

# WEST DEVON HUB COMMITTEE



West Devon  
Borough  
Council

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **West Devon Hub Committee** held  
on  
**Tuesday, 13th July, 2021** at **2.00 pm** at the **Chamber -  
Kilworthy Park**

Present: **Councillors:**

**Chairman** Cllr Jory  
**Vice Chairman** Cllr Cheadle

Cllr Edmonds  
Cllr Leech  
Cllr Crozier  
Cllr Ratcliffe

Cllr Mott  
Cllr Pearce  
Cllr Daniel

**In attendance:**

Councillors:

Cllr Heyworth

Cllr Hipsey

Officers:

Chief Executive  
Deputy Chief Executive  
Head of Strategy & Projects  
Head of Development Management  
Democratic Services Manager

11. **Apologies for absence**

\*HC 11/21

There were no apologies for absence received for this meeting.

12. **Declarations of Interest**

\*HC 12/21

Members were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be discussed and there were none made.

13. **Confirmation of Minutes**  
\*HC 13/21  
The Minutes of the Hub Committee meeting held on 8 June 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.
14. **Public Questions - a period of up to 15 minutes is available to deal with issues raised by the public**  
\*HC 14/21  
It was noted that no Questions had been received in accordance with the Hub Committee Procedure Rules.
15. **Hub Committee Forward Plan**  
\*HC 15/21  
Members were presented with the Hub Committee Forward Plan that set out items on the agenda for Hub Committee meetings for the next four months.
- In discussion, it was agreed that the Leader would discuss with officers the need to schedule in further reports on aspects of the 'Plan for West Devon' once it had been adopted by Full Council at its 28 September 2021 meeting.
16. **Development of the draft 'A Plan for West Devon'**  
HC 16/21  
The Committee was presented with a report that set out the draft Corporate Strategy 'A Plan for West Devon' and timeline for the next steps, with a view to ultimate adoption of the final Strategy in September 2021.
- The Leader introduced the draft Plan and stated that it currently represented a high level vision that was deliberately scant on detail. It was the intention of the Leader for the detail to be included as part of a series of draft Delivery Plans that would be appended to the draft 'Plan for West Devon' and would be considered by the Hub Committee at its next meeting on 14 September 2021 before onward consideration at the Full Council meeting to be held on 28 September 2021.
- In discussion, the following points were raised:-
- (a) Prior to being published for consultation, Members requested that the final draft Plan be both proofread by an individual outside of the Council (thereby helping to ensure that it was understandable to the public) and, in the final version to be considered in September, ensure that images used throughout the document were reflective of the diversity of the Borough;
  - (b) A number of Members paid tribute to the presentation, design and layout of the draft Plan which was felt to be excellent;

- (c) A Member felt that there was a need for the delivery plans to be realistic and to not set out unobtainable targets. Furthermore, another Member felt that it would be useful to outline matters (e.g. highways) that were outside of the remit of the Borough Council and state which partner organisation were responsible for such matters.

It was then **RESOLVED** that Council be **RECOMMENDED** to:

1. officers be instructed to commence a formal public consultation exercise on the draft 'Plan for West Devon' in line with the adopted Community Consultation and Engagement Strategy; and
2. the Chief Executive and the Director of Governance and Assurance be instructed to develop delivery plans for the Strategy, for consideration by the Hub Committee alongside the final Strategy at its meeting on 21 September 2021 before their onward consideration by Full Council on 28 September 2021.

17. **Draft Annual Report 2021/22**

\*HC 17/21

A report was considered that presented the Council's draft Annual Report for 2020/21.

In discussion, reference was made to:-

- (a) Anti-Social Behaviour referrals. In response to a specific question, it was agreed that the matter of Anti-Social Behaviour referrals would be raised at the time when the Community Safety Partnership presented its annual report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- (b) the achievements of the Council in such a difficult year. Members felt that the Council should be congratulated for its achievements and stable financial management in what had been an unprecedented difficult year as a result of the pandemic.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. the progress and achievements made by the Council be noted; and
2. the West Devon Borough Council Draft Annual Report (as set out at Appendix A of the presented agenda report) be considered for the financial year 2020/21, with any amendments being suggested prior to publication of the final report.

18. **Planning Service Review - Verbal Update**

\*HC 18/21

The lead Hub Committee Member introduced her verbal update and advised the meeting that:

- a service review had been invoked to deliver improvements in service performance and quality;
- an Improvement Plan had been drafted and a Review Board established;
- a report on the outcome of the Review would be presented to a meeting of the Hub Committee in the Autumn;
- whilst not a formal review undertaken by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS), the organisation was providing some support on: improving customer service and communication and the delivery of the Improvement Plan;
- progress was being made in the recruitment of officers to fill the vacancies in both planning enforcement and development management;
- the validation process was critical. The lead Member advised that extensive officer time was wasted as a result of over 50% of planning applications being invalid and, in recognition of the importance of validation, an additional 2 Case Managers had been assigned to support the process;
- the backlog of planning applications was currently reducing;
- further improvements were anticipated in line with the roll-out of the new IT system;
- the pre-application process was being reviewed;
- a Memorandum of Understanding with town and parish councils was being drafted for consultation; and
- the relationship with the Council's internal consultees was also being reviewed and the support that was being provided by Ecology Officers at Devon County Council was already realising benefits.

In debate, the following points were raised:-

- (a) Based upon recent experiences, Members expressed their wish that, wherever possible, work was kept in-house and not outsourced;
- (b) It was noted that the matter of invalid planning applications was a national issue. In terms of mitigating measures, holding a workshop with planning agents and retaining an administrative (cost recovery) fee from invalid applications were currently being considered;
- (c) The pre-application process was felt to be a very important component on the planning service.

**(NOTE: THESE DECISIONS WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE FROM THURSDAY, 22 JULY 2021, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF MINUTE HC 16/21 WHICH IS A RECOMMENDATION TO THE COUNCIL MEEITNG TO BE HELD ON 20 JULY 2021, UNLESS CALLED IN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULE 18)**

The Meeting concluded at 2.45 pm

**Signed by:**

**Chairman**

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