

Appendix B: Thoughts and Ideas Arising from the Joint Meeting of the O+S Panel / DM Committee Meeting held on 4 June 2020 on the Recovery and Renewal Themes

Residents:

- Need to give consideration to provision of (energy efficient) single persons living accommodation;
- Vulnerable population also must include those most affected groups: Children and Young People; the Elderly; and the Disabled;
- Emphasis given to the role played by local Members within their local communities – must utilise the local knowledge and expertise of Members.

Business:

- Benefits to be exploited from the increased ability of individuals to work from home (potential to see an increase in full-time population (and home based businesses) in the district;
- Tourism – Council must help where it can (complement but not duplicate the work of existing tourism destination marketing organisations). Likely to see an increase in tourism numbers to the South Hams – must be capitalised upon and explore increased car parking capacity. Consider re-establishment of a local Tourism Forum;
- Public Conveniences – strong views expressed that, since they were so closely linked to the tourism industry, public conveniences must be kept open;
- support for consideration of 'Brand South Hams'. Council should explore facilitation of deliveries for local producers and do all it can to support and promote our excellent local businesses and producers. In addition, importance of farming industry recognised and consideration should be given to re-establishing a local agricultural forum.

Community and Partnerships:

It was agreed that the proposal that had been submitted in advance by Cllr Rose (as outlined in full below) should be forwarded to the Executive meeting for onward consideration during development of the plan:

'Introduction

Crises offer both challenges and opportunities. The Covid-19 pandemic has clearly highlighted:

- 1) The lack of existing community resilience - demonstrated by the dependence of communities on government aid.*
- 2) The need for community resilience - demonstrated by the unbelievable amount of people who have worried about their most basic needs such as feeding themselves and their families, losing their livelihood, the huge spikes in domestic violence, the lack of sufficient support for those with mental health issues etc...*
- 3) The ability of communities to come together in the face of adversity, building resilience in the moment of need - demonstrated by the heart warming and inspiring actions of our constituents as they support one another in lockdown, reaching out to the marginalised and elderly, many of whom who have had little to no contact with anybody for years.*

The Proposal

'SHDC recognises that community resilience is essential to mitigating risk of future crises. SHDC recognises that community led initiatives are an effective way to increase community resilience as communities best understand their local needs. SHDC embraces the approach of 'Building Back Better' and recognises the opportunity to build on the momentum generated by communities stepping up to support themselves during the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of its recovery plan, SHDC will support communities to lead on initiatives to increase local resilience, beginning with a consultation to the diverse range of groups that have emerged to tackle the issues brought up by COVID-19, asking them how they imagine building long-term resilience in their communities.

SHDC can support community resilience initiatives by linking community groups to sources of funding, whilst offering advice and networking to the groups. Cluster groups or individual members can liaise with existing community groups and can encourage communication between various local organisations, charities, volunteers and community representatives to create shared goals.

This approach benefits SHDC as it mitigates the risk of future crises through increasing community resilience at little financial cost to the council. Any successful projects will set precedents, generate momentum, encourage creativity in the relationship between council and community and secure a positive reputation for the council, as it will be seen supporting communities from the ground up.

These initiatives should be woven into the foundations of the council's recovery plan and the first step (consulting community groups) can begin immediately. Infrastructure to monitor progress will be needed. SHDC should align itself with organisations such as the South Devon Bioregional Learning Centre and Transition Town, who currently operate across South Hams, building community resilience and offering their extensive expertise.'

Other key points raised in relation to the 'Community and Partnerships' Theme were:

- the importance of keeping town and parish councils informed. On this point, it was recognised that, whilst a number of town and parish councils had demonstrated excellent community leadership during the pandemic, a number of others had been found wanting. As a result, there was a role for the Council to play in supporting those Councils that were struggling. Some Members also felt that the town and parish council clustering arrangements should be reinstated. There was also considered to be an immediate role for all Members in facilitating networking meetings with their local town and parish clerks in neighbouring towns and parishes;
- the importance of town and parish councils joining the 'Devon Resilience Forum' to support them in each developing their own Emergency Plans;
- the need to explore the creation of 'town centre depots', which were easily accessible for people to collect necessary provisions;
- the work of the Community Response Team could be extended into the future and it was recognised that the Localities Service would have a key role to play in this respect.

Financial Stability:

It was agreed that the proposal that had been submitted in advance by Cllr McKay (as outlined in full below) should be forwarded to the Executive meeting for onward consideration during development of the plan:

'1 Public Loan Works Board (PLWB)

The Chancellor has said that Councils should not be using PWLB loans for commercial property investment or loans for "yield". However, my understanding is loans are available for infrastructure projects. The Council should be looking at developing a plan for local infrastructure within the district and possibly with DCC.

English town and parish councils can also borrow from PLWB (with approval from MHCLG). The Council should look to work with Town and Parish Council on joint projects.

2 Invest in social housing

Works Loan Board (PWLB) Housing Revenue Account (HRA) rates are down 1.0%. As well as providing much need social housing this will in time generate a revenue stream.

3 Capital Investment Programme

The Capital Investment Programme should become the Communities Investment Programme. The Council should be investing in local community projects and green businesses to build the local resilience implied by Build Back Better (BBB). By being active investors in projects the Council can build a diverse portfolio that will provide revenue while providing a stimulus to the local economy. It is BBB with ABCD! The first steps are to work with partners like SH-CVS, Bioregional Learning, Transition Towns, Town and Parish Councils and myriad other community groups to identify need and opportunity.

4 Active Travel

The Emergency Active Travel Fund for Devon is only £1,689,000 but this is the first stage of a £2bn investment in active travel by government. We should have investment ready plans as per Cllr Chown's suggestions so we are ready to dawn on these funds. Creating the infrastructure on which other businesses like for instance electric bike hire can build and in which this Council could be an investment partner.'

Other key points raised in relation to the 'Financial Stability' Theme were:

- a Member was strongly of the view that the Council should immediately rule out both the use of Earmarked Reserves and the sale of assets to pay off the 2020/21 Budget shortfall. In addition, the Member felt it essential that, with urgency, Council Reserves should be ringfenced, with assets being devolved to local town and parish councils;
- other ideas that the Council should lobby Central Government on included: gaining further freedoms and flexibilities over its finances (including capital receipts flexibilities); the switching of domestic properties to business use; and the ability to charge up to double Council Tax for second homes; and
- the need to lobby (and keep informed) both local MPs.

Communications:

- Members had a raft of local networks that could be used to disseminate information to the hard to reach groups within their local wards.

Governance:

It was agreed that the proposal that had been submitted in advance by Cllr McKay (as outlined in full below) should be forwarded to the Executive meeting for onward consideration during development of the plan:

'1 Objectives

The objective should be as the report states to Build Back Better. While the Council may be in a slightly better financial position than it might have been the numbers still look daunting. It is clear that the modus-operandi of the past is unlikely to work post-covid and the Council needs to build on the extraordinary things that have been happening in our communities and to work with them to consolidate and build the future which must have Climate Change and Biodiversity at its core. The way to achieve this is through a vibrant green economy in which the Council is a real investor and partner. The result will be long term resilience for our communities and for the Council;

2 Constitutional Review

The Council's Constitution needs to be overhauled to help it become less focused on the delivery of top-down service provision and more of a partner of local organisations and a facilitator. This will only work if there is a great deal more open government, transparency and involvement of members in the day to day running of the council. Just as an example, the current delegation scheme does not properly recognise that when members delegate powers they retain responsibility (to their electorate) and they need to be able to effectively hold those to whom power has been delegated to account for actions taken on their behalf.

3 Constitution Versioning

The constitution is a so called living document but it has no version history, which is essential for such an important core document. In the interests of a new era of transparency, lets version it.

4 Briefings and Questions

While Members receive a bulletin email once a week it is very high-level. To ensure that members are as involved as possible, there should be regular fortnightly Q&A sessions. Being able to email an officer is not sufficient and does not encourage open and continued dialogue.

5 Localities

The localities officer role could be greatly enhanced in a new community focused Council and while the O&S Task and Finish group came close to a conclusion it would be helpful to revisit this study.

6 Commissioning Model

The commissioning model of working with partners should be reviewed as it is not an appropriate way of building relationships with partner organisations. The model used should focus on collaboration and not be perceived as buying in a service from a third-party.'

Other key points raised in relation to the 'Governance' Theme were:

- All Locality Engagement Officers should attend town and parish council meetings within their local areas;
- Whilst remote meetings had worked well to date, some Members felt that they were not ideal to conduct meetings of Full Council and the Development Management Committee (on the occasions when major planning applications were to be considered).

Service Recovery:

- The need to re-convene the Locality Service Task and Finish Group was recognised;
- The importance of the Leisure Contract with Fusion was also highlighted.