

WEST DEVON OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY (INTERNAL) COMMITTEE



West Devon
Borough
Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **West Devon Overview & Scrutiny (Internal) Committee** held on **Tuesday, 18th April, 2017 at 2.00 pm** at the **Chamber - Kilworthy Park**

Present: **Councillors:**

Chairman Cllr Musgrave
Vice Chairman Cllr Yelland

Cllr Davies
Cllr Kimber
Cllr Moyse

Cllr Evans
Cllr Mott
Cllr Ridgers

In attendance:

Councillors:

Cllr Cheadle
Cllr Edmonds
Cllr Sheldon

Cllr Cloke
Cllr Leech

Officers:

Jim Davis
Neil Hawke
Steve Jordan

Specialist - Performance and
Intelligence

Executive Director Head of Paid
Service

50. **Apologies for absence**

***O&S(I) 50**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs W G Cann OBE, L J G Hockridge and J R McInnes.

51. **Confirmation of Minutes**

***O&S(I) 51**

The minutes of the Meeting held on 8 November 2016 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

52. **Declarations of Interest**

***O&S(I) 52**

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.

53. **Public Forum**

***O&S(I) 53**

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

54. **Hub Committee Forward Plan**

***O&S(I) 54**

The most recent (published March 2017) Hub Committee Forward Plan was presented for consideration.

In discussion, the Committee was provided with the following updates:

- The next Hub Committee meeting had been rescheduled to take place on Tuesday, 16 May 2017; and
- Additional items had since been added to the Forward Plan as below:
 - o 'Commercial Property Investment' – that was scheduled for consideration at a future Hub Committee meeting;
 - o 'Productivity Plan Joint Committee' – that was scheduled for consideration by the Hub Committee either in June or July 2017; and
 - o 'Update and Recommendations from the SH/WD Joint Steering Group – that was scheduled for consideration by the Hub Committee in September 2017.

55. **Planning Peer Challenge Action Plan Update**

O&S(I) 55

The Committee considered a report that outlined the progress that had been made with implementing the Peer Review Action Plan that had arisen from the Planning Peer Challenge Team Visit conducted between 18 and 20 April 2016.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- (a) Having been informed of the success of the reinstatement of the Developer/Agents Forum, the Committee requested that specialist planning officers also be introduced to Members. In response to an additional request, it was also agreed that the key action points

that were captured at Forum meetings would be circulated to all Members;

- (b) Whilst welcoming the fact that the Community Of Practice Lead had attended a number of town and parish council meetings to introduce himself and respond to questions, Members were still of the view that a number of parish councils often failed to understand the reasons for a planning decision that was contrary to their recommendation. As a result, the Committee asked for consideration to be given to additional explanatory information being circulated to town and parish councils with a copy of the formal decision notice;
- (c) With regard to the pre-application process, officers advised that a review was to be undertaken and it was accepted that a good quality pre-application service would be beneficial to the performance of Development Management;
- (d) The Committee congratulated officers on both the new Council website and planning portal and felt that both were more user friendly and, in line with the Channel Shift agenda, should be actively promoted amongst the local community and stakeholders;
- (e) Having been informed that an officer had recently been appointed by the Council to have specific responsibility for supporting neighbourhood planning groups, a Member sought more clarity around the exact role of this postholder. In reply, it was noted that the officer would primarily be responsible for ensuring that the Council was fulfilling its statutory obligations. Furthermore, the officer would also be the main point of contact for existing and interested neighbourhood planning groups.

In reply to specific requests, officers committed to let a Member know outside of the meeting the reason why the Council had seemingly not responded during the consultation phase for his local Neighbourhood Plan and, when considering that both a Neighbourhood Plan and Local Plan had equal weighting, how the Council proposed to manage a situation in the event of these Plans contradicting one another;

- (f) The Committee asked that, when it was presented with future update reports on the Action Plan, it also be in receipt of the latest set of related performance information.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the progress made in implementing the Peer Challenge Action Plan be noted; and
2. That, when future Action Plan update reports are presented to the Committee, the latest set of related performance information is included.

56.

Q3 - Performance Measures

***O&S(I) 56**

The Committee considered a report that presented the performance measures for Quarter 3. In summary, the report noted that performance measures for this Quarter had continued their upward trajectory in comparison to the previous quarter.

In discussion, reference was made to:-

- (i) reviewing the current measures and associated targets. Members were of the view that, since two years had passed since the last review, it would be timely for a Task and Finish Group to be established to review the current performance measures and their associated targets. As a result, it was agreed that this would be raised with the new Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its first meeting of the 2017/18 Municipal Year;
- (ii) the new telephony system. Officers informed that the new system was more intuitive and included features such as the provision for customers to be informed where they were in a queue and the ability to track a call in the event of a customer complaint;
- (iii) write-off reports. The Committee was reminded of the ability for Overview and Scrutiny to review write-off reports prior to their consideration by the Hub Committee.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. the performance levels against target communicated in the Balanced Scorecard and the performance figures supplied in the background and the exception report be noted; and
2. the Committee has reviewed the new online dashboards and has taken the opportunity to make comments (as outlined in the content of the minutes above).

57.

IT Update

***O&S(I) 57**

The IT Community Of Practice Lead provided a verbal update on the IT service.

In the ensuing discussion, reference was made to:-

- (a) evaluating the use of cloud hosting document editing solutions. When questioned, officers confirmed that they recognised the

benefits of such solutions and the service was intending to undertake a pilot exercise in this respect. It was also confirmed that other local authorities were using cloud hosted email solutions;

- (b) Member iPads. Officers recognised that there was scope to provide additional support and training to Members on their Council iPads and it was agreed that some sessions would be scheduled into the Member Learning and Development Plan for this purpose;
- (c) the Meeting Calendar. In line with the requests made by the Member Development Steering Group, some Members welcomed the fact that the formal meetings calendar could now be downloaded on to the iPad Calendar. However, other Members highlighted that the wider membership had not been made aware of this application and emphasised the need for the IT service to improve its communication links with Members;
- (d) the front page of the Council website. A Member was of the view that it looked inefficient for an 'under construction' banner to have been on the front page of the Council website for such an extensive length of time. In reply, officers stated that they would review how this message was presented.

58. **Joint Local Plan Update - Standing Agenda Item**

***O&S(I) 58**

Although a standing agenda item, the Committee was advised that an urgent meeting had been called for the Members of the Joint Local Plan Joint Steering Group that had led to a clash with this meeting.

In light of this previously unforeseen clash, the lead Hub Committee Member for Strategic Planning had offered to meet with the wider membership to provide them with an informal update outside of this meeting. The Committee proceeded to welcome this offer and asked that the necessary arrangements be made.

59. **Task and Finish Group Updates**

O&S(I) 59

(a) T18 Review – Concluding Report

In consideration of the concluding report, the Committee made the following specific points:-

- The review had illustrated the lack of a detailed blueprint or plan throughout the Programme;
- A Member stated that it was almost impossible to imagine the Council undergoing such a monumental change project in the future. In addition, a Member highlighted the Programme timing coinciding with the 2015 local elections and felt that there were a number of

unfortunate circumstances that had not helped with the implementation of the Programme;

- Whilst not in its Terms of Reference, Group Members gave an assurance that the Local Authority Controlled Company (LACC) project was in their minds during this Review. The view was also expressed that the LACC project had been an additional hindrance to the implementation of the Transformation Programme. In response, officers advised that a LACC Closure report would be formally presented to the Hub Committee during the summer months;
- When considering major projects in the future, there was a need for increased emphasis to be placed on Governance;
- In respect of the findings related to project management, the Committee was advised that half of the Specialist Manager (Support Services) role was now allocated to leading on major projects; and
- Having inherited such a difficult set of circumstances, a Member wished to put on record her thanks to the hard work and efforts of the two Executive Directors, who had worked tirelessly to ensure that the Programme had ultimately met its objectives.

It was then **RECOMMENDED** that the Hub Committee **RECOMMEND** to Council that the Task and Finish Group findings (as outlined at Appendix 1 of the presented agenda report) be noted and the conclusions also be noted and, where appropriate, be adopted for future significant projects.

60. **Committee Decision Log**

***O&S(I) 60**

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.

61. **Annual Work Programme 2017/18: Initial Thoughts**

***O&S(I) 61**

The Committee took the opportunity to express its initial thoughts in relation to the 2017/18 Work Programme for the new Overview and Scrutiny Committee and, in so doing, noted that the Future Approach to Arts Task and Finish Group had now commenced its Review.

62. **Member Learning and Development Opportunities Arising from this Meeting**

***O&S(I) 62**

The following Learning and Development opportunities had been identified during this meeting:

- To arrange support and training sessions for Members on the functionality of their Council iPads; and
- The need for an informal Member update to be given on the Joint Local Plan.

63. **Chairman's Concluding Remarks**

***O&S(I) 63**

Since this was to be the last meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny (Internal) Committee before it was subsumed into a combined Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Chairman wished to thank all Members for their valued input and contributions to this Committee.

The Meeting concluded at 3.50 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
