

WEST DEVON OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE



West Devon
Borough
Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **West Devon Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Tuesday, 27th February, 2018** at **2.00 pm** at the **Chamber - Kilworthy Park**

Present: **Councillors:**

Chairman Cllr Yelland
Vice Chairman

Cllr Baldwin
Cllr Evans
Cllr Leech
Cllr Musgrave
Cllr Roberts

Cllr Cloke
Cllr Kimber
Cllr Moyse
Cllr Ridgers
Cllr Sellis

In attendance:

Councillors:

Cllr Edmonds
Cllr Moody

Cllr Lamb
Cllr Mott

Officers:

Group Manager – Customer First & Support Services
Monitoring Officer
Localities Team Leader
Specialist – Performance & Intelligence

76. **Apologies for Absence**
***O&S 76**
Apologies for absence for this meeting were received from Cllrs R Cheadle J R McInnes, T G Pearce and J Sheldon.
77. **Confirmation of Minutes**
***O&S 77**
The minutes of the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 16 January 2018 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

78. **Declarations of Interest**

***O&S 78**

Members and officers were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of this meeting and these were recorded as follows:

Cllr A F Leech declared a personal interest in Item 8: 'Localities Team Update' (Minute *O&S 82 below refers) and specifically the debate on the decision to close the Okehampton Office by virtue of being a Trustee of the Ockment Centre and remained in the meeting during consideration of this agenda item.

79. **Public Forum**

***O&S 79**

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

80. **Hub Committee Forward Plan**

***O&S 80**

There were no issues raised during consideration of the most recently published Hub Committee Forward Plan.

81. **Ambulance Service Representatives**

***O&S 81**

Following a formal Committee request at its meeting held on 7 November 2017 (Minute *O&S 59 refers), the Chairman introduced and welcomed Mr Steve Boucher (Head of Operations, West Division) and Mr Kevin McSherry (Operations Manager, West Devon) to outline how the ambulance service was responding to public sector challenges.

In their presentation, the following points were raised:-

- (a) The representatives informed that new performance measures had been put in place by the Department of Health (DoH) that had come into effect in November 2017 and had included the target for the Service to get to those incidents deemed as being 'most serious' within an average of 7 minutes. To date, the Devon average for this category had been 9 minutes and 19 seconds, with the West Devon average being 8 minutes and 16 seconds. The representatives also made the point that the Service had a significant funding gap that resulted in the national DoH target being almost impossible to achieve;
- (b) Whilst recognising that the Service had been allocated some additional funding, it was noted that this was not reflective of the increased demand on the Service and the organisation was therefore having to look at achieving further efficiencies. As an indication of the costs of Service provision, it was noted that the

cost of running a double crewed ambulance on a '24 hours a day, 7 days a week' basis amounted to £250,000 per year;

(c) With regard to Community First Responders, the representatives advised that:

- Tavistock currently had 3, with 2 more in training;
- 1 in Horrabridge; and
- 1 in Yelverton.

In reply to a question, the representatives confirmed that they would ascertain whether or not Bere Ferrers had a First Responder outside of this meeting. Both Members and the representatives recognised the great work undertaken by this group of volunteers. The Committee also felt there to be scope to encourage more volunteers to come forward by increasing publicity and awareness on the Council website;

(d) Members were informed that the intention of the Service was to manage patients as close to their home as was practically possible. To support this intention, it was noted that only 45% of service callers were taken in an ambulance to 'Accident and Emergency' Departments, with 50% of incidents reported being managed at home;

(e) The representatives made reference to the close working relationships between the Service and both the Devon and Cornwall Air Ambulances. It was also noted that the two Devon Air Ambulances were staffed by paramedics from the Ambulance Service;

(f) When questioned, the representatives highlighted the close linkages between the Service and Higher Education establishments. Members were informed that both the University of Plymouth and the University of the West of England offered three-year Paramedic Degree Courses. Furthermore, these courses included 'on the road' experience and the Service had recruited 25 graduates via this means.

In addition, the representatives highlighted that North Devon Academy was about to open and that organisation was to offer an A-Level qualification that was focused around the emergency services;

(g) Since it was possible for some ambulance crews to be sent to an incident from outside of the geographical area, the representatives acknowledged that these crews were not likely to have extensive local knowledge. As a result, these crews would be reliant upon sat-nav technology and the representatives could not give an assurance that they would be taking the fastest route to every reported incident;

In conclusion, the Chairman thanked the representatives for their attendance and informative presentation. In reply, the representatives thanked the Committee for their invite and advised that they were happy to attend a future meeting to provide a further update to Members.

82. **Localities Team Update**

***O&S 82**

The Committee considered a report that provided an update on the progress being made by the Localities Team and an opportunity for Members to make any recommendations to the Locality Model.

In discussion, reference was made to:-

- (a) staffing resources. A Member was of the view that there was a need to increase the capacity and resilience of the Mobile Locality Officer (MLO) function. In reply, officers gave an assurance that their primary concern was to ensure that staff were not under undue pressure and being overworked. It was noted that the Team had recently undertaken an internal wellbeing survey and the conclusions did not suggest that there was a capacity issue at this time;
- (b) tree inspections. The Committee was informed that, whilst MLO's had been trained to recognise any obvious detrimental conditions to a tree, they were not in a position to be able to undertake any specialist assessments;
- (c) the success of the Locality Service. Officers and Members alike recognised that the Locality Service had proven to be one of the main success stories of the Transformation Programme. To support this view, a number of other local authorities had already visited the Council to learn more about the Transformation Programme. As part of these visits, representatives had been highly impressed by the enthusiasm and commitment of the Locality Team;
- (d) offering a Locality based support to Okehampton residents. In light of the Council decision to close the Okehampton Customer Services Office, it was noted that the intention was for the Locality Engagement Officer to be onsite at the Ockment Centre two days per week. Officers confirmed that the effectiveness of this provision would be monitored and kept under review, with the five Okehampton Ward Members being a key part of this process. Whilst the Council decision to close the Office had only just been made, it was intended that residents would be notified via the normal communication channels and an update would be given during the next Northern Link meeting.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the progress made in the Locality Team be noted; and
2. That the effectiveness of the Locality based support provision in Okehampton be monitored and kept under review, with the five Okehampton Ward Members being a key part of this process.

83. **Quarter 3 Performance Measures**

***O&S 83**

A report was considered that presented the performance measures for Quarter 3. The report noted that measures for Quarter 3 had continued at a high level with the only measure that was 'below target performance' during this period being a newly implemented measure and target.

In discussion, reference was made to:

- (a) the 'below target measure'. Having sought clarity, officers advised that the '% of benefits change of circumstances online' was an aspirational target and the principle of encouraging residents to self-serve was an ongoing challenge. Therefore, the Committee recognised that it was uptake (rather than performance) that was poor and a re-launch of the ability to self-serve would be carried out at the annual Council Tax billing stage;
- (b) use of plain English. A Member made a plea for future performance reports to be more reader friendly, with jargon being eradicated;
- (c) training on Pentana. In acknowledging that there was now a downloadable app from the Council catalogue for Pentana, Members requested that they be in receipt of training on this new way of reporting.

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.

84. **Joint Local Plan: Standing Agenda Item**

***O&S 84**

As a Member of the Joint Local Plan (JLP) Joint Steering Group, Cllr Baldwin introduced the update and particularly highlighted that:

- he wished to put on record his personal thanks and gratitude to Cllr Parker, for his tireless and constructive work on the JLP. These wishes were proceeded to be echoed by Committee Members;
- the Examination in Public (EiP) public roadshow was to take place at Kilworthy Park, Tavistock on 1 March 2018. Cllr Baldwin advised

- the Committee that all Members were welcome to attend, but could only participate if they had already notified the Programme Office;
- upon the conclusion of the EiP, the Inspector would prepare a report that identified what changes were required to the JLP in order for it to be deemed 'sound'. It is intended that the Inspectors' report would be assessed by Council officers and presented to the Steering Group at its meeting on 3 April 2018;
 - most of the more significant issues to date had been in Plymouth and the South Hams;
 - the earliest that the JLP could be adopted was likely to be November 2018. That being said, the JLP should carry more weight with Inspectors at Appeals following the conclusion on the EiP;
 - in addition to the Plan being adopted, it was equally important to regularly monitor it and take action to ensure that it was delivered and the requirement targets met;
 - it was not unusual for some of the requirement for new homes in one authority area to be built in a neighbouring authority area;
 - the Plan containing a logical hierarchy of settlements:
 - o Plymouth City – where most of the new employment opportunities would arise;
 - o The Main Towns (of which 4 were in the South Hams and 2 in West Devon (Okehampton and Tavistock));
 - o Smaller Towns and Key Villages (e.g. Lifton, Hatherleigh and Bere Alston);
 - o Villages that still remain some local facilities (e.g. a shop, public house and/or primary school). Such Villages in West Devon include: Lewdown, Lamerton, Bridestowe and Spreyton. Cllr Baldwin advised that indicative numbers of new housing had been established for these Villages and sites were expected to come forward in Neighbourhood Plans; and
 - o Smaller Villages and Hamlets with few facilities, where development would only be permitted in exceptional circumstances.
 - the five year land supply. Cllr Baldwin informed that the position was consistent with that reported to the last Committee meeting on 16 January 2018. Officers had put in a concerted effort to meet with Developers to ascertain their intentions for major sites identified in the Borough (e.g. Callington Road and land East of Okehampton). However, there were potential threats to achieving the required number of homes. These were notably:
 - o Falling house prices; and
 - o Skills shortages in the construction industry.

In the ensuing debate, Cllr Baldwin was thanked for providing such a detailed update and a number of Members wished to again reiterate their previously raised concerns over the lack of clarity regarding whether or not the Council had a demonstrable five year land supply.

85.

Task & Finish Group Updates (if any):

***O&S 85**

(a) Partnership Grant Funding Review

The Chairman informed that the composition of the Group had been expanded to include the lead Hub Committee Members for Partnerships and Health and Wellbeing.

(b) Performance Measure

The Committee recognised that the current review of the Corporate Strategy (and the subsequent knock-on effect to the Corporate Priorities) was likely to have a big impact on the Council's Performance Measures. It was therefore deemed appropriate by the Committee to hold this piece of work in abeyance pending the outcome of the Corporate Strategy review.

86. **Rural Broadband Working Group Update (if any)**

***O&S 86**

There was no update given to this meeting.

87. **Annual Work Programme 2017/18**

***O&S 87**

The Chairman introduced the latest version of the Work Programme for the next 12 months and its contents were noted without further comment.

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

***O&S 88**

In discussion, reference was made to:

- the request made earlier in the meeting for Members to receive training on Pentana (Minute *O&S 83 above refers); and
- the recent decision to no longer print and post Committee agendas. As a consequence of this Council decision, Members were urged to contact Democratic Services to support them through the transition.

The Meeting concluded at 4.25 pm

Signed by:

Chairman

