

# WEST DEVON OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY (EXTERNAL) COMMITTEE



**Minutes** of a meeting of the **West Devon Overview & Scrutiny (External) Committee** held on **Tuesday, 11th October, 2016 at 2.00 pm** at the **Chamber - Kilworthy Park**

Present: **Councillors:**

**Chairman** Cllr Sellis  
**Vice Chairman** Cllr Cloke

Cllr Ball  
Cllr Jory  
Cllr Pearce  
Cllr Sheldon  
Cllr Watts

Cllr Cheadle  
Cllr Leech  
Cllr Roberts  
Cllr Stephens

**In attendance:**

Councillors:

Cllr Benson  
Cllr Moyse

Cllr Evans  
Cllr Musgrave

Officers:

Darren Arulvasagam

Group Manager Business  
Development  
Executive Director Head of Paid  
Service

Steve Jordan

30. **Apologies for absence**

**\*O&S(E) 30**

There were no apologies for absence received for this meeting.

31. **Confirmation of Minutes**

**\*O&S(E) 31**

The minutes of the Meeting held on 26 September 2016 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

32. **Declarations of Interest**

**\*O&S(E) 32**

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.

33. **Public Forum**

**\*O&S(E) 33**

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

34. **Hub Committee Forward Plan**

**\*O&S(E) 34**

The most recent (published October 2016) Hub Committee Forward Plan was presented for consideration. With no specific issues being raised, the Committee subsequently noted the contents of the Plan.

35. **Police and Crime Commissioner to attend (Alison Hernandez)**

**\*O&S(E) 35**

The Chairman introduced Alison Hernandez (the Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall) and Sgt Dave Anning (Devon and Cornwall Police) to the meeting and invited the Commissioner to undertake a brief presentation. In so doing, the Committee was advised that:-

- she fully appreciated the importance of building up good working relationships with local authorities and elected Members. In wishing to develop these relations, the Commissioner urged Members to regularly communicate with her. As an example of this commitment, the Commissioner confirmed that she was in the process of developing a 'Councillor Advocacy Scheme' that would see Members being able to be increasingly involved in policing related matters and greater partnership working in order to keep local communities safe;
- her key functions included: setting the priorities for policing and having responsibility for a £280 million budget and the Devon and Cornwall Police estate. As a general point, the Commissioner summarised her role as being there to represent the general public in policing matters; and
- following a public consultation exercise during the summer, she was imminently to publish her Police and Crime Plan. It was intended that the final version would be presented to the Police and Crime Panel at its meeting on 9 December 2016. Assuming that the Panel endorsed the Plan, the Commissioner's focus would then be on its delivery.

In the subsequent discussion, reference was made to:-

- (a) the impact of central government budget cuts. The Commissioner outlined some of the impacts of the budget reductions and the consequent measures that were being undertaken by her office to plug some of the gaps in service provision. Looking to the future, the Commissioner stressed the importance of all relevant stakeholders working more closely in partnership to prevent crime;
- (b) the National Crime Agency (NCA). The Commissioner highlighted the benefits of the NCA and her belief that the proposed powers that they were to receive would present an excellent opportunity for policing in Devon and Cornwall;
- (c) the Government's Prevent Strategy for tackling radicalisation. In welcoming the question, the Commissioner stated that this Strategy was very much on her radar, but she did recognise that the rural geography of Devon and Cornwall presented a real challenge to tackling radicalisation. In expanding upon this point, Sgt Anning advised that terrorism was now very much a part of the everyday function of the Police service;
- (d) the political aspect of the role. In reply to a question, the Commissioner confirmed that, to date, she had not experienced any party political related issues arising from her role and reiterated that she did not follow the political line of her central government party. Nonetheless, the Commissioner did advise that she had good working relations with local MPs and she was working tirelessly to ensure that increased resources were made available to the Devon and Cornwall area;
- (e) policing in rural areas. The Commissioner recognised the differences between rural and urban policing and advised of her intention for an increased number of front line police officers to be recruited in the area. Sgt Anning also made the point to the Committee that, in the event of any residents observing incidents of crime or anti-social behaviour, then they should record these incidents because video evidence remained very important to the Police;
- (f) incidents of speeding. The Committee was informed that the Commissioner received a great deal of correspondence relating to incidents of speeding. Since speeding was a particularly resource intensive matter, the Commissioner advised that she would like to see greater delegated powers being granted to Community Speedwatch groups and she was currently discussing this concept with the Chief Constable. Moreover, the Commissioner also hoped that the process to become a Community Speedwatch representative could be less bureaucratic and time consuming in the future;
- (g) IT systems. Members were informed by the Commissioner that she accepted that there would be a need to invest monies into upgrading the IT systems. In particular, mobile data devices were still being

rolled out to officers and there was a major project being undertaken to ensure that the supporting systems were fully functioning to be able to adequately support them;

- (h) office resources. When questioned, the Commissioner advised that the current budget for her office amounted to £1.25 million and directly employed 27 members of staff;
- (i) the creation of a 'local policing promise'. To ensure that public expectations could be managed, the Commissioner was developing a 'local policing promise';
- (j) some specific parochial issues. In response to some specific Member issues, the Commissioner asked that these (and any others not raised at the meeting) be forwarded on to her email address ([Alison.Hernandez@devonandcornwall.pnn.police.uk](mailto:Alison.Hernandez@devonandcornwall.pnn.police.uk)) outside of this meeting;
- (k) public perception. The Commissioner acknowledged the clear message that she had received when canvassing before her election that the Police were not accessible to the general public. To improve public perception in this respect, she was considering mechanisms such as police front desks being shared with public libraries and town and borough council offices. Moreover, if any Members had their own suggestions to improve upon this public perception, they were encouraged to let the Commissioner know;
- (l) cyber security. It was widely recognised that cyber security related crime was on the increase and was insufficiently resourced at present. As a consequence, cyber security was a key component of the Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan;
- (m) the implications of the badger cull. The Panel was informed that the cull was being funded by DEFRA and was being policed by officers on their non-working days, who were being paid overtime for this duty.

In concluding the agenda item, the Chairman thanked the Commissioner and Sgt Anning for their attendance and very informative responses to Member questions.

36.

### **Community Safety Partnership**

#### **\* O&S(E) 36**

The Committee considered a report that provided Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the work of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) as defined by Sections 19 and 20 of the Police and Justice Act 2006 and the Crime and Disorder (Overview & Scrutiny) Regulations 2009.

In the ensuing debate, reference was made to:-

- (a) instances of modern slavery. Unfortunately, the Committee was informed that instances of modern slavery were more prevalent in the Borough than would be naturally assumed;
- (b) value for money to the Council. When questioned, officers were confident that the Council contribution towards the CSP (£38,547 per annum) constituted good value for money to the Council. In addition, this view had been endorsed by Members of the Partnership Task and Finish Group during their recent review;
- (c) the £20,000 grant funded from the Commissioner. Members noted that the Commissioner greatly valued the work undertaken by CSP's. The Committee also learned that it was the hope of the Commissioner that the annual contribution made to CSPs from her office would either be maintained at the existing level or increased. However, such decisions would be made pending discussions between the Commissioner and the Safer Devon Partnership;

It was then

**RESOLVED**

That the report be noted.

37. **Tavistock Townscape Heritage Initiative - Briefing Note**

**\* O&S(E) 37**

A briefing note was considered by the Committee that provided an update on the Tavistock Townscape Heritage Initiative (TTHI) Scheme. In particular, the note reminded the Committee that the purpose of the Scheme was as follows:

- To bring new uses to, and sustain existing/bring new jobs to heritage buildings and the communities they served;
- To repair and regenerate the historic environment;
- To provide enhancements to the public realm making the town a better place to live in, work and visit; and
- To provide information and education associated with historic buildings. In particular, to increase local resilience through supporting and promoting the historic skills/crafts needed to keep such in good and authentic repair.

The meeting was joined by the Chairman of the TTHI Management Board and the Project Manager, who introduced the Briefing Note and responded to Member questions.

For clarity, the Committee Chairman advised that she attended meetings of the TTHI Partnership and the Grants Policy. However, since she was not directly involved in the decision-making process, she did not consider it necessary to declare an interest in this agenda item.

In the subsequent discussion, the following points were raised:-

- (a) The representatives assured the Committee that the Initiative was particularly mindful of the need to utilise apprentices and the general need to upskill workers on the repair and maintenance of historic buildings. Furthermore, representatives from local schools were invited to a recent skills workshop and a craft and skills day was also being proposed in the future;
- (b) With regard to the financial stability of the scheme, Members were advised that the main associated financial risks related to private owner applications and the need to encourage progress of such schemes was recognised by the Committee;
- (c) Members were given comfort that there were clawback mechanisms in place to prevent private owners from making a quick profit through the Initiative.

In noting the update, the Committee wished to thank the representatives for their attendance and contributions to this meeting.

### 38. **Joint Local Plan Update - Standing Agenda Item**

#### **\* O&S(E) 38**

The Head of Paid Service introduced the standing agenda item on the Joint Local Plan (JLP) and made particular reference to:-

- the JLP now being an internal policy. As a consequence of the JLP now being an internal policy, the Committee was advised that this standing agenda item was in fact within the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny (Internal) Committee and should therefore be included on its future work programme instead. On balance, the Committee was supportive of this approach, but did wish to retain the provision to receive periodic updates;
- the JLP Steering Group continuing to work its way through the consultation responses;
- two Member Workshops being arranged in the next few months to consider the draft policies that would underpin the JLP and specific site allocations;
- the five year land supply. In light of the apparent ambiguity concerning the Council's five year land supply, it was intended that a more detailed position report would be considered by the Hub Committee at its meeting on 29 November 2016.

It was then:

#### **RESOLVED**

That the Overview and Scrutiny (Internal) Committee be asked to consider updating its work programme to include 'Joint Local Plan Updates' as a standing agenda item, with the Overview and Scrutiny (External) Committee also being in receipt of periodic updates on the Joint Local Plan.

39. **Task and Finish Group Updates**

**\* O&S(E) 39**

**(a) DCH Rent Review**

The Task and Finish Group Members advised that, rather unsatisfactorily, it had proven particularly difficult to receive any responses from Devon and Cornwall Housing (DCH) regarding this issue.

In conclusion, as a way forward, the Committee agreed that the Task and Finish Group should conclude its review. However, the Committee also requested that representatives from DCH be invited to attend its meeting on 7 March 2017 for three main reasons:

1. How rental figures for social housing were calculated in West Devon;
2. To provide a general update on DCH's approach to property maintenance; and
3. To look at methods of improving DCH's working relationship with the Council.

The Committee also expressed its support for the working practice whereby Members be encouraged to submit questions in advance for the consideration of invited external attendee(s).

40. **Committee Decisions Log**

**\*O&S(E) 40**

The latest version of the Committee decisions log was presented to the meeting.

With no debate or questions being raised on the log, it was then:

**RESOLVED**

That the published Decisions Log be noted.

41. **Annual Work Programme 2016/17**

**\*O&S(E) 41**

The Committee considered its draft 2016/17 Work Programme and made reference to the following comments, additions and amendments:-

- It was noted that the final recommendations of the Economy Working Group would be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny (Internal) Committee at its meeting on 8 November 2016;

- With regard to County Highways, some concerns were expressed at the nature of the recommendations that were being presented to the Planning and Licensing Committee and it was therefore felt that relevant representatives should be invited to attend a future Overview and Scrutiny (External) Committee. Having been informed of the intention for County Highways Officers to be invited to provide an informal briefing to Planning and Licensing Committee Members in the upcoming months, it was suggested that all Members of this Committee should also be invited to attend this session;
- Some examples were cited regarding poor instances of service being received by Airband customers in the borough. As a consequence, the Committee requested that a senior representative from Airband should be invited to attend a future meeting to respond to these concerns.

The Meeting concluded at 4.15 pm

**Signed by:**

**Chairman**

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