

WEST DEVON JOINT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMITTEE



West Devon
Borough
Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **West Devon Joint Overview & Scrutiny Internal and External Committee** held on **Tuesday, 12th January, 2016** at **2.00 pm** at the **Chamber - Kilworthy Park**

Present: **Councillors:**

Chairman Musgrave
Vice Chairman Ridgers

Cllr R Cheadle
Davies
Evans
Kimber
McInnes
Moyse
Roberts
Stephens

Cloke
Edmonds
Cllr J Hockridge
Leech
Mott
Pearce
John
Watts

In attendance:

Councillors:

Officers:

1. **Appointment of Chairman**

(*O&S1)

It was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** and when put to the vote declared **CARRIED** that: 'Cllr C R Musgrave be declared Chairman for the duration of this meeting'.

2. **Apologies for Absence**

(*O&S 2)
Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs K Ball, N Jory, D K A Sellis and J Yelland.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

(*O&S 3)
Members and officers were asked to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of this meeting, but there were none made

4. **Public Forum**

(*O&S 4)

The Chairman informed that one issue had been raised for this meeting in accordance with the Public Forum procedure rules.

This issue had been raised by Cllr Leech and related to the imminent closure of the practice at the Okement Doctors Surgery, Okehampton.

At this point, Cllr Leech was invited to comment and, in so doing, expressed his grave concerns at the decision to close the practice and the lack of consultation that had been undertaken. Specifically regarding the closure, Members were advised that a meeting with key stakeholders had been arranged to take place on Friday, 22 January 2015.

Members also felt that there would be merit in inviting a representative from the NHS England South West Area Team to attend the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny (External) Committee on 15 March 2016. The purpose of this invitation would be two-fold:-

1. For the representatives to outline the future plans for the NHS England South West Area in respect of other potential closures or services that may be under threat that affect the Borough; and
2. The need to improve communication and consultation links between the Council and the NHS South West region.

In conclusion, Cllr Leech was thanked for his efforts in submitting a Scrutiny proposal form which had directly resulted in this item being presented to the meeting.

5. **Budget Proposals 2016-17 - Update Information**

(*O&S 5)

The Committees considered a report that provided Members with an update to the figures that had been shown in the published Budget proposals report that was considered by the Hub Committee at its meeting on 1 December 2015 (Minute HC 36 refers).

In particular, the update report took into account the results of the Local Government Finance Settlement announcement by central government on 17 December 2015.

In his introduction, the Leader made particular reference to:-

- a minor anomaly to the figures contained within the presented agenda report. The Leader highlighted some minor amendments to the figures that had resulted from an adjustment in the TaxBase for 2016-17;
- the anticipated impact of the Revenue Support Grant being nil at the earlier time of 2018/19;
- the business rates baseline figures being based upon the current Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA);
- a decision being required at a future date on whether the Council should accept the four year offer to Councils to have certainty on their funding. Members were advised that a meeting was to be held imminently between senior finance officers across the county during which the merits of the four year offer would be discussed further;
- the New Homes Bonus. The meeting welcomed the comments in the report whereby the Council would be sending a robust response to the New Homes Bonus consultation document.

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

- (a) In respect of the set up costs of the Trading Company, officers advised that they were awaiting a response from the Local Government Association to ascertain whether or not the Council would be entitled to receive a sum of transformation funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government to support this project. It was noted that the cost pressure had been increased (to £150,000 per Council) as a consequence of some further exploratory work that had been undertaken by Grant Thornton;
- (b) Officers confirmed that the inflation sum allocated towards the swimming pool (£20,000) was higher for 2017/18 in order to take into account assumptions associated with the start of the new leisure contract;

(c) A Member highlighted the importance of the anticipated budget surplus for 2016/17 and the importance of it being re-invested wisely;

(d) To provide guidance to the Hub Committee, Members discussed the merits of whether or not the Council Tax level for 2016/17 should be increased by 1.99%. In light of the ongoing budget reductions from central government, a number of Members concluded that it was absolutely essential to build up our Council TaxBase and there was a further need to look at every possible revenue stream available to the Council. It was then **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** and when put to the vote was unanimously declared **CARRIED** that:-

'The Hub Committee be advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committees recommend that the Council Tax level for 2016/17 be increased by 1.99%.'

Before the meeting was formally closed, the Leader wished to pay tribute to the hard work of the Section 151 Officer and her finance colleagues who continued to work tirelessly for the Council,

The Meeting concluded at 3.00 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
