

WEST DEVON OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY (INTERNAL) COMMITTEE



Minutes of a meeting of the **West Devon Overview & Scrutiny (Internal) Committee** held on **Tuesday, 6th September, 2016 at 2.00 pm** at the **Chamber - Kilworthy Park**

Present: **Councillors:**

Chairman Cllr Musgrave
Vice Chairman Cllr Yelland

Cllr Cann OBE
Cllr Evans
Cllr Mott
Cllr Ridgers

Cllr Davies
Cllr Kimber
Cllr Moyse

In attendance:

Councillors:

Cllr Benson
Cllr Edmonds
Cllr Moody
Cllr Sellis

Cllr Cloke
Cllr Leech
Cllr Parker

Officers:

Sophie Hosking
Steve Jordan

Patrick Whymer
Jim Davis

Drew Powell
Nadine Trout

Executive Director
Executive Director Head of Paid Service
Lead Specialist DM
Specialist - Performance and Intelligence
Specialists Manager
Localities Manager

21. **Apologies for absence**

***O&S(I) 21**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs L J G Hockridge and J R McInnes.

22. **Confirmation of Minutes**

***O&S(I) 22**

The minutes of the Meeting held on 19 July 2016 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

23. **Declarations of Interest**

***O&S(I) 23**

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 was none made.

24. **Public Forum**

***O&S(I) 24**

It was noted that no issues had been raised by the general public.

25. **Hub Committee Forward Plan**

***O&S(I) 25**

The most recent (published September 2016) Hub Committee Forward Plan was presented for consideration.

In the ensuing discussion, reference was made to:-

(a) the Devolution agenda. It was currently anticipated that an agenda item relating to the Devolution bid would be added to the Hub Committee Forward Plan for a meeting during the late Autumn;

(b) the draft policy on Flying Drones from Public Open Space. In addition to ensuring compliance with national legislation, it was noted that the draft policy would give consideration to preventing people from being put at unnecessary risk.

26. **Locality Model Review**

***O&S(I) 26**

A report was presented that detailed how the locality service was currently operating and included related performance information. Furthermore, the report also detailed future plans to develop the locality service to continue to meet Council needs.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

(a) For clarity, whilst it was confirmed that the task of testing private water supplies used to be a function of Environmental Health

Officers, this had now been transferred to the responsibility of Mobile Locality Officers;

- (b) A number of Members wished to pay tribute to the value and effectiveness of the service that was being provided by the locality Team;
- (c) A Member questioned whether there was potential income streams that could be generated through the locality service. In response, the Head of Paid Service advised that this potential would continue to be explored as part of the Council's growth agenda;
- (d) With regard to the team workload, the Locality Manager confirmed that, whilst there were a number of conflicting priorities, there was sufficient current capacity within the service. However, this matter was closely monitored on an ongoing basis;
- (e) It was noted that 560 dog patrols had been undertaken by the service, with the subsequent intelligence and feedback gleaned then being given to Environmental Protection colleagues. As a general point, a debate took place on the current disparity in respect of some town and parish councils paying into the Dog Warden Scheme whilst others did not. In light of the perception being that contributing town and parish councils were subsidising the remaining authorities, the Head of Paid Service gave a commitment that he would look into this matter outside of the meeting;
- (f) In terms of measuring customer feedback, Members were invited to give consideration to the most appropriate means of gauging feedback on the service.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the locality model continue to operate pending ongoing monitoring and a further report in twelve months' time.

27. **Planning Peer Challenge Review 2016/17**

***O&S(I) 27**

Consideration was given to report that presented the Peer Challenge report and Action Plan that had been developed to implement the recommendations contained within the Report, arising from the Planning Improvement Peer Challenge visit conducted between 18 and 20 April 2016.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- (i) The recent upward trend in service improvements were acknowledged by the meeting and were also reflective of the recent meeting of Agents and Developers. In particular, officers advised that the designated contact number that had been

established for Agents and Developers had been particularly well received;

- (ii) It was anticipated that the performance information would begin to be presented with effect from the next scheduled Planning and Licensing Committee meeting;
- (iii) A Member did reiterate his previously raised concerns that there were still examples of officers who were not replying to calls or emails received from town and parish councils and members of the public. In reply, the Head of Paid Service gave a strong assurance that this issue was being addressed;
- (iv) It was noted that some town and parish council clerk sessions had been arranged to take place in the next month and a planning service update would be included on the agenda for discussion at these events;
- (v) With regard to planning enforcement, Members were informed that Mobile Locality Officers were being utilised to issue notices and take photographs. In terms of the process followed for enforcement cases, the Committee was assured that, once a matter was closed, a letter was sent to the local town and parish council and Ward Member(s) that explained the reason for the closure. Moreover, whilst there was not direct dialogue on every enforcement case, the Committee was assured that none were closed without a site visit first taking place.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. it be noted that the Planning and Licensing Committee has accepted the Planning Peer Challenge report (as outlined in Appendix 2 of the presented agenda report);
2. it be noted that the content of the revised Action Plan 2016/17 (as outlined in Appendix 3 of the presented agenda report) be noted; and
3. the Committee receive, on a quarterly basis, key performance data as part of the Performance Indicator report.

28. **Quarterly Performance Measures**

***O&S(I) 28**

The Committee considered a report that presented the performance measures for Quarter 1. In summary, the report noted that performance had stayed relatively consistent with the previous quarter.

In discussion, reference was made to:-

- (a) the average end to end time for Benefits New Claims. When questioned, officers advised that the downward trend for this quarter was attributed to a number of staff departures as part of the T18 recruitment process that had been undertaken during this period;
- (b) how channel shift was resulting in savings by releasing resources. For example, it was noted that 50% of Housing Benefit claims were now made online which saved officer time in processing;
- (c) issues arising. In the future, it was requested that any issues that arose should be brought to the Committee in a more timely manner.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the performance levels against target communicated in the Balanced Scorecard and the performance figures supplied in the background and the exception report be noted.

29. **Task and Finish Group Updates**

***O&S(I) 29**

(a) T18 Programme – Interim Review

The Committee was advised that the first meeting of the Task and Finish Group had taken place earlier that day. The Group was working to a specific Terms of Reference and would be compiling a list of questions and looking to identify what had worked well and areas that could be improved.

30. **Committee Decisions Log**

***O&S(I) 30**

The latest version of the Committee decisions log was presented to the meeting and, with no debate or discussion, it was:

RESOLVED

That the published Decisions Log be noted.

31. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

***O&S(I) 31**

It was then:

RESOLVED

That, in accordance with Section 100(A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that exempt information is likely to be disclosed as defined in Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12(A) to the Act.

32. **Five Year Land Supply - Verbal Report**

***O&S(I) 32**

The Lead Hub Committee Member for the Local Plan and Strategic Housing presented a verbal update to Members on the position of the authority in relation to having a five year land supply. The Lead Member and COP Lead Development Management responded to a number of specific questions and concerns from Members of the Committee as well as the wider membership

33. **Re-admittance of Press and Public**

***O&S(I) 33**

It was then:

RESOLVED

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

34. **Draft Annual Work Programme 2016/17**

***O&S(I) 34**

The Committee took the opportunity to express its views in relation to its 2016/17 Work Programme.

The Meeting concluded at 4.30 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
