

WEST DEVON HUB COMMITTEE



West Devon
Borough
Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **West Devon Hub Committee** held on **Tuesday, 7th June, 2022** at **2.00 pm** at the **Chamber - Kilworthy Park**

Present: **Councillors:**

Chairman Cllr Jory
Vice Chairman Cllr Edmonds

Cllr Cheadle	Cllr Crozier
Cllr Leech	Cllr Mott
Cllr Ratcliffe	Cllr Vachon

In attendance:

Councillors:

Cllr Heyworth	Cllr Pearce
Cllr Wood	Cllr Yelland

Officers:

Chief Executive
Deputy Chief Executive
Monitoring Officer
Section 151 Officer
Director – Place & Enterprise
Director – Strategy & Governance
Democratic Services Manager
Head of Housing
Head of Strategy & Projects
Head of Operations and Support Services

1. **Welcome and Thanks**

*HC 1/22

In formally opening the Committee meeting, the Leader welcomed Cllr Vachon to his first meeting as a Hub Committee Member and also Cllr Edmonds in his capacity as Deputy Leader since their respective appointments at the recent Annual Council meeting (Minutes CM 11/22 and CM 14/22 refer) . In so doing, the Leader also wished to

thank Cllr Cheadle for his work, commitment and support that he had shown during his time as the Deputy Leader of the Council.

2. **Apologies for absence**

*HC 2/22

Apologies for this meeting had been received from Cllr L Daniel.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

*HC 3/22

Cllr Leech declared an interest in agenda Item 10: Key Partnerships Funding (Minute HC10/22 refers), by virtue of being a trustee of the Okehampton Community Transport Group and remained in the meeting and took part in the debate and vote thereon.

4. **Confirmation of Minutes**

*HC 4/22

The Minutes of the Hub Committee meeting held on 12 April 2022 were confirmed as a correct record.

5. **Public Questions -a period of up to 15 minutes is available to deal with issues raised by the public**

*HC 5/22

It was noted that no Public Questions had been received in accordance with the Hub Committee Procedure Rules.

6. **Hub Committee Forward Plan**

*HC 6/22

Members were presented with the latest version of the Hub Committee Forward Plan that set out items on the agenda for Hub Committee meetings for the next four months and duly noted its contents.

7. **Annual Report Achievements**

*HC 7/22

A report was considered that presented the Council's draft Annual Report for 2021/22.

In his introduction, the Leader made reference to the achievements of the Council during the year, including:

- the re-opening of the Okehampton Rail line and the town station;
- the payment of £33 Million to local businesses via a plethora of Covid Business Support Grants;
- the waste and recycling collection service which although it had experienced recent difficulties, had performed well for most of the period; and
- the setting of a balanced budget.

In discussion, Members welcomed the reference in the draft Annual Report to the challenges that had been experienced in the waste and recycling collection service during 2021/22.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. the achievements of the Council during 2021/22 be noted: and
2. the publication of the Annual Report as a record of those achievements be agreed.

8. **Housing Crisis Update Report - Strengthening Housing Delivery**

HC 8/22

Members were presented with a report that provided an update on the actions and activities undertaken to date to help address the Housing Crisis declared by the Council in February 2022.

Following a recent Resources Review, the report also set out measures that the Council was taking to deliver against the priorities, including the recommended changes to be made to the staffing levels and structure of the Housing Team.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. the proposed revised Housing Team Structure (as set out in Appendix 1 of the presented agenda report) be noted; and
2. Council be **RECOMMENDED** to approve an annual revenue cost pressure of £29,800 (WDBC share) to be built into the budget process for 2023/24 onwards, and a one off expenditure of £100,520 to be funded from the 2021/22 Government Homeless Prevention grant, to be used to fund the additional posts for the new Housing Team Structure (as set out in Appendix 1 of the presented agenda report).

9. **Waste and Recycling Performance Update**

*HC 9/22

Members were presented with a report that provided an update on the Council's actions to hold FCC, the Council's waste and recycling contractor, to account for the poor performance experienced by some residents over recent months.

In discussion, the following points were raised:

- (a) An alternative part 3 to the published agenda report was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** as follows:

'That the Council continue to monitor contract performance to consider all available options, including those options available under the contract, to improve the performance of the waste and

recycling service in due course if required.'

When put to the vote, this alternative was declared **CARRIED**;

- (b) With regard to the imminent temporary closure of the Crowndale Recycling Centre, it was confirmed that discussions had been undertaken and FCC were confident that the impact would be negligible;
- (c) Whilst acknowledging that performance trends had been inconsistent during the last year, officers also informed that performance monitoring was now undertaken on a daily basis and May 2022 had seen a dramatic improvement in service;
- (d) With regard to the merits of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee inviting representatives from FCC to attend a future meeting, it was agreed that this would be followed up as part of the ongoing discussions with the Committee on its annual work programme for 2022/23;
- (e) When considering prohibiting factors such as the Covid pandemic and the national shortage of HGV and LGV drivers, some Members were of the view that the overall level of service delivered by FCC to West Devon Borough Council was in fact worthy of praise;
- (f) The importance of regular communication on the waste collection service with local Members, town and parish councils and residents was recognised.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. the performance of the waste contractor, FCC Environment (FCC) be noted;
2. FCC continue to be held to account in relation to its performance and that the monitoring of FCC's resources, recruitment and operational decisions be continued; and
3. the Council continue to monitor contract performance to consider all available options, including those options available under the contract, to improve the performance of the waste and recycling service in due course if required.

10. **Key Partnerships Funding**

*HC 10/22

Consideration was given to a report that recommended an approach for extending the current funding term with the Council's key partners by two years.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- (a) It was noted that a final decision on potential funding would be made by the Hub Committee at its meeting to be held in September 2022 and this meeting would provide an opportunity for Members to determine whether the Council was financially supporting the partners that were considered to be most closely aligned to the adopted 'A Plan for West Devon';
- (b) In expressing concerns over the rise in instances of Anti-Social Behaviour across the Borough, a Member hoped that some efforts could be made to re-direct funding towards partners associated with youth service provision. In response, it was felt that this subject matter would be appropriate to be considered at a future round of Link Committee meetings;
- (c) Having cited examples of some local Community Transport Groups being in receipt of partnership funding from the Council whilst others were not, a Member called for a more consistent approach to be taken;
- (d) Some Members highlighted the role of our key partner, West Devon Council for Voluntary Service (CVS), and the role that they could play in supporting wider community groups and enabling them to make the greatest impact.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. the positive contribution made by our key funded partnerships in supporting our ambitions as set out in our Corporate Strategy: A Plan for West Devon, be noted;
2. the Head of Strategy be requested to liaise with existing key partners (as set out in section 2.6 of the presented report) to request that an updated application be submitted for a further two year funding arrangement from 31 March 2022; and
3. the returned application forms be considered at the Hub Committee meeting in September 2022.

11. **Council Tax Rebate Discretionary Scheme**

*HC 11/22

Consideration was given to a report that sought to enable the Hub Committee to make a decision on the discretionary element of the Government's Council Tax Rebate scheme.

In discussion, the following points were raised:

- (a) Officers were congratulated for their performance in being able to release the funds to 95% of those households who were entitled to be in receipt;
- (b) In light of some clarification being sought over paragraph 3.3.2 of the published agenda report, an alternative part 1 of the report

recommendation was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** as follows:

'That delegated authority be granted to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to approve the final wording of the Discretionary Council Tax Rebate policy.'

When put to the vote, this alternative recommendation was declared **CARRIED**.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) delegated authority be granted to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to approve the final wording of the Discretionary Council Tax Rebate policy;
- (ii) the current approach to distributing the main Government's Council Tax rebate for households in Bands A to D be endorsed; and
- (iii) the existing discretionary support schemes operated by the Council be endorsed and that increasing the public and voluntary sector awareness of the support and schemes available for residents, be supported.

12. **Contact Centre Service Review Update**

*HC 12/22

Members gave consideration to a report that provided an update on the recently undertaken Customer Contact Centre service review.

In the ensuing discussion, reference was made to:

- (a) the support of the Hub Advisory Group. The lead Member confirmed that the outcome of the review had also been considered by the Hub Advisory Group and the Group had confirmed its support for the proposals;
- (b) call answering times. Officers confirmed that, due to channel shift, there was a year-on-year reduction in telephone calls received by the Contact Centre. Nonetheless, it was also recognised that there would be occasions when residents would still need to call the Contact Centre. In addition, the time taken to resolve complex enquiries in relation to certain service areas (e.g. Revenue and Benefits) was often extensive and impacted upon the average call answering times;
- (c) the Kilworthy Park Reception opening times. It was confirmed that a further report on the current trial into Reception opening times would be presented to the Hub Committee meeting to be held in September 2022.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. the approach taken with the Contact Centre review, and the subsequent and ongoing Improvement Plan be approved;
2. the performance of the Contact Centre and the improvement over recent months in total calls answered, and calls answered within 5 minutes, be recognised; and
3. the timescales of the Contact Centre Improvement Plan as set out in Appendix A of the presented report be noted, and that it be recommended that a further update on progress be brought to the Committee in six months.

13. **Planning Services Improvement Plan**

*HC 13/22

Members considered a report that provided an update on proposals to restructure the Council's Development Management and Enforcement Service as part of the continuing implementation of the Planning Improvement Plan (the Plan) adopted by the Hub Committee on 21 September 2021 (minute HC 30/21 refers).

In discussion, widespread support was expressed for the proposals and the recognition of greater emphasis being placed on service performance monitoring was welcomed.

It was the **RESOLVED** that:

- i) the proposed restructure of the Development Management Service be endorsed; and
- ii) it be noted that the cost of the restructure (£33,000 per annum) be funded for the first three years from the additional planning income held in the Planning Earmarked Reserve.

(NOTE: THESE DECISIONS WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE FROM THURSDAY, 16 JUNE 2022, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF MINUTE HC 08/22 PART 2 WHICH IS A RECOMMENDATION TO THE COUNCIL MEETING TO BE HELD ON 19 JULY 2022, UNLESS CALLED IN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULE 18)

The Meeting concluded at 3.20 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
