RESOLVED

- 1) That the improvement in performance of the waste and recycling service in the last 8 months be noted;
- 2) That a Waste Working Group be established to consider the implications of the Environment Act 2021 and provide oversight of the Waste and Recycling contract with FCC; and
- 3) That the contents of (exempt) Appendix A to the presented report be noted and that it also be noted that a further report on the updated costs contained therein, would be considered at a future meeting of the Hub Committee.

(NOTE: THESE DECISIONS, WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE FROM 5.00PM ON THURSDAY, 20 JULY 2023 UNLESS CALLED IN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES)

The Meeting concluded at 4.55 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
