

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE EXECUTIVE
HELD AT FOLLATON HOUSE ON THURSDAY, 05 MARCH 2015**

Members in attendance:			
* Denotes attendance			
∅ Denotes apologies			
∅	Cllr H D Bastone	*	Cllr R J Tucker (arrived late)
*	Cllr R D Gilbert	*	Cllr L A H Ward
*	Cllr M J Hicks (Chairman for the duration of this meeting)	*	Cllr S A E Wright
*	Cllr M F Saltern		

Also in attendance and participating		
Item 8	E.69/14	Cllr Baverstock
Item 9	E.70/14	Cllr Brazil
Item 10	E.71/14	Cllrs Barber, Brazil, May, Pearce, Smerdon, Wingate
Item 11	E.72/14	Cllrs Barber, Holway, May
Item 12	E.73/14	Cllrs Brazil and Hodgson
Item 13	E.74/14	Cllrs Barber, Brazil, Hawkins, Stone
Also in attendance and not participating		
Cllrs Bramble, B Cooper, Cane and Cuthbert		

Officers in attendance and participating		
All items	Minute Ref	Executive Director (SJ), Finance COP Lead and Member Services Manager
Item 12	E.73/14	Customer Services Manager
Item 13	E.74/14	Commercial Services Group Manager

E.65/14 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 29 January 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

E.66/14 URGENT BUSINESS

The Chairman advised that there was one item of urgent business to be raised. It had come to light that the Local Development Strategy, which had been the subject of a report to 24 April 2014 meeting of the Executive (Minute E.81/13 refers), did not specify a start date beyond stating 'this year'. For the avoidance of any doubt, he proposed therefore that the minutes of this meeting reflect that the Local Development Strategy had commenced on 7 May 2014 (i.e. after the call in period following that Executive meeting on 24 April 2014).

It was then:

RESOLVED

That, for the avoidance of any doubt, it be noted that the start date of the Local Development Strategy was 7 May 2014

E.67/14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members and officers were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of this meeting and the following were made:

Cllr R D Gilbert declared a potentially disclosable pecuniary interest in item 7: 'Priority Action Plan for 2015/16' (Minute E.68/14 below refers) specifically in respect of Direct Lets. As this matter did not arise during the discussion, Cllr Gilbert remained in the meeting and took part in the debate and vote thereon.

E.68/14 PRIORITY ACTION PLAN FOR 2015/16

Members were asked to consider a report that sought formal approval of a list of priority actions for 2015-16 as an interim measure for 2015-16 whilst Our Plan and the supporting Annual Delivery Plan were developed, the latter being the Council's corporate plan and part of the 'Our Plan' strategic approach to the development of both a Local Plan for the area and the Corporate Planning Framework.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economy and Community introduced the report.

There being no questions raised, it was then:

RESOLVED

That the list of actions for 2015-16 as attached to the presented agenda report be approved.

E.69/14 COMMUNITY RE-INVESTMENT PROJECTS FUND 2014/15 GRANT ALLOCATIONS

Members were presented with a report that provided a summary of the applications to the Community Re-investment Projects Fund in 2014/15 and sought approval for allocating grants of over £10,000 to these projects.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economy and Community introduced the report. Members generally welcomed the report and the Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Customer Services particularly welcomed the additional criteria as set out in the presented report.

The local Ward Member for Stokenham thanked the Executive for agreeing to a previous request in respect of an enhanced footpath within his Ward, and asked that the current request for extension of the footpath be approved.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the following six grants of over £10,000, totalling £136,013, be approved:
 - £30,000 to Malborough Village Hall & Playing Fields Association and Malborough Parish Council towards replacing the Village Hall roof.
 - £13,295 to Loddiswell Playing Fields & Village Hall Trust for tarmacing the Playing Field car park area.
 - £12,506 to Stokenham Parish Council towards footpath surface and drainage improvements between Carehouse Cross and Torcross (to complete improvements between Chillington and Torcross).
 - £27,225 to Totnes Development Trust towards improvements to the Shady Garden (creation of an improved public space through installation of paving, seating and street furniture).
 - £26,166 to Dartington Village Hall Association towards disabled access alterations and a toilet block and committee room extension.
 - £26,821 to Totnes Town Council for Civic Hall regeneration (purchase and installation of sound system and sound insulation and refurbishment of backstage stairs and landing).
2. That an addition to the eligibility criteria to the Community Re-investment Projects Fund to take effect from 1 April 2015, as per the red italicised text in the attached Guidance Notes (Appendix B of the presented agenda report refers), be approved.

E.70/14 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2014/15

Members were presented with a report that enabled them to monitor income and expenditure variations against the approved budget for 2014/15 and provided a forecast for the year end position.

The Executive Portfolio Holder for Support Services introduced the report and advised Members that this was a routine monitoring report. She drew particular attention to the predicted surplus of £45,000.

The Executive Portfolio Holder for Environment Services updated Members on the potential impact on the Council of recent developments in the recycled materials market. One of three organisations across the UK who buy recycled paper and card had unexpectedly gone into administration. South Hams District Council had a contract in place and material would still be collected, however the income from material would reduce from £37 per tonne to £5 per tonne. However, the Council's recycling rate would remain unaffected and the recycling credits would continue to be paid. He concluded by advising that the situation would continue to be monitored.

In response to a question relating to anticipated savings not being realised in respect of seasonal closure of public conveniences, a Member was advised that in the medium term there would be a better financial gain as more parish councils than expected had elected to have the public conveniences transferred to them as an asset.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the forecast income and expenditure variations for the 2014/15 financial year be noted.

E.71/14 T18 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

Members were presented with a report that advised of the progress of the T18 Transformation Programme.

The Executive Director Strategy and Commissioning (Head of Paid Service) introduced the report and took Members through the key areas. The Finance COP Lead explained the detail around Section 3 of the presented report and the reason for the second recommendation. It was also confirmed that this was not a request for additional funding.

During discussion, the following points were raised:

- In response to a question, Members were advised that customer insight information looked at population density and needs. It was accepted that not all residents would use IT but the Transformation Programme was about giving them a choice of options;
- A number of Members felt that the term 'channel shift' may need further explanation. In response, they were advised that this was an understood term within local government but it was an internal term. Members asked that attention be paid to language used and that communication was clear;
- One Member asked that IT approaches must be user friendly if residents were to be encouraged to use them;
- A Member reminded that the Council would be using Locality Officers to provide off site face to face communication;

- The Leader advised that, at an awards evening the previous day, the Council had jointly with West Devon Borough Council received a gold award for Delivery through Efficiency and a silver award for Council of the Year. He added that this was to the credit of staff and Members and they should be thanked for supporting the Programme.

It was then:

RESOLVED

- a) That progress on the Transformation Programme to date be noted; and
- b) That the s151 Officer, in consultation with the Executive Director Strategy and Commissioning (Head of Paid Service) and the Leader be delegated authority to determine the appropriate financing requirement from the Council's Earmarked Reserves in 2014/5, to fund the year end accounting provision for the Transformation Programme as set out in section 3 of the presented agenda report.

E.72/14

TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY FOR 2015/16

Members were presented with a report that sought approval of the proposed Treasury Management and Investment Strategies together with their associated prudential indicators.

The Executive Portfolio Holder for Support Services introduced the report and the s151 Officer added that work was being undertaken to advise residents of the change in bank account details of the Council. In response to questions she confirmed that no financial allowance needed to be made for non receipt of payments due to the change. However, two temporary agency staff were being taken on for a two-three month period in the Customer Services Team to handle any additional calls from the change of bank details and the forthcoming election.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That Council be **RECOMMENDED** to approve:

1. the prudential indicators and limits for 2015/16 to 2017/18 (as contained within Appendix A of the presented agenda report);
2. the Treasury Management Strategy 2015/16 and the treasury prudential indicators 2015/16 to 2017/18 contained within Appendix B of the presented agenda report; and
3. The Investment Strategy 2015/16 (Appendix C of the presented agenda report refers) and the detailed criteria included in Appendix D of the presented agenda report.

E.73/14

COUNCIL TAX DISCRETIONARY DISCOUNT AND REDUCTION POLICY

Members considered a report that presented a new policy which incorporated the existing discretionary powers with the Exceptional Hardship Fund which specifically provided additional support to customers in receipt of Council Tax Reduction.

The Executive Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Customer Services introduced the report and explained that the purpose was to bring two applications for assistance with council tax together within one set of financial assessment criteria.

One Member looked for an assurance that remaining monies had not arisen due to overly strict adherence to criteria. In response, it was confirmed that any remaining monies could be carried over and a degree of flexibility was employed with applications. Members then discussed how best to make customers aware that the Fund existed for those in need.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That Council be **RECOMMENDED** that the Council Tax Discretionary Discount and Reduction Policy be approved.

E.74/14

DARTMOUTH LOWER FERRY UPDATE

Members considered a report that considered the recommendations for the future of the service based on review work recently undertaken to health check the service and identify methods for improving its success.

The Lead Executive Member for Environmental Health and Housing introduced the report on behalf of the Lead Executive Member for Assets, and advised Members of the improvements made including: the use of plastic cards rather than paper tickets, rebranded concessionary tickets, fleet cards for businesses, guest cards for hotels and a new leaflet for tourist offices. He also advised that a customer survey had been undertaken and the feedback highlighted the necessity for a proper business appraisal of the service.

One Member reiterated that a root and branch appraisal of the service was important.

A local Ward Member reminded Members that the service did make a profit for the Council. It was not a statutory service but was a front line service with excellent staff. In his opinion, a manager on site was needed to respond to issues and he hoped that this would form part of the appraisal. He concluded by stating that any goodwill from Higher Ferry customers who used the service whilst the Higher Ferry was off service had been lost, as immediately it returned then the Lower Ferry reduced to one float resulting in queues to use it. Another local Ward Member stated that many years ago an agreement had been reached whereby if ever the Lower Ferry was considered for sale then it should be offered to the staff that operated it.

One Member wanted to be convinced that the rest of the South Hams was not subsidising Dartmouth through the provision of the Lower Ferry.

Another Member stated that he would be totally opposed to selling off the Lower Ferry and he could not think of anything worse for local communities. If privatised, his fear was that the service would finish at 7pm. The Council had a responsibility to communities and Members should perhaps question the amount allocated to support services for the re-charge to the Ferry. Finally, any options appraisal should not be based on the last 12 months and should take a longer term view.

In response to the final point, the Commercial Services Group Manager confirmed that the options appraisal would be based on a three year profile.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That progress in relation to improvements and efficiencies delivered by the Property Services Manager over the last two years be noted; and
2. That a full Options Assessment on the Lower Ferry Service to ensure a preferred option for the Lower Ferry business is identified by autumn 2015 at a cost of up to £7,500 to be funded from the Land and Development Reserve, be agreed.

E.75/14 REPORTS OF OTHER BODIES

RESOLVED

That the following be received and that any recommendations contained therein be approved:

- a) **Community Life and Housing Scrutiny Panel – 5 February 2015**
 - i) **CLH.33/14 NEW HOMES BONUS ALLOCATION TO DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

RESOLVED

That the status quo be retained in relation to the process adopted for the future allocation of funds.

- b) **Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Panel – 19 February 2015**

(NOTE: THESE DECISIONS, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF MINUTE E.72/14 and E.73/14 WHICH ARE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COUNCIL MEETING TO BE HELD ON 21 MAY 2015, WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE FROM 5.00PM ON MONDAY 16 MARCH 2015 UNLESS CALLED IN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULE 18).

(Meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 11.15 am)

Chairman