

SOUTH HAMS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL



Minutes of a meeting of the **South Hams Overview and Scrutiny Panel** held on **Thursday, 18th January, 2018** at **1.30 pm** at the **Cary Room** **- Follaton House**

Present: **Councillors:**

Chairman Cllr Saltern
Vice Chairman

Cllr Baldry
Cllr Cane
Cllr May
Cllr Pringle

Cllr Blackler
Cllr Green
Cllr Pennington

In attendance:

Councillors:
Cllr Bramble
Cllr Pearce
Cllr Tucker
Cllr Holway

Cllr Brazil
Cllr Rowe
Cllr Wingate

Officers:
Head of Paid Service
Assets Community Of Practice Lead
Community Housing Lead
Specialist – Place Making

77. **Minutes**
O&S.77/17
The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 9 November 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
78. **Declarations of Interest**
O&S.78/17
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.

79. **Chairman's Announcement**

O&S.79/17

Since this was the last scheduled Panel meeting before the Head of Paid Service left the employ of the Council, the Chairman paid tribute to the tremendous support and advice that he had given to the Panel and, on behalf of the Panel, proceeded to wish him every success for the future.

80. **Public Forum**

O&S.80/17

In accordance with the Public Forum Procedure Rules, there were no issues received for consideration.

81. **Executive Forward Plan**

O&S.81/17

The Panel was presented with the most recently published Executive Forward Plan. In accordance with Procedure Rules, a request had been made for the Panel to receive an update on the following agenda item:

(i) Set up of Wholly Owned Company

The Head of Paid Service advised that it was very early days in respect of the detail of the proposals (the matter was currently on the Forward Plan for the Executive meeting on 26 April 2018). However, officers were developing a number of workstreams at the moment whereby the ability to trade through a company could offer the Council some advantages.

82. **Community Housing Update**

O&S.82/17

Consideration was given to a report that provided an update on progress with the Community Housing Strategy and the programme of action going forward.

In discussion, reference was made to:

- (a) the lack of housing being built. Some Members highlighted the frustrations being experienced (particularly amongst community groups) in respect of the lack of housing that was actually being built. Furthermore, there was a hope amongst Members that the Community Housing Fund (£1.88 million) would result in a number of houses being built and would not be spent on simply administering the Fund;
- (b) the 17 identified sites. Some Members expressed their doubts that the Fund was sufficient to be able to progress each of the 17 identified sites;
- (c) the Strategy still being in its infancy. In acknowledging that the Strategy was still in its infancy, the Panel requested receipt of a more

challenging monitoring report in six months' time (at its July 2018 meeting). As part of this report, the Panel also asked for progress updates on each of the 17 identified sites;

- (d) the Transition Homes Totnes Community Land Trust. When questioned, officers confirmed that, following Member approval, £190,000 had been allocated from the Community Housing Fund to support the Community Land Trust, who had obtained planning permission to build 19 affordable homes in Dartington;
- (e) obtaining mortgages for shared ownership properties. Whilst it was accepted that it was often difficult, officers did advise that there were some lenders in the market who were current offering mortgages for shared ownership properties;
- (f) the intermediate housing approach. The Panel was informed of some measures that were being investigated (e.g. the Council continuing to be the freehold owner of a property and the imposing of clauses within a Section 106 Agreement) to ensure that affordable properties did not ultimately end up being sold on at open market pricing levels.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the contents of the report be endorsed; and
2. That further update reports be presented on a six monthly basis.

83.

Task and Finish Group Updates (if any)

O&S.83/17

(a) Performance Measures

By way of an update, the Chairman informed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at West Devon Borough Council had formally expressed its desire for the Joint Task and Finish Group to re-commence its review.

In discussion, it was apparent that the Panel was divided in whether or not this request should be accepted. In support of the request, some Members felt it to be important that, with a shared workforce, the performance measures were the same across both councils. In addition, a joint review was felt to be more efficient and would result in less duplication.

In contrast, other Members were unsupportive of the request and confirmed that they had absolutely no wish to work jointly (aside from on the Joint Local Plan and the Waste Review) with West Devon Borough Council.

When put to the vote, it was then (by virtue of a Chairman's Casting Vote) declared **CARRIED** that:

'The Joint SH/WD Performance Measures Task and Finish Group should re-commence its review.'

84. **Actions Arising / Decisions Log**

O&S.84/17

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

In so doing, the following points were raised:-

- (a) Those Members who had already met with Enforcement Officers highlighted the success of these sessions and urged all Members to accept the invitation to discuss cases within their local Wards;
- (b) Following the decision of the Council at its meeting on 15 December 2017 (Minute 52/17(a) refers), it was confirmed that the letter on Neighbourhood Policing had been sent to the Police and Crime Commissioner.

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

O&S.85/17

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

- (a) The Chairman made reference to a Scrutiny Proposal Form that had been submitted by Cllr Green on the matter of drugs related issues affecting the community in the South Hams.

In so doing and, in line with Procedure Rules, it was noted that the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Head of Paid Service had recognised that there was merit in this proposal and had therefore supported the request being taken forward.

Whilst acknowledging that the decision had already been made, some Members did nonetheless wish to put on record their reservations over this proposal. In particular, these Members questioned whether this should be a responsibility for this Council and the potential significant resource implications of this review to the authority. In reply, other Members felt that the Council did have a community responsibility in this respect, but did accept that the Terms of Reference would need to be carefully drafted to ensure that the Review was realistic and not overly ambitious.

In terms of next steps, it was agreed that the Task and Finish Group would comprise of: Cllrs Smerdon (Chairman), Birch, Cuthbert and Green. The Panel also recognised that there may be merit in co-opting a Totnes Town Council representative (who was not a dual

hatted Member) onto the Group. It was also emphasised that the Council's appointed representative on the Community Safety Partnership would be a key witness during the review.

Finally, in light of the legitimate concerns raised at this meeting, it was agreed that the draft Terms of Reference for this Review would be presented to the next Panel meeting on 8 February 2018 for formal approval.

- (b) The Panel agreed that the 'Update on the Urban Fringe Delivery Team and Sherford Strategic Review' could be deferred to the Panel meeting on 22 March 2018;
- (c) Following the decision of Council on 14 December 2017 (Minute 52/17(b) refers), the Panel requested that the report into the 'Feasibility of Installing Electric Car Charging Points in the Council's Public Car Parks' should be programmed for consideration by the Panel at its 3 May 2018 meeting.

The Meeting concluded at 2.45 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
