

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on 30 September 2019 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors

F W Letch (Chairman)
W Burke, Mrs C P Daw, R Evans, Mrs I Hill,
B Holdman, B A Moore, C R Slade,
R L Stanley, B G J Warren and A Wilce

Apologies

Councillor(s)

R J Chesterton and Ms E J Wainwright

Also Present

Councillor(s)

S J Clist and R M Deed

Also Present

Officer(s):

Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Jill May (Director of Corporate Affairs and Business Transformation), Maria De Leburne (Solicitor), Andrew Busby (Group Manager for Corporate Property and Commercial Assets), Claire Fry (Group Manager for Housing), Lisa Lewis (Group Manager for Business Transformation and Customer Engagement), Christopher Davey (Procurement Manager), Tristan Peat (Forward Planning Team Leader), Philip Langdon (Solicitor), Clare Robathan (Scrutiny Officer), Christie McCombe (Area Planning Officer), Paul Tucker (Growth and Regeneration Officer) and Carole Oliphant (Member Services Officer)

55 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (00.01.14)

Cllr R J Chesterton gave apologies and was substituted by Cllr C Slade and Cllr Ms E Wainwright gave apologies.

56 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (00.01.30)

There were no declarations

57 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (00.01.40)

There were no members of the public present.

58 MEMBER FORUM (00.01.50)

There were no issues raised under this item.

59 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (00.02.18)

Subject to amendments:

1. Minute 53 (para 3) Councillor Woollatt's response that 'no other local authority in the South West charged people to park overnight' be amended to 'the majority of council owned car parks in the South West do not charge for overnight parking' and;
2. Minute 49 (para 1) Police representatives title be change from Superintendent to Inspector

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd September 2019 were agreed as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

Cllr B A Moore stated that he wanted his comments that the Cabinet Member for Finance did not attend the last meeting to be recorded but he did not want the minutes changed.

60 **DECISIONS OF THE CABINET (00.05.13)**

The Committee **NOTED** that none of the decisions made by the Cabinet on 19th September 2019 had been called in.

61 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (00.05.30)**

The Chairman advised the Committee that Matt Barrow, DCC, would be attending the 28th October meeting to give an update on the Broadband rollout in Mid Devon and asked Members to submit any questions they wanted to ask before 14th October 2019.

The Chairman asked for volunteers for the Customer Experience Working Group which was meeting on 1st October 2019 at 2.30pm as Cllr A Wilce had had to withdraw from the Working Group. Cllr I Hill volunteered to be a member of the Working Group.

It was therefore **AGREED** that Cllr I Hill be a member of the Customer Experience Working Group.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

The Chairman advised the Committee that he had attended a meeting with police representatives with Cllr Lloyd Knight, Mayor of Cullompton and the Leader.

The Chairman introduced Clare Robathan as the Scrutiny Officer.

62 **MEETING MANAGEMENT (00.07.20)**

The Chairman advised the Committee (with their agreement) that he would take item 14, the Scrutiny Officer update, as the next item on the agenda.

63 **SCRUTINY OFFICER UPDATE (00.07.35)**

The Scrutiny Officer gave Members some detail on her background in Central Government and that she was bringing useful skills and experience to the role. She

confirmed her working hours to Members and that a large part of her work would be to support the Scrutiny Committee but she also had a remit to support the Environment and Community PDG's with any research required.

She advised the Committee that she would be providing a presentation to Members on the forward work programme at the next meeting.

64 **CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING REPORT (00.10.56)**

The Cabinet Member for Housing provided the Committee with a *report on area's within his remit and gave the details of performance against targets in key areas.

He gave personal thanks to Cllr R L Stanley for all the hard work that he had done in relation to the portfolio before he had taken over.

He explained that he was surprised by the attitude of some tenants who were against gas inspections and informed Members that Tommy Walsh would be the guest speaker at this year's Landlords Event.

He expressed his thanks to officers who had made the transition process since May easy and that he had been made to feel very welcome and he explained that he had attended over 100 meetings with officers to date and found the service to be a lean, slick, cohesive and a professional outfit.

In response to Members questions the Chief Executive explained the difference in the number of affordable units which had been secured in the district as to the number of social housing units delivered by the Council itself.

Members asked for responses to the following questions:

1. The figures for affordable housing and social housing be explained in more detail
2. That the HRA figures be clarified, including the exact amount going in each year and the current total pot
3. Request for a full report on the figures currently invested with Wessex Bank, the current amount of monies available, the number of loans made in the past 12 months, how the reserves of £80k have been spent and if any money had been clawed back by the Council
4. Would the previous policy of replacing all coal fired heating systems in Council housing stock with reserves from renewable energy continue?
5. An explanation of where the DARS figures were obtained and the difference between the 18/19 budget and spend
6. Clarification of the £54k lost through non co-operation by tenants for gas inspections
7. Provide a prediction of the amount of rent arrears by the end of the financial year
8. Clarification on why there were more grants and sales for right to buy in 17/18 and 18/19 and to date
9. Clarification of why Band E figures were included on the housing list

The Cabinet Member informed the Committee that he would provide a written response to questions asked.

Members congratulated officers on the amount of successful rogue landlord prosecutions but felt that more could be done.

Note: *report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

65 **STRATEGIC GRANTS AND SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT PROGRAMME 2020-2023 (00.50.45)**

The Committee had before it and **NOTED** a *report from the Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration presented by the Growth and Regeneration Officer outlining the process for the Strategic Grants and Service Level Agreement Programme for 2020-2023.

He explained to the Committee that a recommendation would be presented to the Community PDG to form a working group to consider recommendations on the approach and the levels of grant funding for 2020-2023. He explained that any awards agreed would have to be within the financial constraints of the Council.

Members who had been present in the previous administration of the Council endorsed the current system of Service Level Agreements and confirmed that the current beneficiaries found the system useful.

In response to a question, the Grants and Funding Officer confirmed that the grant awards to the Grand Western Canal, Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life and the Tourist Information Centre would be considered by the Economy PDG and was separate from the Service Level Agreement Programme.

Members urged that the award notices were made in a timely manner so that the recipients could plan for the future.

Notes:

1. *Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes
2. Cllr B A Moore declared an interest as a trustee of Involve

66 **CULLOMPTON TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN - CONTRACT AWARD (00.56.19)**

The Committee had before it and **NOTED** a *report from the Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration, presented by the Area Planning Officer, outlining the procurement process for the Contact Award for the Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan.

She outlined the contents of the report which advised Members of the procurement process for the employment of consultants to assist in the preparation of the Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan and the Delivery Plan.

She explained the next steps of the process and that stage 1 would be a public consultation exercise to be completed by the end of the year.

Members expressed a desire that lessons learned from the public consultation exercise in Cullompton regarding the link road be implemented.

Members discussed the number of suppliers who had submitted an expression of interest and that a single supplier had actually submitted a response by the tender deadline.

The Procurement Manager explained that there were issues with the number of skilled trades willing to tender for contracts due to them being employed on the Hinkley Point project. He explained that the Council would try to pre-empt this in the future with pin notices in advance of tenders.

A Member expressed a concern that previous Town Centre Masterplans had not been implemented and that the public were questioning the amount of money spent on them and them not being taken forward. The Area Planning Officer offered to go through the stages of previous Masterplans and explain what had been implemented.

The Chief Executive explained to Members that once the Town Centre Masterplan reached implementation stage it would be down to Members to agree the details. He explained that the work being undertaken was intended to form part of the Council's development and planning framework, giving far greater strength and planning 'weight' to it than perhaps the vision or idea documents of the past.

Notes:

1. *Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes
2. Cllr R L Stanley left and returned to the meeting during the item and did not take part in the discussion

67 **ANNUAL REPORT OF COMPLAINTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLIMENTS (01.08.55)**

The Committee had before it and **NOTED** a *report from the Group Manager for Business Transformation and Customer Engagement providing details of the complaints, comments and compliments received by the Council.

Members asked if the implementation of cashless payments had increased the amount of complaints received by the Council. The Group Manager for Business Transformation and Customer Engagement explained that the Council had not received an increased amount of formal complaints but had received queries from the public on how to access and use the new payment methods.

In response to questions asked about helping customers understand the complaints process, the Chief Executive explained that at the end of every stage 1 complaint the complainant was given details on how to escalate to a stage 2 complaint if they were not satisfied with the response. Any stage 2 response highlighted how to take any further action via the Ombudsman, in order to ensure the highest standards of transparency and accountability.

Members noted that in many areas the numbers of comments outweighed the number of formal complaints received. The Group Manager for Business Transformation and Customer Engagement explained that the comments received

were analysed by the Service Area and Customer Services to see where improvement to the Service could be made.

Members expressed concerns that the highest number of complaints received were in the Waste and Housing Services. The Group Manager for Business Transformation and Customer Engagement explained that the waste services touched every household in the district and was statistically likely to incur more complaints as were Housing whose customers had multiple need for contact. She explained that they worked with these service areas to understand and reduce multiple complaints of the same nature.

Notes:

1. *Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes
2. Cllr A Wilce left the meeting and did not take part in the discussion

68 RIPA ANNUAL UPDATE (01.22.25)

The Committee had before it and **NOTED** a *report from the Group Manager for Legal Services and Monitoring Officer presented by the RIPA Coordinator who stated that the RIPA powers had not been used since 2014.

Members discussed the use of CCTV cameras and if these could be used to record instances of fly tipping and antisocial behaviour. It was explained that any such surveillance would need to be approved by a Magistrate and would be time limited and that only offences that could carry a 6 month prison term would be approved.

Note: *Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

69 FORWARD PLAN (01.30.20)

The Forward Plan was **NOTED**.

Note: *Forward plan previously circulated and attached to the minutes

70 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS (01.30.52)

No items were identified.

(The meeting ended at 3.46 pm)

CHAIRMAN