

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on 18 July 2016 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors

F J Rosamond (Chairman)
Mrs H Bainbridge, Mrs C P Daw,
Mrs S Griggs, T G Hughes, Mrs J Roach,
T W Snow, N A Way, Mrs G Doe,
Mrs A R Berry, R Evans and J L Smith

Also Present

Councillor(s)

Mrs B M Hull and C J Eginton

Also Present

Officer(s):

Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Amy Tregellas (Head of Communities and Governance and Monitoring Officer), Jill May (Head of HR and Development), Lee Chester (Leisure Centre Manager), Rachel Jenman (Town Centre Manager), Alan Ottey (Market Manager) and Julia Stuckey (Member Services Officer)

16 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

There were no apologies given.

17 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

Mr John Massey, referring to a decision made at the Planning Committee meeting held on 8th June, when a proposal to demolish Castle Primary School was made, stated that Teignbridge District Council (Heritage Advice) and Historic England evidence had advised that the case for demolition had not been made. He asked why this advice was ignored and asked why, since the Education Funding Agency (EFA) had refused to make public the financial case for any course of action other than demolition did the Planning Committee vote for the proposal, about which an assessment of value for money could not be made, or more simply why did the authority submit to EFA's blackmail?

The Chairman informed Mr Massey that his question would be answered in writing.

18 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Subject to the removal of the words 'applications for agricultural workers dwellings' from the final bullet point on page 10, the minutes of the last meeting were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

19 **MEMBER FORUM**

There were no issues raised under this item.

20 DECISIONS OF THE CABINET

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

21 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reminded the Committee that the meeting scheduled for Monday 15th August had been cancelled and replaced by a Special Meeting on Friday 19th August at which Neil Parish MP would be in attendance. The Chairman asked Members to provide questions in advance of the meeting.

22 LEADERS ANNUAL REPORT (00:08:00)

The Committee had before it a report * from the Leader which highlighted key points from the last 12 months.

Discussion took place regarding:

- 'WiserMoney' was in its third year and the figures quoted within the report covered that period of time;
- Three officers had been transferred to the Department of Works and Pensions and some tasks that they used to carry out had been absorbed into the remaining team;
- Freedom of Information requests that had been answered were not on the internet and this could result in duplicate enquiries;
- The number of businesses that had received help through LEADER funding;
- The funding provided to the Crediton Chamber of Commerce and the fact that the Ward Member had not been invited to their meetings;
- Parking in Cullompton on market days;
- The need for all Members to be kept informed regarding any overspend;
- New build council houses and the type of rent they generated;
- The level of income from the New Homes Bonus;
- Difficulties in accessing the Planning Portal on the website and plans to improve it;
- The need to communicate with those that did not want to use technology;
- Leisure and the change to the structure which had allowed it to become business focused;
- Delays in adopting the Local Plan and the risk of speculative development;

- Members concerns regarding the North West Cullompton extension proposed residential road/by-pass and ongoing concerns regarding the relief road at the Kingfisher development;
- The need for Devon County Council to listen to local people regarding Anaerobic Digesters;
- The successful transfer of waste and recycling services to a new combined depot at Willand and improvements to recycling services which had resulted in a reduction in waste to landfill;
- The Enforcement Policy and whether it would be better to rename it as an 'education' policy rather than enforcement;
- Car parks and why car parking tickets state that they are valid until 2.00am when the car park is closed overnight;
- Car parking charges and the impact of recent increases. It was **AGREED** that car parking charges would be on the next agenda of the Committee in order that vends, income and expenditure could be discussed;
- The impact of increased parking charges on the town centres.

The Chairman thanked the Leader for his report and asked that in future it indicate successes and difficulties and the priorities in the Local Plan.

Notes:- i) Report previously circulated and attached to the Minutes.

ii) Cllr Mrs J Roach declared a personal interest as she was applying for LEADER funding for the Room4U project.

23 TIVERTON PANNIER MARKET AND TOWN CENTRE (00:49:55)

At the request of the Committee the Town Centre Manager and Pannier Market Manager were in attendance to provide an update regarding plans and progress for the Tiverton Pannier Market and Tiverton Town Centre.

The Town Centre Manager provided some information regarding performance in the town centre explaining that Tiverton had a shop vacancy rate of 5.4% with the national average being 12% but was high in its number of charity shops at 6% when the national average was 2.3%.

The officer explained that she was meeting with the Street Scene team the next day to discuss how the town centre could be improved and informed the Committee that several public litter picks had been undertaken in the last year to raise awareness. Litter bins were due to be painted and she was in discussions with Devon County Council regarding lamp posts.

CCTV equipment had been replaced and now had better coverage. It had been used to identify suspects in a recent vandalism incident. The town had been branded into separate areas to try and promote the retail areas.

The Market Manager informed the Committee that he had been involved with markets and town centre management for a number of years and during his first four months in post he had introduced a survey at the market, was measuring footfall, was building relationships with traders, had introduced monthly meetings, had organised a light clean-up of the area, had introduced banners to brighten up the area and had started to introduce events.

A monthly report on the health of the market would be produced and this would indicate footfall, which could be affected by the weather. Country markets, a WI market, a knit and natter group and trader incentives had been introduced. The market had recently taken part in a 'love your local market' event in which 9 countries took part including nearly 1000 markets in the UK.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Reports had been prepared for the Community Well Being Policy Development Group regarding the Town Centre Action Plan and the Tiverton Market Strategy. These reports would be circulated to Members of the Committee;
- Levels of support provided to Crediton and Cullompton;
- Bicycle racks had been provided by the PORTAS group for use at the market but had not yet been installed;
- The possible re-introduction of Farmers Markets and their success in Crediton and Cullompton;
- The possibility of investing in the market.

The Head of Communities and Governance informed the Committee that meetings had recently taken place with the Conservation Officer regarding the Listed Building and it had been confirmed that the inside of the building could be painted any colour. The area would receive a deep clean and plans were in place to make it more vibrant and colourful with the use of canopies and awnings.

Note:- Cllr N A Way declared a personal interest as he was a Crediton Town Councillor.

24 REVIEWING THE EFFECTS OF INCREASES TO LEISURE CENTRE CHARGING (01:33:20)

The Committee had before it a report * from the Cost of Efficiencies Working Group and a recommendation that the Scrutiny Committee undertake a review of Leisure Service price increases, based on appendix 1 of the report.

The Leisure Centre Manager informed the Committee that a report regarding Leisure Services was being prepared for the Community Well Being Policy Development Group. This report would be circulated to Members of the Committee.

The Officer reminded Members that there had been several recent changes with the leisure service which included an officer restructure, changes to hours and changes to pricing.

In quarter 1 income had increased on the same period last year from £509k to £564k, an increase of £55k.

Changes to membership showed that there had been 1300 additional visits from members using a 60+ membership but that visits from those using concessionary memberships had dropped by 1200. Average usage at this time of year was 75000 a month.

Membership numbers had reduced for those paying annually, increased for 60+ memberships, reduced for concessionary memberships and increased for junior concessionary memberships. Some concessionary members had upgraded in order that their usage wasn't restricted to non-peak times. Concessionary memberships were being audited on a regular basis to ensure that the customer was still entitled.

The Leisure Services was £15k below target for the first quarter but had moved forward with regards to performance.

The officer informed Members that benchmarking with neighbouring providers had shown that despite the recent increase to concessionary admissions they were still cheap in comparison.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Encouraging the public to take part in activities that did not need to cost a lot such as running and cycling;
- The task of providing a service for the public but also balancing the budget;
- The recent restructure had taken managers off shift in order that they could work on improving the business;
- The Public Health aim to help local people be fitter and healthier.

Note: - Report previously circulated and attached to Minutes.

25 **DEVOLUTION (01:55:32)**

The Cabinet had before it a * report from the Chief Executive seeking agreement on the principle of a Combined Authority for the Heart of the South West, as set out in the Prospectus for Productivity, as the basis for negotiation with Government towards a Devolution Deal for the area.

The Chief Executive outlined the contents of the report stating that the principle was to create a Combined Authority and that the report had gone to all of the partner authority members. The purpose of the report was to ask for this Council's endorsement to continue negotiations.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The possible creation of another layer of bureaucracy;
- The future of the LEP;
- Potential changes to devolution following BREXIT;
- Communication and transport problems in the South West;
- The need for a proactive approach in terms of what was good for Mid Devon.

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

ii) Cllr T W Snow declared a personal interest as he was a Member of the LEP.

26 **CORPORATE STRAP LINE (02:09:57)**

The Head of Communities and Governance informed the Committee that following concerns from Members regarding the Council's vision in the Corporate Plan, alternatives had been sought from officers. A proposed alternative to the original vision "Making the Most of Mid Devon" was "Your Council, Your Future".

It was **RECOMMENDED** to Council that "Your Council, Your Future" be adopted as the Council's Vision in the Corporate Plan.

(Proposed by Cllr Mrs J Roach and seconded by Cllr FJ Rosamond)

27 **SAFEGUARDING (02.12.24)**

The Head of Communities and Governance informed the Committee that she had been working with the district leads regarding Safeguarding and that a joint policy had been taken to the last meeting of the Community Well Being Policy Development Group and subsequently approved by Cabinet. The group were now working on joint procedures for Safeguarding, there were current procedures in place but this was about streamlining across Devon to share good practice. The Group were also developing a joint training programme and the officer was in the process of formalising a training session for all relevant staff. She also informed the Committee that she would be attending team meetings of services that could come across Safeguarding concerns for either children or adults. Online INSIGHT training would be updated and Members would be asked to complete this. A Member Briefing would be put in place for the autumn following the next meeting of the Safeguarding leads in October. The group would be meeting with the Devon Safeguarding Boards leads and would highlight to them the need to look at the whole family. They would be asking how 'Early Help' could fit in with Safeguarding and the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

28 **ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT - EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Committee were informed that any discussion relating to an individual contained within the report was likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information. Having considered the sensitive nature of the report it was:

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the next item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 respectively of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, namely information relating to any individual.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

29 **SAFEGUARDING - REVIEW (02:22:17)**

The Committee **AGREED** to return to Part 1 and that members of the public and press be allowed to return to the meeting.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Following a meeting of the Committee held on 4 January 2016 it had been **RESOLVED** to invite the Chairman of the Devon Safeguarding Board and a senior officer from Devon County Council to attend a meeting of the Committee. This had not yet happened.
- The failure of the authorities concerned to deal with an incident where several unnamed children were involved rather than one named child:
- The risk that children could 'fall through the net' when several agencies were involved;
- The need to reinforce closer collaboration;
- Housing Services at Mid Devon acted appropriately and staff should be congratulated but the question was raised whether or not evening visits by officers may have helped to identify issues earlier.

It was **AGREED** that the Head of Communities and Governance would report the above points to the Safeguarding Hub.

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

Digitalisation for Members
Whistleblowing Update
RIPA 6 monthly update
Car parking update
Neil Parish MP
Shop Front Project
Equalities/Hate Crime

(The meeting ended at 5.40 pm)

CHAIRMAN