

**MINUTES of the MEETING of the
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE,
Held in the Council Chamber, Follaton House, Totnes, on
THURSDAY, 21 JULY 2022**

Panel Members in attendance:			
* Denotes attendance		∅ Denotes apology for absence	
*	Cllr L Austen	*	Cllr R Rowe
∅	Cllr J P Birch	*	Cllr P C Smerdon (Vice Chairman)
∅	Cllr M Chown	*	Cllr B Spencer
*	Cllr S Jackson	∅	Cllr J Sweett
∅	Cllr L Jones	*	Cllr D Thomas (Chairman)
*	Cllr J McKay	*	Cllr B Taylor
∅	Cllr J Rose	*	Cllr M Long (substituting for Cllr J Sweett)

Other Members also in attendance either in person or via Teams:
Cllrs K Baldry; H Bastone; J Pearce; J Hawkins; N Hopwood; K Pringle and H Reeve

Item No	Minute Ref No below refers	Officers in attendance and participating
All		Deputy Chief Executive; Director of Strategy & Governance; Section 151 Officer (via Teams); Business Manager – Specialists; Senior Specialist – Economic Development; Specialist - Democratic Services; Senior Specialist - Place Making (via Teams) Specialist – Leisure; Specialist – Green Infrastructure and representatives from Fusion Leisure (via Teams)

O&S.10/22 MINUTES SILENCE

Since this was the first formal Member meeting since former Councillor Simon Wright had sadly passed away, Members proceeded, as a mark of respect, to stand and observe a minute's silence in his memory.

O&S.11/22 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (O&S) held on 16 June 2022 were confirmed as a correct record.

O&S.12/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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.

O&S.13/22 PUBLIC FORUM

In accordance with the Public Forum Procedure Rules, the Chairman informed that no questions had been received for consideration.

O&S.14/22 “BETTER LIVES FOR ALL” THEMATIC UPDATE: ECONOMY

Following the Council’s adoption of the Better Lives for All Strategy in September 2021, the Committee was provided with an update on the Economy strand of the Better Lives for All Strategy.

In discussion on the report, the following points were raised:

- (a) Action TE1.1: The Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) investment plan was discussed, with the individual projects to be shared with Members before the Bid was made. It was confirmed that the SPF Bid would not conflict with any potential protective environment monies, dovetailing with various activities, (e.g. regenerative farming), which would also aid biodiversity and soil health. An update on specific support for local farmers would be given to a future Committee meeting;
- (b) Action TE1.2: Following a question from a Member, it was agreed that there had been insufficient interaction with rural communities for the #MySpace spring/summer campaign and, although available funds were reducing, the Christmas campaign was already under development and there would be greater involvement with rural parishes. The officers would contact rural communities within a fortnight of this meeting and assurances were given that local ward Members would also be involved. Because of this, it was **PROPOSED, SECONDED**, and at the subsequent vote, **AGREED** that the overall rating for this Action should be moved from green (on track) to amber (slightly off track but plan in place);
- (c) Action TE1.3: It was confirmed that there was a small amount of financial support available to deliver on this Action. The Lead Executive Member stated that he wanted to work on supporting tourist information centres in the district;
- (d) Action TE1.4: It was clarified that although the objective set had been for key town businesses, the project had also focused on supporting rural businesses too. It was stated that this high level action would be regularly updated with the next iteration soon to reflect the situation with grant funding availability;
- (e) Action TE1.5: Following the decision of the Executive at its meeting on 7 July 2022 (Minute E.22/22 refers) in relation to the Iybridge Regeneration project, it was confirmed that this action would be removed from the next iteration of this Delivery Plan;
- (f) Action TE1.6: It was confirmed that the Council could not insist that a Town Council produced a Town Centre Plan; and

- (g) Action TE1.7: It was stated that there was much demand for small business premises in the area with current units often fully let before completion.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

1. **NOTE** the progress in delivering against the Better Lives for All 'Economy Thematic Delivery Plan';
2. **REQUEST** an update on the outcome of the Bid to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund once this had been announced; and
3. **REQUEST** that the overall rating for Action TE1.2 should be moved from green (on track) to amber (slightly off track but plan in place);

O&S.15/22 **LEISURE CONTRACT – FUSION QUARTERLY REPORT**

The Executive Lead Member for Leisure introduced the report which provided an update on current performance, and the presentation summary for the past three months (as shown in Appendix A of the attendant report).

During the presentation, reference was made to:

- Centre attendance figures being only just lower than those before the COVID pandemic;
- The identified gap in service provision for 16 to 18 year olds;
- The introduction of a reduced rate for using the Centre facilities that were on offer. It was noted that this introduction and the extension of concessionary hours had been well received;
- Family membership tariffs being currently under review; and
- An increase in provision of leisure activities for 8-12 year olds.

Further to questions from Members, the following points were clarified:

- a) It was recognised that the financial support that had been provided from the Council during the Pandemic had been very well received by Fusion and had helped to reduce the financial pressures that the organisation had faced;
- b) Whilst there had been a significant number of expressions of interest, at the time of this meeting these were not at a point that had resulted in any of the café facilities within the Leisure Centres being opened. However, it was hoped that one of the Centre facilities would be open from September 2022;
- c) In response to the concerns of the local Ward Member, the community outreach offer for football in the Woolwell area had not been progressed. In reply, it was agreed that this would be followed-up outside of this Committee Meeting;

- d) The Committee noted that the recruitment challenges facing the leisure industry were still being felt by Fusion and there remained a number of vacancies throughout the Centres. Some of the measures that were being undertaken by Fusion to reverse this trend were highlighted, including the pending wage review;

In concluding the agenda item, the Chairman thanked the Fusion representatives and lead officers for their report, presentation and responses to Member questions.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the contents and progress of Fusion's Quarterly Report for 2022 be noted.

O&S.16/22 SECTION 106 MONIES REVIEW

In accordance with Minute reference O&S.62/21, the Committee reviewed an extract of a report which was presented to the Executive on 3 March 2022, as part of the Month 10 Capital Programme Monitoring report for 2021/22 (Minute E.92/21 refers).

Although Section 106 (S106) monies were normally tied to the town/parish for which the relevant development had taken place, S106 affordable housing contributions could be spent across the wider district if there was no opportunity to develop in the immediate town/parish from where it had been collected.

It was reiterated that Members should be working hard to get the S106 monies allocated before the expiry deadline when they had to be returned to the Developer. Thanks were consequently passed to the officers for their work and the report extract.

O&S.17/22 PROGRESS OF RECRUITMENT ON LAWYERS

The Committee received a verbal update on behalf of the Monitoring Officer regarding the progress being made on the recruitment of lawyers as follows:

"The update is that since the last Committee a further member of staff has resigned, but we are continuing to advertise to fill all vacancies, but also exploring alternatives with other local authorities."

Members expressed their disappointment that the situation was now even worse than at the time of the last Committee meeting and the following potential measures were suggested as a way forward:

- Benchmarking rates of pay with other Devon local authorities; and

- The ability to buy-in additional legal resource from other local authorities. In reply, it was confirmed that discussions had been held with other local authorities. However, these authorities were facing similar challenges since there was a general shortfall of legal resource across the region. Notwithstanding the resource pressures, officers did give an assurance to the Committee that essential work related to the legal service was being carried out.

O&S.18/22 TASK AND FINISH GROUP UPDATES

a) Housing

It was noted that the Group had formally concluded its review and it was intended that the conclusions would be presented to a future Executive meeting as part of a Housing Crisis – Standing Agenda Item report.

b) Electric Vehicle Strategy

The Executive had requested that the Committee set up a Task and Finish Group to support officers in the development of an Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy for the District.

In discussion, it was agreed that a Group should be established for this purpose and it was requested that it comprise of 5 Members. In recognition that a number of Members were not in attendance at this Committee Meeting, it was felt that expressions of interest to serve on this Group should be sought outside of this Meeting. It was also concluded that the lead Executive Members for Climate Change and Car Parks should be invited to attend Task and Finish Group meetings (that would be held over Teams) when arranged.

O&S.19/22 ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23

The latest version of the draft annual work programme for the coming fiscal year was reviewed and approved by the Committee.

(Meeting started at 10:00 am and concluded at 12:30pm)

Chairman