

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL
HELD AT FOLLATON HOUSE, TOTNES ON
THURSDAY, 9 JULY 2015**

| Panel Members in attendance: | | | |
|---|---------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| * Denotes attendance ∅ Denotes apology for absence A Absent | | | |
| * | Cllr K J Baldry | ∅ | Cllr J T Pennington |
| * | Cllr N A Barnes | * | Cllr K Pringle |
| * | Cllr J I G Blackler | * | Cllr M F Saltern (Chairman) |
| * | Cllr D Brown | * | Cllr P C Smerdon |
| * | Cllr J D Hawkins | * | Cllr K R H Wingate |
| * | Cllr D Horsburgh | A | Cllr B Wood |
| * | Cllr D W May | | |

| Other Members also in attendance: |
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| Cllrs H D Bastone, I Bramble, P K Cuthbert, R J Foss, R D Gilbert, M J Hicks, P W Hitchins, J M Hodgson, T R Holway, J A Pearce, R C Steer, R J Tucker, R J Vint, L A H Ward and S A E Wright |

| Item No | Minute Ref No below refers | Officers in attendance and participating |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| All | | Head of Paid Service and Senior Specialist – Democratic Services |
| 9 | O&S.17/15 | Lead Specialist – Place and Strategy; South Hams CAB Manager and South Hams CAB Vice-Chairman |
| 10 | O&S.18/15 | Executive Director (Service Delivery and Commercial Services) and Group Manager – Support Services |
| 11 | O&S.19/15 | Group Manager – Support Services and Group Manager – Customer First |
| 12 | O&S.20/15 | Group Manager – Commercial Services |

O&S.12/15 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 4 June 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

O&S.13/15 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 and the following was made:

Cllr J D Hawkins declared a personal interest in Item 9: 'Monitoring Report on South Hams Citizens Advice Bureau Service Level Agreement' (Minute O&S.17/15 below refers) by virtue of the South Hams CAB Vice-Chairman being a fellow member of the Dartmouth Food Bank Committee and remained in the meeting and took part in the debate and vote thereon.

O&S.14/15 PUBLIC FORUM

In accordance with the Public Forum procedure rules, no items were raised at this meeting.

O&S.15/15 EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN

With regard to the most recently published Forward Plan, it was agreed that the Leader would consult with the Chairman outside of the meeting to establish whether it was feasible to bring forward the Homeless Strategy (which was currently scheduled for presentation to the Executive at its meeting on 10 March 2016) to an earlier date.

O&S.16/15 MARITIME AND COASTGUARD AGENCY UPDATE

The Chairman advised the Panel that, subsequent to the meeting agenda being published, the Coastal Operations Divisional Commander had since submitted her apologies due to operational reasons.

The Chairman proceeded to read out the advanced questions which had been received by Members and sent on to the Commander (as outlined at Appendix A). In so doing, the Chairman also made reference to the considerable safety concerns which were being raised in these questions and confirmed it was his intention to write to the Commander to invite her (or a nominee) to attend either one of the next two Panel meetings.

O&S.17/15 MONITORING REPORT ON SOUTH HAMS CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

The Panel was presented with a report that reviewed the operation of South Hams Citizens Advice Bureau (SHCAB) in 2014/15. The report also reported on the requirements of the Service Level Agreement (SLA) and began to look beyond 2015/16.

To supplement the report, the newly appointed SHCAB Manager provided a presentation to the Panel. In summary, the presentation outlined the aims and objectives of the SHCAB and the future challenges facing the organisation, which were considered to be:

- the anticipated increased future demand;
- maintaining the core grants which the organisation was so reliant upon; and
- integrating the outreach and home visiting service into the core functions of the SHCAB.

In the subsequent discussion, reference was made to:-

- (a) the telephony system. The CAB representatives gave assurances that, whilst able to receive telephone calls from across the county, the telephony system ensured that priority was given to calls received from South Hams dialling codes;
- (b) the western end of the district. A Member highlighted that a political decision had been made by Plymouth City Council whereby residents from outside of the city boundaries were not permitted to use the Plymouth CAB service. In light of this decision, the Member pleaded with the SHCAB to consider the needs of the western end of the district when developing its outreach services;
- (c) a request for additional related information. When considering the report recommendations outlined in the agenda papers, the Panel felt that it required additional information to be able to reach a view in respect of future options for the renewal of the SLA. In particular, Members wished to see further financial information (e.g. income and expenditure; staff and volunteer pay and external grants and other funding sources) and less subjectivity. Until the Panel had been able to review such information, it did not feel in a position to be able to reach any recommendations. It was therefore suggested that this agenda item should be revisited at the next Panel meeting on 27 August 2015;

In conclusion, the Chairman wished to thank the SHCAB representatives and the Lead Specialist – Place and Strategy for their informative report and presentation.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the South Hams CAB Update be revisited at the next Panel meeting on 27 August 2015, with an updated report being included on the published agenda that includes greater financial information and less subjectivity.

O&S.18/15 TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME MONITORING

In providing a verbal progress update, the Executive Director (Service Delivery and Commercial Services) focused specifically on four parts of the Programme: Human Resources, IT, Budget and Agile Working and Culture. In summary, the officer made reference to:-

- Human Resources. Since the last Panel update, Members were informed that Phase 2 of the assessment process had been brought forward and it was anticipated that those affected employees would be confirmed in their new roles by 1 September 2015.

Officers highlighted the current capacity challenges facing the Council, which had largely arisen in light of the IT workstream being six weeks behind current forecasted timescales. In particular, the Panel was informed that there were a number of vacancies currently in the Customer Contact Centre, which were being covered by temporary staff;

- the Finance Workstream. It was confirmed that a detailed Transformation Programme budget report would be presented to the next Panel meeting. However, officers did also confirm that they did not anticipate any budget overspend of the total Programme budget of £4.61 million, which had been approved by the Council in December 2014 (Minute 53/14 refers);
- the accommodation workstream. The Panel noted that the accommodation project was largely finished and had delivered approximately 150 agile workstations. In addition, the Council was currently negotiating with an external contractor, with a view to the organisation becoming a tenant of Follaton House from 1 January 2016;
- the progress being made by the Localities team. In highlighting this progress, officers referred to the upcoming Member Briefing on 16 July 2015, which was intended to provide an opportunity for Members to have an input into shaping future locality delivery;
- recruiting apprentices and graduates. When questioned, the Panel was advised that the Senior Leadership Team was committed to looking at methods of recruiting apprentices and graduates and a number of apprentices had already been recruited into Commercial Services.

O&S.19/15 UPDATE ON CUSTOMER SERVICES AND IT

Having been invited to attend by the Panel Chairman, the lead Executive Members and Group Managers for Customer First and Support Services were in attendance to provide a progress update on Customer Services and IT.

In their combined presentation, the following points were raised:-

- (a) The Panel was informed that the new IT infrastructure was in place and staff had been in receipt of their laptops. In respect of the technology, the IT service had already delivered new back end application systems for services including Housing, Waste, Environmental Health and Licensing;
- (b) A paper was tabled to the meeting that illustrated the sheer extent of the work involved in developing just one process in the new W2 System;

- (c) To ensure that delivery targets were met, an additional short-term resource (which was within the existing budget) had been brought in to provide some project management support. It was intended that this would provide additional capacity to ensure that delivery targets were met;
- (d) The importance of delivering the new customer centre telephony system was emphasised;
- (e) A Customer Services Performance paper for 2014-15 was presented to the meeting that highlighted that:
 - o call volumes had dramatically increased (by 12%), largely as a consequence of the service now receiving the Development Management Service telephone calls;
 - o one third of staff were currently temporary and in training;
 - o 70% of calls were being answered, with just over 30% of these being answered within 20 seconds. However, 30% of callers were also experiencing a greater than 7 minute wait to have their call answered;
 - o the self-service portal on the website was absolutely critical to the effectiveness of the service. Once it was in place and operational, more customers would be able to self-serve and therefore the number of calls into the Council would be reduced.
- (f) Members recognised that the Customer Services staff were working tirelessly in very difficult circumstances and their commitment and work ethic was admirable.

In the ensuing debate, reference was made to:-

- (i) the assurances that Members were initially given. A number of Members made the point that they had stressed that, right from the offset of T18, customer service was of paramount importance to maintain credibility and confidence in the Programme. It was therefore felt regrettable and unacceptable that the service was in its current predicament and particular concern was expressed at the statistic whereby 30% of calls were not being answered.

Whilst acknowledging that it was unsatisfactory, the Leader of Council reminded Members that it had been made clear from the start of the Programme that the Council would see a dip in performance and that it would take time for improvements to be apparent. Some Members proceeded to respond that the dip had been deeper than previously anticipated and there was a need to reverse this trend quickly;

- (ii) failure demand. In the drive to reduce instances of failure demand, officers informed that such calls had recently started to be logged and this was seen to be a key workstream for Customer Services;
- (iii) the need to increase resources in Customer Services. Some Members felt that there was a capacity shortfall in Customer Services and resources should therefore be re-allocated accordingly;

- (iv) the introduction of a Member direct telephone line into the Council. The Panel endorsed the suggestion that a Member direct line be established which should be for the sole use of Members and not for the wider circulation of residents or town and parish councils;
- (v) the commitment to improve the performance in Customer Services. In reiterating their unerring commitment, the lead Members and officers stated that there were already signs of service improvements. In light of the importance of this issue, the Panel requested that, at least for the foreseeable future, it be in receipt of updated performance comparisons based upon the paper which had been tabled to this meeting. In addition, Members felt it reasonable for a more extensive IT and Customer Services update to be then given to the Panel meeting on 19 November 2015.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That a Member direct telephone line into the Council be established;
2. That the Panel be in receipt of updated Customer Services performance information at each meeting, with the tabled paper to this meeting being used as a template to enable for comparative analysis; and
3. That a detailed IT and Customer Services update be presented to the Panel meeting on 19 November 2015.

O&S.20/15 WASTE TASK AND FINISH GROUP – REVIEW AND FUTURE PLAN

The Panel considered a report that looked to conclude the work of the previous waste and recycling task and finish group and set out the forward planning required for this service area.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- (a) A number of Members wished to put on record their gratitude for the excellent work undertaken by the previous task and finish group;
- (b) It was acknowledged that the proposed newly constituted group may extend its scope beyond solely waste and recycling and consider the wider subject matter of commercialisation;
- (c) Members recognised that there was potential to work jointly with West Devon Borough Council in respect of strategic matters and potential future service delivery models. However, it was equally acknowledged that certain aspects of the group's work would not be appropriate to be considered jointly;

- (d) During its deliberations, officers confirmed that the group would be asked to consider whether there was merit in progressing any appropriate partnership working opportunities;
- (e) The Panel supported the appointment of Cllrs Baldry, Barnes and Gilbert to serve on the newly constituted group.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the work of the previous task and finish group be formally concluded through a final meeting, with continuity of group membership being retained where possible and any recommendations arising from this meeting being presented to the Panel for its consideration;
2. That a new task and finish group be formed (comprising of Cllrs Baldry, Barnes and Gilbert) with its primary purpose being to strategically review waste and recycling services as part of the Devon wide strategic group, which also considers legislative changes;
3. That membership of the new group also considers the governance required to consider delivery option models for future front line, customer facing service provision; and
4. That, where appropriate, the task and finish group works jointly with West Devon Borough Council and reports its findings to the Panel.

O&S.21/15 TASK AND FINISH GROUP UPDATES:

(a) Performance Measures

The Panel was informed that the first meeting of the Group had been arranged to take place on Monday, 3 August 2015.

(b) Dartmouth Lower Ferry

Members noted that the Group would be supported by the Executive Director (Service Delivery and Commercial Development) and Group Manager – Commercial Services and its first meeting would be taking place on Friday, 10 July 2015.

O&S.22/15 DRAFT ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16

The Panel considered its draft 2015/16 Work Programme and made particular reference to:-

- (a) income generation opportunities. The Panel was informed that the Business Development Group Manager currently had approximately 50 ideas to progress. As a consequence, Members asked that the officer provide a summary of these projects to the Panel meeting on 17 September 2015;
- (b) Housing Associations. A non-Panel Member queried why some Housing Associations were included on the draft Work Programme whilst others were not. In reply, the Chairman informed that he would give this issue some more consideration, but did not consider it appropriate for more than one Housing Association to be in attendance at the same meeting. Therefore, it was felt that the Work Programme should be updated whereby the South Devon Rural Housing agenda item should be deferred to 25 February 2016 meeting;
- (c) a formal request for the Panel to review agency staff numbers and associated costs and political balance provisions. The Chairman confirmed that these proposals had been considered and since the agency staff issue would be considered by the Audit Committee in September and the political balance queries had been dealt with via email, then there was not felt to be a need for these matters to be added to the Work Programme.

(Meeting started at 10.00 am and concluded at 12.40 pm).

Chairman

Appendix A**Maritime and Coastguard Agency Update – Member Questions Submitted in Advance**

- *Who do local boats call up on the radio for radio checks? There is a lot of confusion. HM Coastguard should have a PR drive.*
- *Why is there a delay in paging crews after a 999 call and this has been up to 20 minutes when there is life in danger?*
- *I read in the local newspaper that fire crews have come from Camel Head, Plymouth, and ambulance crews have come from Exeter. Why aren't local resources used e.g. coastguards in the area?*
- *How many people are covering the South Hams? How many people are covering Torbay?*
- *Please outline the process for a 999 HM Coastguard call.*
- *When a team is tasked to do a search or cliff rescue it is HMRC protocol to task the flank team. This has failed to happen numerous times. Why?*
- *When the coastguard vehicle is on patrol it was an HMRC requirement for the vehicle to call in hourly when on the highway and half hourly when off road. This was always a safety requirement which now seems to be discouraged. Why?*
- *Why do Solent and Falmouth control centres no longer monitor Channel 0 as well as Channel 16? There have been numerous complaints from the local teams being unable to call for back up from other teams.*
- *Are you satisfied with the support you give to your local coastguard volunteers?*