

At a Meeting of the **HUB COMMITTEE** held in the **Council Chamber, Kilworthy Park, Tavistock** on **TUESDAY** the **21st** day of **NOVEMBER 2023** at **2.00 pm**

Members in attendance

*** Denotes attendance**

∅ Denotes apology for absence

* Cllr A Bridgewater	∅ Cllr T Leech (<i>joined via Teams</i>)
* Cllr L Daniel	* Cllr J Moody
* Cllr C Edmonds	* Cllr C Mott
* Cllr M Ewings (Leader)	* Cllr M Renders (Deputy Leader)
* Cllr N Jory	

Other Member(s) also in attendance in a non-voting capacity:

Cllrs Calder (via Teams), Elliott (via Teams) Johnson (via Teams); Kimber; Leech (via Teams); Oxborough, Squire, Viney and West

Officers in attendance

Chief Executive; Deputy Chief Executive; Section 151 Officer; Monitoring Officer (via Teams); Head of Democratic Services; Assistant Director Strategy; Head of Finance; Head of Environmental Health & Licensing; Head of Head of Revenues & Benefits, Head of Housing (via Teams); Head of Economy & Place; Principal Environmental Health Officer; Community Digital Connectivity Officer; Principal Assets Officer; Principal Climate Change Officer and Principal Building & Facilities Officer (via Teams)

***HC 23/23 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence had been received from Cllr Leech, who was in attendance remotely via Teams.

***HC 24/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

***HC 25/23 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Hub Committee meeting held on 19 September 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.

***HC 26/23 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

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

***HC 27/23 HUB COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN**

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 proceeded to note its content.

***HC 28/23 DRAFT CORPORATE STRATEGY**

The Hub Committee considered a report that provided an update on the progress made in the preparation of the draft Corporate Strategy for the period 2024-2028.

During the ensuing debate, the following points were raised:

- (a) In respect of the development of the delivery plans, officers advised of the intention that the next round of Hub Advisory Groups would be held in the upcoming months. Furthermore, it was intended that the detailed delivery plans would be considered at the next Hub Committee meeting (to be held on 30 January 2024) alongside further consideration of the Corporate Strategy and draft Revenue and Capital Budget proposals for 2024/25;
- (b) It was noted that, as part of the public consultation exercise, a question would be included that sought the views of residents as to what the Strategy should be titled. In hoping that residents and local stakeholders would be fully engaged in the consultation exercise, officers confirmed that a 'Member Pack' (including a list of Frequently Asked Questions) would be issued to all Members upon the commencement of the consultation process;
- (c) The view was expressed that the Strategy should highlight (and cross reference) the 12 national missions that underpinned Central Government's Levelling Up agenda;

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the draft Corporate Strategy, as set out at Appendix B of the presented agenda report, be endorsed;
2. That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director - Strategy, in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader, to apply any final amendments to the draft Corporate Strategy prior to commencement of the public consultation exercise;
3. That the formal consultation on the draft Strategy be commenced; and
4. That the Senior Leadership Team and Assistant Director - Strategy support Lead Hub Committee Members in the development of detailed delivery and resourcing plans for the Strategy.

HC 29/23 REVIEW OF CAPITAL PROGRAMME (CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING) AND REVIEW OF EARMARKED RESERVES

Members considered a report that set out the progress made on individual schemes within the approved capital programme, including an assessment of their budgets and financial position and how schemes might align with the emerging corporate priorities.

In the ensuing debate, particular reference was made to:

- (a) the Springhill project. In the event of Full Council ultimately approving the recommendations in the published agenda report, then the Business Case for the Springhill project would be reviewed with alternative options being explored as part of that process;
- (b) the Financial Stability Reserve. When questioned, the Section 151 Officer advised that releasing the funds within this Reserve would not affect the financial stability of the Council.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That Council be **RECOMMENDED** to:

- 1) withdraw three capital projects from the current Capital Programme, being Parklands Leisure Centre contribution to moveable floor (£50,000) and Tavistock Viaduct (£20,000). It is also recommended to withdraw the Springhill Temporary Accommodation budget from the capital programme, following the Hub Committee decision to put this project on hold whilst other options are explored, freeing up a further £193.2k. Therefore, the review of the capital programme is freeing up capital resources of £263.2k which is potentially available for future corporate priorities and can be re-purposed;
- 2) continue to progress all other capital projects, in line with the existing capital projects within the overall Capital Programme;
- 3) note the content of the Capital Programme Monitoring Report in Appendix C of the presented agenda report which shows the current expenditure on capital projects between April 2023 and September 2023 of £1.692m, being 21% of the profiled budget for 2023/24 (the first six months of the financial year);
- 4) note the revised capital allocation for the UK Shared Prosperity fund (UKSPF) scheme for 2023/24 and 2024/25 as set out in section 3.2 of the presented agenda report;
- 5) note the addition of £26,632 to the capital programme for a new boiler at Okehampton Business Centre to be financed from the Maintenance Earmarked Reserve, set out in section 3.3 of the presented agenda report; and
- 6) approve the outcome of the review of revenue reserves, releasing revenue reserves of up to £871,000 which is potentially available to support the delivery of the emerging Corporate Strategy.

***HC 30/23**

DRAFT REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2024-25

The Hub Committee was presented with a report that outlined a series of draft revenue and capital budget proposals for 2024/25.

During discussion, the following points were raised:

- (a) It was noted that the projected budget gap for 2026/27 was sizeable;
- (b) The proposed flooding contingency budget of £50,000 was welcomed and, given recent climatic trends, was felt to be very pragmatic;
- (c) In echoing the views of the Audit & Governance Committee, Members expressed their disappointment over the increased External Audit fees;
- (d) Moving forward, a number of Members stated their hope that Central Government would provide greater clarity over the future of New Homes Bonus funding;
- (e) Members looked forward to receiving the views of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on these draft proposals at the next Hub Committee meeting to be held on 30 January 2024.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the forecast budget gap for 2024/25 of £142,030 (1.5% of the projected Net Budget of £9.265million) and the position for future years be noted; and
2. That the Senior Leadership Team work with Hub Committee Members to provide further options on how to close the predicted budget gap for 2024/25, for Members' consideration as part of future budget reports in early 2024 (once more detail of the Local Government Finance settlement is known).

***HC 31/23 SOCIAL HOUSING & PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING LANDLORDS**

Members considered a report that set out a commitment by the Council to support tenants in social and private sector rented accommodation to take action against their landlords when there were unacceptable delays or challenges in remedying repairs.

During debate, particular reference was made to:

- (a) accessing those tenants considered to be 'hardest to reach'. When questioned, officers set out a series of measures that were being undertaken in an attempt to access the hardest to reach tenants;
- (b) improving methods of regulating landlords in West Devon. Officers informed that they were currently reviewing the merits of establishing a landlord / letting regulatory scheme. For clarity, the Committee noted that there was no evidence of systemic rogue landlords in the Borough area but some could be considered to be uneducated on housing standards;
- (c) close linkages between the Environmental Health and Housing teams. It was noted that regular dialogue took place between Environmental Health and Housing officers with steps that included properties not being able to be re-let until necessary remedial works had been carried out being in place.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That an enhanced approach to improving Social and Private Sector Housing standards in West Devon be approved; and
2. That an annual performance report on the investigations of housing standards complaints be brought to the Hub Committee.

***HC 32/23 UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND & RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND UPDATE**

The Hub Committee considered a report that provided an update on the projects that had so far benefitted from the UK Shared Prosperity and Rural England Prosperity Funds

During debate the following points were raised:

- (a) With regard to the Agri-Tech Innovation Project, officers committed to providing more information with regard to the level of interest to date from those farmers located in the West Devon area outside of this Committee meeting;
- (b) Through the Community Resilience Grant scheme, it was noted that parish councils were able to apply for monies to expand the range of services that could be delivered through their local parish, community and village hall facilities;
- (c) The ongoing need to publicise and promote the projects and schemes set out within the presented agenda report was recognised;
- (d) Officers highlighted the extent of interest already and, as a result, expressed their confidence that these monies would be spent before the prescribed deadline. Furthermore, it was hoped that additional funding opportunities would be made available by Central Government;
- (e) Whilst welcoming the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, Members also recognised the need for a co-ordinated approach between the Council and Devon County Council regarding their Highways maintenance programme and schedule of works;
- (f) It was recognised that this agenda item represented an excellent example of meaningful devolution from Central to Local Government.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That an all-Member Briefing session be convened to take place at the earliest opportunity enabling Members to further explore the work being delivered through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) programme;

2. That the work of the UKSPF programme be disseminated and promoted to local communities; and
3. That the Rural England Prosperity Fund Grant Policies be supported.

***HC 33/23 LONG STAY PAY & DISPLAY CHARGES REVIEW**

Members were presented with a report that sought approval to amend the pay and display charges in long stay West Devon off-street car parks.

In his introduction, the lead Member informed that, at the appropriate time, he would be proposing an alternative form of wording to report recommendation 1.1 that would read as follows:

'1.1 To amend the Pay and Display Charges in accordance with Appendix A, with the exception of Hatherleigh and Chagford, which should be amended whereby there is no increases for charges up to and including 2 hours.'

During the ensuing discussion, particular reference was made to:

- (a) usage and income figures. Officers informed that both car parking usage and income figures had still not quite returned to pre-COVID levels;
- (b) car parking permit numbers. Whilst the permit scheme was particularly popular in Chagford, it was felt that there was scope to increase the promotion and marketing of parking permits across the remainder of the Borough area;
- (c) the proposals to remove Brentor and Lydford car parks from the Council's Parking Places Order 2022 (report recommendation 1.3 refers). Officers confirmed that these proposals were cost neutral to the Council;
- (d) support for the proposals. A number of Members expressed their support for the proposals contained within the agenda papers that were felt to strike the delicate balance between the Council's budgetary pressures and the need to support the local economy.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the Head of Assets be authorised to publish notice of proposals for the West Devon Borough Council (Off-Street Parking Places) (Variation No.1) Order 2022 amendments to be made as follows:
 - 1.1 To amend the Pay and Display charges in accordance with Appendix A of the presented agenda report, with the exception of Hatherleigh and Chagford, which be amended whereby there is no increase for charges up to and including 2 hours;
 - 1.2 To change Abbey car park from a 4 hour maximum stay to a 6 hour maximum stay car park; and
 - 1.3 To remove Brentor car park and Lydford car park from the West Devon Borough Council (Off Street Parking Places) Order 2022;

2. That the Head of Assets be requested to prepare a report summarising any representations received in response to the notice of proposals for consideration by the Hub Committee before deciding whether to make the off-street parking places order as proposed or with modifications; and
3. That the Director of Place and Enterprise, in consultation with the Lead Hub Committee Member and the Leader of Council, be authorised to vary the charges payable in respect of off-street parking places to reflect annual changes in the September Consumer Price Index (inflationary uplift) subject to giving the public notice in accordance with Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure)(England and Wales) Regulations 1996 specifying the charges payable when the notice comes into effect.

***HC 34/23 Q3 AND Q4 WRITE-OFF REPORT 2022/23**

A report was considered that informed Members of the proposal to write-off a series of debts with a value of more than £5,000 for the period from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023.

During debate, support was expressed for the excellent work being carried out by the Team.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That, in accordance with Financial Regulations, it be noted that the Section 151 Officer had authorised the write-off of individual debts totalling £77,279.31 as detailed in paragraph 3 of the presented report; and
2. That the write-off of the individual debts totalling £29,868.75, as shown in Appendix A of the presented agenda report, be approved.

HC 35/23 CLIMATE CHANGE – EV STRATEGY UPDATE

Members considered a report that set out an updated Electric Vehicle (EV) Strategy for 2023 - 2025.

During discussion, the following points were raised:

- (a) In reply to a question, officers confirmed that feasibility studies would take into account the local capacity and capability for EV rapid chargers;
- (b) Whilst in the infancy of the journey for the Council, Members felt that, in the future, the Council should explore providing an EV charger installation service to local residents and stakeholders as a means of income generation;
- (c) Having sought clarification, officers advised that there were mechanisms in place to prevent users from effectively blocking those car parking spaces that contained EV charging points.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That Council be **RECOMMENDED** to adopt the West Devon Borough Council Electric Vehicle Strategy 2023-2025 as set out at Appendix B of the presented agenda report.

(The meeting terminated at 4.00pm)

Chairman

(NOTE: THESE DECISIONS, WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE FROM 5.00PM ON THURSDAY, 30 NOVEMBER 2023, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF MINUTES HC 29/23 AND HC 35/23 WHICH ARE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COUNCIL MEETING TO BE HELD ON 19 DECEMBER 2023, UNLESS CALLED IN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINYPROCEDURE RULES)