

# SOUTH HAMS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL



## **Minutes** of a meeting of the **South Hams Overview and Scrutiny Panel** held on **Thursday, 27th July, 2017 at 10.00 am** at the **Cary Room - Follaton House**

Present: **Councillors:**

**Chairman** Cllr Saltern  
**Vice Chairman** Cllr Smerdon

Cllr Baldry  
Cllr Blackler  
Cllr Green  
Cllr Hicks  
Cllr May  
Cllr Pringle

Cllr Birch  
Cllr Cane  
Cllr Hawkins  
Cllr Huntley  
Cllr Pennington

### **In attendance:**

Councillors:

Cllr Bastone  
Cllr Brazil  
Cllr Cuthbert  
Cllr Hopwood  
Cllr Steer  
Cllr Wright

Cllr Bramble  
Cllr Brown  
Cllr Holway  
Cllr Pearce  
Cllr Tucker

Officers:

Lisa Buckle  
Jim Davis

Sophie Hosking  
Steve Jorden

Steve Mullineaux

Section 151 Officer  
Specialist - Performance and  
Intelligence  
Executive Director  
Executive Director Head of Paid  
Service  
Group Manager Support Services

26. **Minutes**

O&S.26/17

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 6 July 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendment to minute O&S.16/17 'Section 106 Agreements' discussion point (f):

Whilst acknowledging that the close proximity of the next meeting made the request unfeasible, the proposer of the motion had in fact moved that a Schedule that listed all Section 106 Agreements (irrespective of whether or not payment had been received) be produced for consideration at '*the next*' Panel meeting and not '*a future*' Panel meeting as had been stated.

27. **Declarations of Interest**

O&S.27/17

Members and officers were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of the meeting, but there were none made.

28. **Public Forum**

O&S.28/17

In accordance with the Public Forum Procedure Rules, there were no issues raised for consideration at this meeting.

29. **Draft Executive Forward Plan**

O&S.29/17

The Panel was presented with the most recently published Executive Forward Plan and, in discussion, made reference to:-

- (a) the 'Request for Section 106 Spend – Affordable Housing' agenda item. Having noted that this item related to a specific individual spend, a Member made reference to a recent article that he had viewed from Wokingham Borough Council (WBC). The Member highlighted that WBC had set up a local housing company to provide an income stream back to its council through developing affordable housing and he felt that this should also be considered by South Hams District Council. As a way forward, it was agreed that the article should be circulated to all Members for their information and officers advised that colleagues had already been in touch with WBC and this matter would be looked at during the upcoming draft budget setting process;
- (b) the 'Transformation Programme Closedown' agenda item. The Panel noted that this item was to be deferred from the next Executive meeting agenda. As a consequence, Members asked that the Panel consider this item at its meeting on 9 November 2017 prior to its presentation to the Executive.

30.

## **T18 Payback Period and Transitional Funding Arrangements**

O&S.30/17

Consideration was given to a report that provided Members with an update on the impact of the temporary, fixed-term transitional resources that were approved by the Council in June 2016 (Minute 25/16 refers).

In discussion, reference was made to:-

- (a) resources in the Development Management (DM) service. In light of increasing volumes of work, officers still had concerns over the current capacity in the DM service and they anticipated that a further report would be presented to Members in the future that sought funding for additional resources in DM. A Member felt that certain aspects of the service (e.g. planning validation) were being undertaken by both Specialists and Case Managers and requested that such duplication of effort be eliminated. Whilst of the view that duplication was not as significant as had been indicated, officers did agree that there was scope for further service efficiency improvements to be made;
- (b) the Customer Contact Centre. Some Members who had accepted the recent invite to visit the Centre paid tribute to the excellent work being undertaken by the team but noted that some working practices were resulting in a duplication of effort. In reply, officers accepted the point and informed that an external advisor was currently in the Centre observing current processes and making recommendations to improve efficiency. The Panel acknowledged that staff retention was an issue in the Centre and it was agreed that the merits of imposing a condition on new members of staff not being able to apply for other internal posts for a prescribed period of time should be explored;
- (c) backlogs in the revenue and benefits service. Officers highlighted that an automated software system was currently being phased in that was expected to ease the backlog in casework for the revenue and benefits service;
- (d) the figures in the presented agenda report. A non-Panel Member felt it to be unacceptable that the figures contained in the report were only up to the end of March 2017 and were therefore four months out of date. In reply, the Section 151 Officer advised that the delay was attributed to the time lag associated with accruals, agency staffing charges and shared services recharges. The Panel proceeded to request that, as part of the Transformation Programme Closedown report being presented to the meeting on 9 November 2017, the most up to date figures be included;
- (e) the impact of Universal Credits. Whilst noting that the rollout had been delayed from October 2017 to January 2018, some Members expressed a number of concerns regarding the potential impact arising from Universal Credits and it was agreed that officers would provide an update via a future Members' Bulletin edition.

It was then:

**RESOLVED**

That the Panel:

1. endorse the contents of the Transitional Resources Monitoring Report and the progress to 31 March 2017;
2. insist that the Transformation Programme Closedown report (to be presented to the Panel meeting on 9 November 2017) include the most up to date available figures; and
3. ask officers to produce an update briefing note on Universal Credits for all Members.

31. **Planning Enforcement Service Review**

O&S.31/17

The Panel considered a report that provided an update on the current workload position and revisions to the Planning Enforcement Service in order to address the business need.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- (a) The Panel felt that the Council's Locality Team could be upskilled further and become even more involved in supporting the Planning Enforcement Service;
- (b) The Panel reiterated that there was a need for greater interaction between Members and those officers working in Planning Enforcement. In an attempt to keep resource implications to a minimum, the Panel requested that, initially as a pilot, a drop-in session be arranged for Members to be able to pre-book a timeslot with an Enforcement Officer to enable for an open discussion on live cases within their local ward;
- (c) It was confirmed that the proposed additional resource would be funded from within existing budgets largely by virtue of a re-allocation of duties within the Environmental Health Community Of Practice. In doubting whether even this additional resource would be sufficient, some Members asked lead officers and the lead Executive Member to keep a close watching brief on the case backlog;
- (d) A number of Members expressed their support for the creation of a Local Enforcement Plan. However, a Member felt that the proposed targets for 'Medium Priority' and 'Low Priority' investigations to commence were too long. Instead of the suggested one month and three months, the Member felt that these should be reduced to two weeks and four weeks respectively;

- (e) Upon the production of the latest schedule of enforcement cases, a Member requested that a brief progress update be added for each case.

It was then:

**RESOLVED**

That the Panel:

1. support the actions proposed and the ongoing monitoring of the Service by the Community Of Practice Lead and the Case Management Manager; and
2. request that a Member Drop-in pilot session be arranged to provide the opportunity for Members to discuss with an Enforcement Officer any live cases within their local ward.

32. **Street Naming and Numbering Policy**

O&S.32/17

The Panel considered a report that sought to recommend adoption of a revised Street Naming and Numbering Policy.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- (a) A number of Members expressed their support for the revised Policy but the request was made that, prior to its adoption, a final proofread be carried out to ensure that, where reference was made to consulting with the local town/parish council, local Ward Member(s) also be included;
- (b) It was confirmed that, in the event of the proposed 21 day consultation period not enabling a local town/parish council the opportunity to formally consider a proposed street name, then a local Ward Member was able to object to the proposal;
- (c) Officers gave a commitment to advise Members outside of the meeting as to whether or not property developers were sent a copy of the adopted policy upon the determination of their planning application(s).

It was then:

**RECOMMENDED**

That the Executive **RECOMMEND** to Council that the revised Street Naming and Numbering Policy be adopted.

### 33. **Quarterly Performance Indicators**

O&S.33/17

The Panel considered a report that presented the Performance Indicators for Quarter 1 of 2017/18.

During discussion, reference was made to:-

- (i) the percentage of calls answered within 20 seconds. As part of the upcoming Performance Measures Task and Finish Group Review, Members asked that the merits of the 20 seconds target be given particular consideration;
- (ii) long-term sickness absence. It was noted that an overview of the monitoring process for sickness absence was currently scheduled on the Panel Work Programme for consideration at its next meeting on 24 August 2017;
- (iii) the increased number of online transactions. In welcoming this upward trend, the Panel was informed that this was mainly attributed to two factors: the new Council website; and the ability to be able to create an online account automatically.

It was then:

#### **RESOLVED**

That the Panel endorse the performance levels against target communicated in the Balanced Scorecard and the performance figures supplied in the Background and Exception reports.

### 34. **SH/WH Joint Steering Group Update**

O&S.34/17

A report was considered by the Panel that presented the latest notes arising from recent meetings of the SH/WD Joint Steering Group (JSG).

In the ensuing debate, reference was made to:-

- (a) the proposal for the Panel to review the outputs of the consultation process. In stressing the importance of this proposal, it was noted that this review would be scheduled on to the Panel Work Programme for the meeting to be held on 5 October 2017;
- (b) the need for the published final consultation document to be fair, balanced and honest. Without wishing to pre-empt the debate on the Single Council proposal at the Special Council meeting later in the day, a number of Members expressed their disappointment regarding the quality of the latest draft version of the consultation document that had been produced. As an assurance, the Panel was advised that an

updated recommendation was to be presented to Special Council that would seek to give delegated authority to the JSG to agree the contents of the published consultation document. In addition, there would be an opportunity for all Members to feed in their views to the JSG and it was agreed that the Chairman of the Council and the Chairman of the Panel would be specifically engaged in the formulation of the questions that would be included within the final document;

- (c) the work of the SH/WD JSG. A Member expressed his belief that the JSG had not fully explored all potential options to reduce the funding gap. Furthermore, the Member was of the view that this work should be conducted independently of West Devon Borough Council and it was therefore inappropriate to use the JSG for this purpose. As a consequence, the Member **PROPOSED** that:

*'Disappointment be expressed at the lack of progress being made by the SH/WD Joint Steering Group to bring forward other alternative options to reduce the Council's funding gap.'*

Whilst this proposal was not seconded, it was agreed that officers would provide Members with the background information concerning the formation of the JSG and its terms of reference.

In addition, it was agreed that the need for JSG meeting notes to be given exempt classification would be reconsidered by the Council's Monitoring Officer. Finally, the current practice whereby JSG meetings were hosted either in Totnes or Tavistock was asked to be reviewed, with a request made for all future meetings to be held in Ivybridge.

It was then:

### **RESOLVED**

That, in the event of the Council agreeing to pursue the Single Council proposal, the Panel review the outputs of the consultation process and provide feedback at its meeting on 5 October 2017.

## **35. Task and Finish Groups (if any)**

O&S.35/17

### **(a) Dartmouth Lower Ferry**

By way of an update, the Chairman of the Task and Finish Group advised that a detailed report would be presented to the next Panel meeting on 24 August 2017.

In addition, the Group Chairman informed the Panel that:-

- a Trade Union representative was due to meet with Lower Ferry staff on Friday, 28 July 2017. Subject to the outcome of that meeting, it was anticipated that the proposed £100,000 savings in the Medium Term Financial Strategy would be realised;
- if agreed, the proposed changes to staff terms of reference would come into effect in September 2017; and
- the proposals would ensure that staff were not working an excessive number of hours, whilst ensuring the highest safety standards were met and excellent customer service was delivered.

In the ensuing debate, a local Ward Member (who was also a Member of the Task and Finish Group) expressed his total support for the current proposals.

#### **(b) Discretionary Grant Funding**

As the Chairman of the Task and Finish Group, Cllr Brown was invited to provide an update. In so doing, he advised that the Group had held its first meeting and had requested that the lead officer gather relevant information in time for the next meeting that would be held in mid-September.

Ultimately, it was the aim of the Group to present its final recommendations to the Panel meeting on 5 October 2017.

#### **(c) Performance Measures**

By way of an update, it was noted that the West Devon Borough Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee had also agreed the proposal to establish a joint Task and Finish Group. In light of this decision, officers were now in the process of setting a date for the first Group meeting.

### **36. Actions Arising / Decisions Log**

O&S.36/17

The contents of the latest version of the Log was presented.

When questioned, the Head of Paid Service gave a commitment to establish exactly when officers would be in a position to present to the Panel the Schedule listing all Section 106 Agreements (Minute O&S.16/17 refers).

### **37. Annual Work Programme 2017/18**

O&S.37/17

In consideration of its Annual Work Programme, the following comments, additions and amendments were made:-



- (a) It was noted that the Single Council Consultation Outcome agenda item would be considered by the Panel at its meeting on 5 October 2017;
- (b) With regard to representatives from the NEW Devon and South Devon and Torbay Clinical Commissioning Groups attending a future Panel meeting, it was agreed that it would be more appropriate for this item to be scheduled on to the agenda for a future Informal Council session;
- (c) It was agreed that the Ombudsman Annual Review Letter should be scheduled for consideration by the Panel at its next meeting on 24 August 2017;
- (d) With regard to the Transformation Programme Closedown, the Work Programme was updated to ensure that this agenda item was included on the Panel agenda for 9 November 2017 meeting;
- (e) Whilst noting that a Joint Local Plan Update was due for consideration by the Panel on 5 October 2017, it was requested that, in the meantime, a brief progress update be circulated to all Members on behalf of the Joint Steering Group;
- (f) It was agreed that the Panel Chairman should exercise his discretion to schedule a future agenda item on to the Work Programme in relation to the Devon Building Control Partnership;
- (g) In response to a request regarding Air Quality and Air Pollution, it was agreed that, in the first instance, a Briefing Note should be produced and circulated to all Members outside of this meeting.

The Meeting concluded at 11.55 am

**Signed by:**

**Chairman**

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