

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on 2 November 2015 at 2.00 pm

Present

Councillors

F J Rosamond (Chairman)
Mrs H Bainbridge, Mrs J B Binks,
Mrs C P Daw, Mrs S Griggs, T G Hughes,
B A Moore, Mrs J Roach, Mrs E J Slade,
T W Snow, N A Way and Mrs N Woollatt

Also Present

Councillor(s)

R L Stanley, D R Coren, C J Eginton and P J Heal

Also Present

Officer(s):

Liz Reeves (Head of Customer Services), Jill May (Head of HR and Development), Julia Stuckey (Member Services Officer) and Rachel Jenman (Town Centre Manager)

Also in

Attendance:

Mr T Hogg, Police and Crime Commissioner

72 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

There were no apologies given.

73 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

Referring to item 7 on the agenda Councillor S Wensley (Lapford Parish Council) asked if Mr Hogg could ensure that in future policing in rural areas would go beyond a basic response service to serious incidents, that in an attempt to cover the needs of rural communities Mr Hogg would look to improve recruitment, training & deployment of special constables from these areas - particularly Parish Constables as in the pattern already established in Northamptonshire and that Mr Hogg could confirm that he had been receiving positive support from our constituency MP Mr Mel Stride.'

The Chairman indicated that the answers to these questions would be provided at item 7.

74 **MEMBER FORUM**

There were no issues raised under this item.

75 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

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

76 DECISIONS OF THE CABINET

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

77 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman informed the Committee that an update he had written regarding recent training provided by the Senior Scrutiny Officer from the City of Westminster Borough Council had been circulated with WIS.

He reminded Members that the Reviewing the Effects of Efficiency Measures Working Group had requested that Members take a short questionnaire with them to Town and Parish Council meetings, paper copies of the survey were available to take away.

The Chairman also informed the Committee that to date there had been no interest in the Scrutiny intern placement from students at Exeter University. The University would be asked to advertise the vacancy again.

78 POLICE COMMISSIONER

The Chairman welcomed Mr T Hogg, Police and Crime Commissioner to the meeting.

Mr Hogg informed the Committee that he had been in post for one term and that elections would be taking place again in May 2016. He explained that the Force was facing a significant level of cuts to their budget. He considered that Devon and Cornwall was a good Force with dedicated officers and that victims were at the centre of everything. He explained that a lot of strategic work took place in areas such as terrorism, child sex exploitation and fraud. Devon and Cornwall was the largest policing area in the country and included rural, urban and coastal areas.

The Commissioner explained some of the challenges facing the Force. He reported that overall crime levels were falling which should be considered as good news; however only 25% of work carried out by the police was crime, a significant amount of time was spent dealing with other areas such as mental health issues. He also informed the Committee that traditional crime was changing from areas such as burglary and theft to areas such as child sexual exploitation, fraud, fire arms, drugs and organised crime. He further explained that it was no longer possible for the force to deal with all reports of petrol station drive-aways, non-suspicious deaths and shop lifting from large outlets and that those companies were being encouraged to put their own measures in place.

The Commissioner discussed the funding mechanism that was in place for policing and the way that national funding was distributed amongst the areas. As an example he informed the Committee that licensing funding was calculated by the number of licenced bars in the area divided by the surface area of the policing area. This resulted in £27m more in West Yorkshire than in Devon and Cornwall, despite having the same number of bars but due to the smaller area.

Mr Hogg indicated that the anticipated cuts to funding could result in the loss of 12-1300 jobs, the removal of the PCSO role, probably no neighbourhood police and road policing would be diminished. He was attending a meeting in London the following day where the funding mechanism was being discussed and he informed the Committee that some forces were considering a judicial review of the Home Office and its procedures.

The Commissioner informed the Committee that consultation would be taking place to find out if the public would be prepared to pay more to off-set some of the cuts. He explained that a 1% increase on the Council Tax to the precept for policing would provide £1m to the force. He explained that he needed to be able to demonstrate to the public how this funding would be used. This could lead to a referendum on a council tax increase.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The 25/75% split between crime work and non-crime work carried out by officers;
- The need for areas such as mental health to be dealt with appropriately to save police time;
- The benefits of joint commissioning and the potential benefits of reducing the number of forces to lower overheads;
- Special Police Officers and the need to put a proper volunteer programme in place to encourage volunteers in specialist areas. A number of Special Constables had been recruited into the force in recent years so numbers had reduced;
- Concerns that the precept would be raised for policing when other bodies such as county and district councils were also facing cuts to funding;
- The potential loss of PCSO Officers and the benefits that they had provided to the force;
- The need for town centres to feel safe in order that improvements to them are not spoiled by retail crime, anti-social behaviour, drug offences;
- The problems encountered with the 101 service and measures that were now in place to improve it;
- The use of drones by the force and the issues of privacy when they were used illegally by the public;
- The monitoring of sex offenders;
- Support received from the local MP Neil Parish;
- The future of Community Safety Partnerships;

- 24 hour drinking and the impact that this had on local communities and policing.

The Chairman thanked Mr Hogg for his time and wished him luck with the funding formula.

79 **MEMBER DEVELOPMENT UPDATE (1:32:00)**

The Committee had before it a report * from the Member Services Manager updating it regarding Member Development.

The Member Services Manager informed the Committee that the South West Charter for Member Development had originally been awarded to the Council in November 2010 following a lengthy evidence gathering exercise which also included Members and senior officers attending interviews with the examining body. Reassessment to secure the Charter for a further three years took place on 3 March 2014.

As a commitment to the Charter, Member Services Officers worked alongside the Member Development Group to continue to address Members' development issues through briefings on key issues, one to one Personal Development Plan interviews which helped to identify a Member's specific training/development requirements and specialist presentations at Committee meetings.

The report informed the Committee of training events that had taken place between May and September 2015 year which included induction sessions for new Members following the elections in May.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The various times of day that briefings could be held to encourage Members to attend;
- The importance of informing Members when IT systems were going to be changed;
- The potential benefits of using the Leisure Centre at Crediton as a satellite for training and the suggestion to share briefings electronically so that they could be watched at home;
- The possibility that established Members could provide training to new Members regarding ward work to let them know what would be expected of them;
- If there was anything that could be done to bridge the gap between Members and Town and Parish Councils, such as an update sheet regarding what is happening in the District.

Note:- Report * previously circulated and attached to Minutes.

80 STAFF SURVEY (1:50:00)

At the request of the Committee the Head of Human Resources and Development provided an overview of the Staff Survey that had been undertaken during August and September 2015.

The Officer informed the Committee that a report and action plan would be presented to them in January but that in the meantime she was providing a verbal update.

The staff survey had taken place in the last couple of months and 280 staff had responded. The survey contained questions and free text.

Issues raised in the responses had included noise, heat and cold in the building, communication, perception of Management Team and also included some comments regarding Members.

The Head of Human Resources and Development would forward an electronic link to Members so that they could review the responses.

The Officer reported that on a positive front staff had reported that they felt proud to work for the Council, had satisfaction with their role and had the tools that they needed to do their job. Flexi time was well regarded by staff.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Staff were not expected to give their name but could choose to identify their Head of Service;
- There were approximately 600 staff, including temps, and 280 had responded to the survey;
- An action plan needed to be produced and complaints acted upon to encourage staff to complete surveys in the future;
- Open plan offices created issues with noise;
- The survey would be run again in 2016 to identify changes.
- Briefings had been held with staff to discuss the results of the survey.

81 TIVERTON TOWN CENTRE (2:03:00)

At the request of the Committee the Chief Executive and the Town Centre Manager were in attendance to answer questions regarding the future of Tiverton town centre and liaison with local businesses.

The Town Centre Manager gave a brief overview of the work that she had undertaken since taking up post and the plans that she had for the future.

The Officer informed the Committee that she had been looking at the street scene and was working with other services to ensure that the town centre was clean, that trees were pruned and that street furniture was in the right place. She had looked at

how people moved around the town, at the dwelling areas, focus points, pedestrian and traffic flow. She aimed to return Tiverton to a market town and create a destination for local shopping, galleries and artists.

The Town Centre Manager had met with interested parties such as the Town Council, residents groups, charities, the Portas Group and local businesses with regard to creating a Town Centre Working Group. This would be a link with the local community and would provide valuable feedback. She had also met with most local businesses.

The Officer explained that security was an issue with a lack of police support in the town. She was investigating the CCTV provision for Tiverton and aimed to help local businesses work together to prevent stock loss.

Events such as the Balloon Festival, Feast of St James and the Literary Festival had been put in place and others, such as a return to the River Exe Struggle, were being planned for the future.

The Officer was working to develop a strong website with a Facebook and Twitter presence. This would include the market and could potentially lead to a town centre app with 'virtual' shopping.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The need for similar plans to take place in Crediton and Cullompton;
- The timetable included some developments which would start soon and others that would require investment in the future;
- The Masterplan, which would be produced following a report which recommended the enhancement of Phoenix Lane, the Pannier Market and market Walk;
- Potential improvements to the cinema;
- The possibility of working with PETROC in the future.

It was **AGREED** that a report detailing plans for the improvement of Cullompton and Crediton Town Centres be presented at the next meeting of the Committee.

Note:- Councillor S Griggs declared a personal interest as Chair of the Portas Group.

82 PARTNERSHIP WORKING

The Head of Communities and Governance had requested that the Committee discuss partnership working and how successful this had proved at other authorities.

This item was deferred to the next meeting of the Committee and Members requested that a written report be provided.

83 **RIPA**

Councillor Mrs J Roach had requested that the Committee consider the RIPA report in terms of effective scrutiny.

Discussion took place regarding RIPA and the fact that the policy, when it was due for review, had been reported to the Community Well Being Policy Development Group prior to Cabinet, as agreed in the Policy Framework. The Chief Executive confirmed that the Scrutiny Committee would be responsible for scrutinising any RIPA cases that took place to ensure adherence to the Policy, but that there had been none in the last three years.

It was **AGREED** to defer this item to the next meeting of the Committee in order that further discussion could take place.

Note:- Report previous circulated.

84 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

Anaerobic Digesters
Impact assessment on proposed grant cuts
Cullompton and Crediton Town Centre Improvements
Tiverton Pannier Market
Update on actions Neil Parish

(The meeting ended at 5.15 pm)

CHAIRMAN