

CALL-IN OF THE HUB COMMITTEE RESOLUTION ON MINUTE *HC 15: 'NORTHERN OUTREACH'

The Chairman introduced this agenda item and highlighted that, in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, three Members of the Committee had invoked a Call-in on Hub Committee Minute HC 15 'Northern Outreach'.

Upon the conclusion of the debate on the Call-in, the Chairman advised that there would be three options available to the Committee. These were:

1. that the Committee was content with the original Hub Committee resolution and the decision would therefore take immediate effect;
2. that the Committee refer the decision back to the next Hub Committee meeting (on 10 September 2019) for further consideration; and
3. that the Committee opt to refer the decision to the next full Council meeting (on 17 September 2019).

At this point, the Chairman invited the Member who was representing the three signatories of the Call-in to explain their reasoning behind this decision. In so doing, the Member made particular reference to:-

- the main concerns relating to the ability of local communities in the north of the Borough to access the Council and its services. As a result, the Members were strongly of the view that the withdrawal of the northern outreach service should be considered at the same time as the proposed option appraisal on the future of Tavistock Reception. Whilst not his own personal belief, the Member stressed that there was a widespread view amongst residents living in the north of the Borough that the Council was too Tavistock orientated and he requested that the need for the Council to take steps to overcome this perception be noted;
- the Hub Committee being divided when making its original decision;
- a number of residents were not digitally enabled and, whilst improvements had been made, there did remain some issues with call waiting times in the Contact Centre;
- it was the wish of the signatories for the original Hub Committee decision to be referred to the Council for further consideration at its meeting on 17 September 2019.

The Chairman then proceeded to invite the lead Hub Committee Member for Customer First to respond to the points raised. During which, the lead Member informed that:-

- great strides had been made to Contact Centre performance and the Council website;
- Mobile Locality Officers would continue to offer to carry out personal visits to vulnerable residents;

- the current Northern Outreach service did not represent good value for money. In support of this statement, the lead Member advised that it was costing £8,000 per year to resource the outreach office one day each week and, as a guide in August 2019, there had been only 11 visits, with the majority of the enquiries raised not relevant to the Borough Council;
- he had recently attended a meeting with the Vice-Chairman of the Committee and the lead officer at Okehampton Library to discuss the possibility of the facility providing a signposting service for the Borough Council. Upon the conclusion of this meeting, the Library representatives had confirmed that they would be happy to provide a signposting service.

During the ensuing debate, the following points were raised:-

- (a) Some Members were of the view that there was a general lack of awareness that the current outreach service was in existence. In addition, the local ward Members stated that they had previously been discouraged from promoting the service. To counter these comments, the lead Hub Committee Member stated that, in his opinion, the outreach service had been well publicised via Council press releases (that had subsequently been picked up by both the Okehampton Times and Devon Live) and a poster being on prominent display in the previous office window at James' Street, Okehampton;
- (b) Local Ward Members expressed their disappointment that they had not been made aware of the meeting that had recently been held at Okehampton Library;
- (c) Support was expressed for the point made by the call-in signatories whereby the withdrawal of the northern outreach service should be considered at the same time as the proposed option appraisal on the future of Tavistock Reception. Moreover, a number of Members felt that the decision should be referred to the Council meeting on 17 September 2019 for further consideration.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the Committee has debated the Call-in on Hub Committee Minute HC 15 'Northern Outreach' and requests that it be considered at the next Council meeting on 17 September 2019.