

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on 21 June 2021 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors

B G J Warren (Chairman)
G Barnell, E J Berry, W Burke,
Mrs F J Colthorpe, L J Cruwys,
Mrs S Griggs, P J Heal, F W Letch,
R F Radford, Ms E J Wainwright and
A Wilce

Also Present

Councillor(s)

S J Clist, Mrs C P Daw, R M Deed, R Evans and
C R Slade

Also Present

Officer(s):

Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Jill May (Director of Business Improvement and Operations), Maria De Leiburne (Operations Manager Legal and Monitoring), Matthew Page (Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste), Darren Beer (Operations Manager for Street Scene), Catherine Yandle (Operations Manager for Performance, Governance and Health & Safety), Vicky Lowman (Environment and Enforcement Manager), Sarah Lees (Member Services Officer) and Sally Gabriel (Member Services Manager)

1 WELCOME (00-05-00)

The Chairman welcomed new members to the committee and thanked previous members of the committee for their work.

2 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (00-05-15)

There were no apologies.

3 HYBRID MEETING PROTOCOL (00-05-28)

The protocol for hybrid meetings was noted.

4 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN (00-05-40)

Cllr Mrs F J Colthorpe proposed, seconded by Cllr E J Berry that Cllr P J Heal be elected Vice Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee.

Cllr L J Cruwys proposed, seconded by Cllr F W Letch that Cllr A Wilce be elected Vice Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee.

Upon a vote being taken Cllr A Wilce was elected Vice Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee.

5 START TIME OF MEETINGS (00-07-57)

It was **AGREED** that the start time of meetings remain at 2.15pm for the remainder of the municipal year.

6 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (00-08-30)

Members were reminded of the need to make declarations of interests where appropriate.

7 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (00-08-30)

There were no questions from members of the public present.

8 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (00-09-01)

The minutes of the last meeting were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

9 DECISIONS OF THE CABINET (00-09-53)

The Committee **NOTED** that none of the decisions made by the Cabinet on 8 June 2021 had been called in.

10 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (-00-10-14)

The Chairman had the following announcements to make:

- He had already welcomed new members to the Committee
- The agenda before members today, looked a little different, it was hoped that the work planning item at the end of the agenda would be helpful to members

11 LEADERS ANNUAL REPORT (00-11-22)

The Committee had before it a *report of the Chief Executive providing members with an update on performance against the Corporate Plan and local service targets for 2020/21.

The Leader addressed the committee stating that although the Council had been impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic it had achieved much of what it had set out to do in line with the Corporate Plan.

Consideration was given to:

- Plans for social and affordable rented housing – 50 dwellings over 3 years, details were requested of social and rented housing plans over the next year – the Leader agreed to provide a written response.

- Town Centre Regeneration – the Tiverton Town Centre Plan had been full of aspirations but with no investment – what investment would be put into the Tiverton Town Centre Masterplan - the Leader responded stating that the authority would continue to bid for funding, again a written response would be provided.
- Whether the report should identify clear priorities for the coming year.
- Covid grant funding to businesses throughout the pandemic and whether local businesses had received the funding that they required – the Leader stated that there had been various schemes with various criteria, £36m had been distributed.
- SW Mutual Bank and whether regular updates would be provided – progress in the project had been delayed but regular updates would be provided when the scheme was progressed further.
- The delay in the town centre Wi-Fi project - an update would be provided.
- The redeployment of leisure staff during several periods of the pandemic – the versatility of the staff was commended and Members’ appreciation was recorded.
- Household waste had increased during the pandemic, had residual business waste reduced – this information was not collected, however a response would be provided.
- The increase in waste during lockdown and the fact that waste was just being put in black bags and not recycled and the need for a better education programme – it was felt that the 3 weekly waste trial would incorporate those issues and would be addressed as part of the trial.
- Climate Change and the corporate planting scheme to include replanting and maintenance and that the key performance indicators may need to be amended.
- The need for a tree planting scheme to be ready for the autumn – the Cabinet Member for the Environment stated that a plan was being worked up and highlighted the area near Morrisons in Tiverton where a piece of land had been identified.
- The need to advertise electric charging points for vehicles – on street charging facilities for domestic use was being looked into - an update would be provided.
- Whether electric charging points could be used for local buses – information would be sought with regard to this.
- Information was requested on the Tiverton Hydro Scheme,
- Targets for new social rented council houses – targets would be provided in the 2021/22 to 2023/24 performance indicators going to Cabinet
- The number of voids had been removed from the corporate performance targets but were being monitored by the Housing Service.

Note: *Report previously circulated, copy attached to minutes.

12 **DRAFT MDDC LITTER STRATEGY (00-54-07)**

The Committee had before it a *report of the Operations Manager for Street Scene inviting comment and feedback on the content and proposal of the draft Litter Strategy prior to the report and draft strategy being presented to the Environment Policy Development Group.

The Chairman indicated that he had spoken to several Members with regard to the content of the Litter Strategy and had passed his concerns on to officers.

The officer outlined the contents of the report stating that it was now common place for grants in respect of street cleansing and environmental initiatives to require a litter strategy to be supplied as part of the grant process. The council had a clear role to play and currently dedicated a large resource to providing and emptying bins and picking up litter in general. The Litter Strategy in line with national strategies covered:

- Education and awareness
- Better cleaning and litter infrastructure
- Improving enforcement.

The strategy would be a living document and reviewed on a yearly basis and key performance indicators would be monitored regularly.

Consideration was given to:

- The objectives as set out in the strategy
- The work of the District Officers and the number of officers available to take part in this type of work and the number of fixed penalty notices served in the last year
- The work taking place with Clean Devon Partnership
- The need for a unified strategy across Devon and the partnerships that were already in place
- The need to keep Devon tidy for local residents and tourists
- The use of the word 'continue' which was obviously not working and for the strategy to be precise so that all issues were covered
- The need for behavioural changes and that current messages with regard to recycling and litter were falling on deaf ears
- Schemes being run in different parts of the country which rewarded good behaviour with regard to littering and where charities could benefit, the use of bright coloured bins in town centres, opportunities for recycling on the go and reducing plastic packaging by working with local supermarkets
- The opportunity to put conditions on litter control in new developments
- There was no mention of overt cameras or the hours of patrol within the strategy - although overt cameras was discussed in the report
- The lack of resources to facilitate the strategy
- Issues with local takeaways and the amount of litter that arose from those premises
- Existing prosecution powers should be named and included in the strategy as well as who and how with regard to education
- The need to empower the public and the need for the strategy to have more detail
- Issues with litter beside the link road and that the officers were now aware of the schedule for cutting the verges, so that a litter pick could take place prior to cutting.

It was **AGREED** that all of the issues that had been raised would be considered and incorporated into a revised strategy to go before the Environment Policy Development Group.

Note: *Report previously circulated, copy attached to minutes.

13 **FORWARD PLAN (1-30-03)**

The Committee had before it and **NOTED** the *Forward Plan.

Discussion took place with regard to:

- The scrutiny of the Treasury Management Strategy and 3 Rivers Annual Accounts, it was agreed that this was a role for the Audit Committee
- The Housing Strategy and the formation of a Teckal Company was requested to be considered by the Scrutiny Committee. It was **AGREED** that a member briefing would be organised with regard to the formation of a Teckal Company prior to a report being worked up and any report would then be considered by the Scrutiny Committee. The Housing Strategy would be considered by the Homes Policy Development Group and Cabinet in its first round and then be considered by the Scrutiny Committee prior to it returning to the Homes Policy Development Group for recommendation to Cabinet.

Cllr G Barnell moved, seconded by Cllr A Wilce that the Housing Strategy be brought before the Scrutiny Committee following initial consideration by the Homes Policy Development Group and Cabinet and prior to the second round of consideration. Upon a vote being taken, this was **AGREED**

Note: *Plan previously circulated, copy attached to minutes.

14 **CURRENT MANAGEMENT CHANGES**

At the request of Cllr Barnell, the current management changes within the Council was requested to be discussed.

Cllr Barnell addressed the committee stating that he did not want to talk about individual posts but about the role of the Director for Place and the delivery of housing in the future, both in Cullompton (including the Garden Village) and Tiverton (including the Eastern Urban Extension) and affordable housing in the district.

The Chief Executive stated that he submitted a report on the Establishment annually to Council and that he had updated members in the interim with regard to the provision of a Director of Place. He spoke of the need to refocus on activity since the pandemic and that he was looking at a structure for delivery and the need to consider the opportunities for funding. He had addressed the strategic view with the proposed appointment of the new director and the rest of the work would follow, once the officer was in place

Consideration was given to the need to deliver affordable housing across the district and suggestions that had been made by the Chairman with regard to an overview of the Tiverton Eastern Urban Extension that was being considered by the Scrutiny Officer.

15 SCRUTINY OFFICER UPDATE (2-00-45)

In the absence of the Scrutiny Officer, the Member Services Manager reported the following:

- The **Programming Panel** had met to discuss how to agree a coordinated work programme for Scrutiny, Audit and the PDGs so that we ensure coordination between the 6 bodies, avoid duplication and consider where issues might sit best. The meeting had been very productive and Members agreed to go away and hold work programming sessions, before coming back together to discuss where issues should best sit. The slides put together from that session would be made available to the Scrutiny Committee
- **Work Programme Planning:** a date for a work programme planning session was being considered and this may take place in early July. Members were asked to think about items that they may like to bring to the session for discussion.
- **Menopause Working Group:** an update on the progress of the menopause recommendations would be brought to the next Scrutiny meeting. [this has since been corrected and an update will be available for the August committee]
- **Spotlight Review on Motion 564:** work was ongoing on the Spotlight Review on Motion 564. A date would be finalised and members informed.
- **Scrutiny training:** the officer had been in contact with the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny with regard to training for Scrutiny Members. A date for a remote training session in July was being considered.

16 WORK PLAN (2-02-53)

The Committee had before it a *proposed work plan for future meetings.

The Chairman indicated that the S106 Monitoring report had been delayed but would be available for the next meeting. The work programme set out a timetable of work and he would very much like to keep to the timetable. The Scrutiny Officer had developed a simple form which members could use to identify issues for discussion which would need to include clear outcomes

The following ideas were raised:

- Air quality actions plans for the towns and how the funding connected through S106 agreements led to investment in the towns rather than for example cycle paths for rural areas.
- A heritage policy and the need to reconcile the need for the conservation of listed buildings with increasing urgent climate goals.
- The Housing Strategy and the formation of a Teckal Company as considered earlier in the meeting
- Broadband issues
- Anaerobic Digesters and the need for a joint scrutiny approach across several district councils, rather than each local authority working in isolation on this issue.

Note * Plan previously circulated, copy attached to minutes

(The meeting ended at 4.34 pm)

CHAIRMAN