

WEST DEVON OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE



West Devon
Borough
Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **West Devon Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Tuesday, 21st June, 2022 at 2.00 pm** at the **Chamber - Kilworthy Park**

Present: **Councillors:**

Chairman Cllr Ewings
Vice Chairman Cllr Kimber

Cllr Blackman
Cllr Kemp
Cllr Pearce
Cllr Spettigue

Cllr Heyworth
Cllr Moyse
Cllr Southcott
Cllr Turnbull

In attendance:

Councillors:

Cllr Crozier
Cllr Edmonds
Cllr Moody (via Teams)
Cllr Yelland (via Teams)

Cllr Daniel (via Teams)
Cllr Leech (via Teams)
Cllr Mott

Officers:

Director – Place & Enterprise
Democratic Services Manager
Senior Specialist – Economic Development
Community Digital Officer (via Teams)

1. **Welcome and Thanks**

*O&S 01/22

In introducing the Meeting, the Chairman wished to welcome Cllr Pearce to his first Committee meeting since being appointed at the recent Annual Council meeting. In addition, the Chairman recorded her thanks to Cllrs Samuel and Vachon for their years of service on the Committee.

2. **Apologies for Absence**
*O&S 02/21
Apologies for absence for this meeting were received from Cllrs A Coulson, J Moody (joined the meeting online in a non-voting capacity), M Renders, D Sellis and L Wood.

3. **Confirmation of Minutes**
*O&S 03/21
The minutes of the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 26 April 2022 were confirmed by the Meeting as a true and correct record.

4. **Declarations of Interest**
*O&S 04/21
Members and officers were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of this meeting but there were none made.

5. **Public Forum**
*O&S 05/21
The Chairman confirmed that no formal requests had been received in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

6. **Third Sector Partners - South West Mutual - Mr Tony Greenham**
*O&S 06/21
The Chairman advised that Mr Tony Greenham (the South West Mutual representative who had been due to attend this Committee Meeting) was sadly suffering from Covid and therefore not able to attend. Following discussions, it was agreed to ask Mr Greenham if he could return to attend the next Committee Meeting scheduled to be held on 26 July 2022.

7. **Third Sector Partners -Airband (Andrew Roberts) and Connecting Devon Somerset (Matt Barrow)**
*O&S 07/21
The Chairman introduced Mr Matt Barrow (from Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS)) and Mr Andrew Roberts (from Airband) who were in attendance. Mr Barrow proceeded to provide a presentation to Members that outlined the work of CDS, and an update on the rollout of broadband provision for hard-to-reach premises in the Borough, in partnership with Airband.

In the ensuing discussion, the Chairman gave her thanks that much of the improvement works in outlying villages were being

performed during the evening and night time which was helping to limit disruption to residents.

Furthermore, the Committee recognised that the most rural schemes were proving to be the most challenging (and least cost effective) to deliver.

With regard to specific query relating to the Brentor parish, it was agreed that the local Ward Member would send more information to Mr Barrow outside of this Meeting.

Thanks were then given to both representatives for their respective updates.

The Community Digital Officer provided her update, which included confirmation that locally nominated Broadband champions now covered around 34 parishes and helped residents to access vouchers. With fibre being run through the area, it would now allow for smaller hamlets to be covered via spurs off the fibre. An online tool was being produced to help residents guide them through the complex system to progress broadband updates; it was hoped that this tool would go live in the near future. The officer confirmed that she would send the link to the tool to Committee Members, along with the list of areas that were still without nominated Broadband champions.

8. **Thematic Update - Built Environment**

*O&S 08/21

The Lead Hub Member for Built Environment introduced a report that reviewed latest progress against the Built Environment Corporate Theme as follows:

- Action BE1.1 – although this action was currently termed ‘amber’ as it was slightly delayed, following a recent recruitment process, progress against the action would soon be made and would likely return to ‘green’ by the next report. In reply to a request, the lead Hub Member agreed to send around the list of 24 Conservation Areas which had been reviewed.
- Action BE1.2 – conversations were happening with parishes, with posters relating to the #MyPlace campaign being displayed which promoted local events.
- Action BE1.3 – it was confirmed that promotion of events was happening via the Visit Dartmoor and Visit Devon websites.
- Action BE1.4 – closer working was being undertaken with Dartmoor National Park colleagues in order to promote Towns and Parishes within its boundary, alongside continuing to

explore the possibility of a Business Improvement District being established in Okehampton.

- Action BE1.5 – progress was being made on this action. An update was given on the Callington Road scheme, outlining that the developers would be in communication with UNESCO, with support from officers.

A Member queried why consultation with UNESCO on phase one of the scheme had not occurred, resulting in, in his opinion, oversized development being created.

- Action BE1.6 – a change in officer support was noted on this strand. Following a question from a Member, the Director for Place and Enterprise stated that an update on the Lamerton Neighbourhood Plan would be sent around to Members following the meeting.
- Action BE1.7 – officers had met recently with a Devon wide group reviewing cycle paths, with a report being developed by Devon County Council (DCC) which would be published in the near future. Following a Member question regarding active travel plans for rural areas, it was confirmed that more officer time had been allocated to this project which would enable increased collaboration with DCC. If successful, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Bid would also progress strategic projects for rural travel plans. An officer agreed to send out further information on 'Quiet Lanes'. It was agreed that a separate report on 'active travel' would be brought back to a future Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.
- Action BE1.8 – the next bid for levelling up was being progressed. A Member asked for an update on the viability study into the reopening of the Bere Alston railway line, the answer to which would be disseminated after the Committee meeting.

It was reiterated that any Member attending an external meeting, which was of relevance to the Council, should be feeding back information to all Members, either via email or through the Weekly Members' Bulletin publication. Attendance at Hub Advisory Group meetings was again highlighted as an issue, with the Head of Democratic Services agreeing to review how best to inform all Members of the dates of all future Hub Advisory Group meetings. Following the Lead Hub Member for Resources and Performance suggesting that the Lead Member of each Hub Advisory Group could also feedback information to all Members, it was agreed that he would discuss this with the Leader.

Two Members outlined their concerns with the continuing withdrawal of services from rural areas. Specifically, the closure of banks and post offices were impacting upon a significant number of people who were not able to access services online

and needed to be able to talk to individuals rather than utilising IT services. It was advised that these concerns should be taken to a future meeting of the relevant Hub Advisory Group.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the progress in delivering against the Plan for West Devon "Built Environment" Thematic Delivery Plan be noted.

9. **Task & Finish Group Updates (if any)**

*O&S 09/21

There were no updates.

10. **Draft O&S Annual Work Programme 2022/23, inc. prep for next meeting**

*O&S 10/21

The draft proposal for the work programme was reviewed. The presentation from South West Mutual would be rescheduled; a report regarding Active Travel would be tabled into the programme; review of the last Member Induction Programme to be added.

11. **Member Learning and Development Opportunities Arising from this Meeting**

*O&S 11/21

There were no learning and development opportunities identified from this meeting.

The Meeting concluded at 4.00 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
