

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on 13 July 2015 at 2.00 pm

Present

Councillors

F J Rosamond (Chairman)
Mrs H Bainbridge, Mrs R Berry (substituting for Cllr C P Daw), Mrs J B Binks, R Evans (substituting for Cllr B A Moore), Mrs S Griggs, Mrs J Roach, Mrs E J Slade, T W Snow, N A Way and Mrs N Woollatt

Apologies

Councillor(s)

Mrs C P Daw, T G Hughes and B A Moore

Also Present

Councillor(s)

C R Slade

Also Present

Officer(s):

Samantha Bennion (Leisure Services Manager), Jill May (Head of HR and Development), Simon Newcombe (Public Health and Professional Services Manager), Liz Reeves (Head of Customer Services), Julia Stuckey (Member Services Officer) and Catherine Yandle (Internal Audit Team Leader)

17 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Apologies were received from Councillor Mrs C P Daw who was substituted by Councillor Mrs R Berry, Councillor B A Moore who was substituted by Councillor R Evans and from Councillor T G Hughes.

18 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no members of the public present.

19 **MEMBER FORUM**

There were no issues raised under this item.

20 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Subject to the following amendments the minutes of the last meeting were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

Page 8, that the sentence explaining the closure over the Christmas holidays be amended to say 'closed for an extended period over the Christmas holidays' and that

a bullet point be added to page 10 under the Legal Services update to say 'Managers having responsibility for their own service budget'.

21 DECISIONS OF THE CABINET

The Committee **NOTED** that none of the decisions made by the Cabinet at their last meeting had been called in.

22 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reminded the Committee that there would be a Special Meeting on 24 August 2015 at which the MP Neil Parish would be available to answer questions. He also informed the Committee that it seemed likely that Exeter University would be able to provide an intern to undertake work on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee.

23 CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY WELL BEING

The Committee had before it a position statement * from the Cabinet Member for Community Well Being, summarising the key issues in each of the areas within his portfolio. The Cabinet Member explained that he was also now responsible for Digital Transformation and ICT but as this had been a recent change he had not reported on them, however he was more than happy to do so at a future meeting.

Discussion regarding Leisure Services and Public Health included:

- Income was plateauing at Exe Valley as the gym was at capacity. An extension was planned which would increase stations from 50 to 100;
- As hoped, Lords Meadow was achieving a higher income following recent capital spend;
- Other issues outside of the Council's control had increased expenditure, such as auto enrolment to the pension scheme, higher national insurance contributions and increases to holiday pay;
- Solar panels were providing savings on energy bills;
- Zest members were currently contacted at the end of their membership to try and retain them, but a system that automated this process was being introduced. This system called 'customer journey' could also be used to send motivational messages;
- Car parking issues at Exe Valley had been relieved by recent development of the tennis court area;
- Satisfaction surveys at the Leisure Centres were undertaken on a regular basis;
- Exercise classes were showing a good return and were also popular with older clients who used them as a social event;
- The cafe at Exe Valley was about to reopen;

- The Public Health Officer explained that as part of the public health agenda this service was working with the leisure service. Priorities within the public health agenda included reducing cardiovascular disease. Targeted families were being given support and it was hoped that habits gained in childhood would be maintained in adulthood. The Leisure Services Manager informed the Committee that staff were currently being trained to provide cardio rehabilitation at all three sites.
- Leisure staff were qualified to deliver diet and nutritional advice but this was very labour intensive. It was acknowledged that customer satisfaction was greater if weight loss was achieved;
- Public Health were working with AcTIV, giving support whenever possible. AcTiv was a local organisation which had the aim of getting more Mid Devon people to take part in sport and exercise. It was **AGREED** that Members would receive minutes of AcTIV meetings in future;
- The restructure in Environmental Health had resulted in the two health teams being merged into one, with a single manager, and renamed Public Health. It had been identified that there were not enough staff to cover all areas and a post had recently been advertised for a food competent Environmental Health Officer to address this;
- Rural isolation, loneliness and emotional health could be included in the Corporate Plan.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and the Officers for their report.

Note: * Report previously circulated; copy attached to the signed Minutes.

24 **PERFORMANCE AND RISK (00:54:16)**

The Committee had before it a report * of the Head of Communities and Governance providing Members with an update on performance against the corporate plan and local service targets for 2014/15.

The Committee discussed the number of sick days taken by staff. The end of year performance showed that 9.21 days per officer were lost during the year due to sickness.

The Audit Team Leader explained that a lot of the sickness reported in the last year had been long term, due to illnesses such as cancer. She also explained that Human Resources had agreed to change the reporting procedure so that sickness over 15 days would be classed as long term (the figure had previously been 40 days). This would help to differentiate between long term absence due to illness, such as cancers and operations, and general short absences.

The Head of Human Resources outlined the current procedures in place for dealing with sickness, which included back to work interviews, phased returns and keeping in touch with staff during absence. Managers were issued with sickness reports when the 'trigger point' was reached. She also informed the Committee that Human

Resources organised health events, such as blood pressure monitoring, to encourage good health in the workforce.

Discussion took place regarding:

- A staff survey would be issued which would help identify areas of stress;
- Sick pay and national terms and conditions;
- Home working and the advantages/disadvantages of this;
- Incentives and benefits;
- The breakdown of sickness type;
- The balance between cutting staffing levels and creating stress.

Discussion also took place regarding the Planning Service:

- The time taken to implement and review the Article 4 Direction for Cullompton;
- Poor performance in some areas of the planning service;
- The staffing issues and restructure that had been put in place to rectify this;
- Joint working with North Devon for Building Control services;
- Performance for enforcement site visits, and the fact that although the initial visit may take place within the target of 15 days, follow up actions often took a long time;
- The High Street Innovation Fund had allocated monies for enhancement of shop fronts in Tiverton Town Centre but this had not yet taken place;

It was **AGREED** that the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration be invited to attend a meeting of this Committee to discuss the issues raised.

It was **AGREED** that a report be brought to this Committee outlining plans and progress for the Tiverton Pannier Market.

It was **RECOMMENDED** to the Cabinet that the following area be identified as a matter of concern:

Performance for Listed Buildings and Conservation area consents.

(Proposed by Councillor Mrs N Woollatt and seconded by Councillor Mrs J Roach).

Note: * Report previously circulated; copy attached to the signed Minutes.

25 **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chairman explained that the list * attached to the agenda had been compiled from items identified by Members at the last meeting when he had asked them to make note of matters of concern that had been highlighted by the public when they were canvassing during the election.

The Committee worked through the list and discussion took place regarding:

The Manor House Hotel, Cullompton

It was agreed that the Head of Planning and Regeneration had kept Members informed. However, Members felt that the situation now needed to be resolved in order to save problems of grid lock in the town centre and access for the fire service. It was **AGREED** that the Head of Customer Services would discuss the matter at the next Management Team meeting with the intention of convening a meeting of District Councillors, County Councillors, Town Councillors, Highway Officers and relevant County/District Council Officers.

Devolution

Joint working with other authorities and whether this was providing value for money.

Waste Service

Changes to the waste service and how they had bedded in.

Broadband

The roll out of Broadband in rural areas and how this was progressing.

Town Improvement

The under-use of the Pannier Market

Moving Forward

Exploring why it sometimes took a long time for recommendations that had been agreed by Members to be implemented by Officers. It was **AGREED** that Members would be asked to provide specific incidents of this.

Value for Money

Whether or not cutting services, such as closing toilets, was actually saving money in the long term or whether the implications were that these cuts would affect future income within the District.

It was **AGREED** that the Chairman would consider the areas raised to identify items for the work programme.

It was **RESOLVED** that a working group be set up to look at the effects of cuts on outcomes/value for money. Membership of the Group to comprise Cllrs Mrs J Binks, B Evans, Mrs S Griggs, F J Rosamond and Mrs J Roach.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

26 UPDATES AND ITEMS TO NOTE REGARDING OUTSTANDING ITEMS

There were no updates given.

27 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

Economic Development
Digital Transformation

(The meeting ended at 4.45 pm)

CHAIRMAN