

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **ECONOMY POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP** held on 8 March 2018 at 5.30 pm

Present

Councillors

Mrs B M Hull (Chairman)
Mrs A R Berry, Mrs C Collis, J M Downes,
R Evans, S G Flaws, F J Rosamond and
Mrs N Woollatt

Apology

Councillor

T G Hughes

Also Present

Councillor

R J Chesterton

Also Present

Officers

Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Jenny Clifford (Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration), Adrian Welsh (Group Manager for Growth, Economy and Delivery), John Bodley-Scott (Economic Development Team Leader), Chris Shears (Economic Development Officer) and Sarah Lees (Member Services Officer)

64 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Apologies were received from Cllr T G Hughes.

65 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

There were no declarations of interest given.

66 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no members of the public present.

67 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2018 were confirmed as a true and accurate record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

68 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman had the following announcements to make:

- This would be the last meeting of the Group in this municipal year.
- The next informal workshop would be held on Monday 23rd April at 5.30pm.

69 APPRENTICESHIPS - PETROC PRESENTATION (00:02:49)

Huw Davies, the Assistant Principal Employer Engagement, Innovation and Enterprise from Petroc attended the meeting to provide the Group with information relating to Apprenticeships.

The following background information was provided:

- The reform of Apprenticeships was announced 6/7 years ago by the Government with the intention of having 3 million Apprentices by 2020. This was in response to such issues as productivity. A further reform was due to come into effect from 1 May 2018, however, full details were not yet available and it was a changing situation.
- The initial reform had had a significant impact on the role of employers, the majority of whom had been large employers such as Rolls Royce.
- A Levy (tax) had been introduced for any business with a pay bill of over £3m and 0.5% had to be paid towards the levy. The example was given of a local hospital having to spend £650k on Apprenticeships.
- If a business had less than 50 employees and wanted to take on 16/17 year old this would be free.
- 20% of an Apprentices time must be given to learning and sometimes this was a challenge for employers, however, this did not have to be classroom based but could be 'mentoring' for example.
- There was a move away from traditional 'frameworks' and more of a move towards 'standards' and formal qualifications were not always a mandatory part of this.
- Anyone could become an Apprentice, there were no age restrictions.
- The vast majority of growth was in white collar work.
- There were various levels of Apprenticeship, Level 2 was akin to GCSE level, Level 3 was akin to A levels, Level 4 was equivalent to a Higher National Certificate and Level 5 was equivalent to a degree.
- Petroc had taken on 80 Apprentices and there was significant interest within the younger generation to take up an Apprenticeship if it meant they could get a degree whilst also being paid to do a job.
- Universities had become very active in promoting Apprenticeships.
- An Apprenticeship, at whatever level, had to be taken on for a minimum of a year and one week.
- The Government were pushing for more engineering and construction placements. Project Management was also encouraged.
- The Council had met all of its targets in relation to Apprenticeships last year and was working towards it for the current year. It was sometimes a challenge to create a post that created value to the business but also to the Apprentice.
- The Apprenticeship scheme was heavily audited and monitored by OFSTED.
- Finance based Apprenticeships were rapidly growing especially those resulting in a qualification.
- It was important for schools to emphasise that GCSE's and A levels were not the only option, Apprenticeships provided a worthwhile alternative.

It was requested that information be passed to the Committee Clerk in relation to a list of the different types of Apprenticeships offered by Petroc and the numbers of Apprenticeship posts in each area.

70 **PERFORMANCE AND RISK FOR 2017/18 (00:39:23)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED** a report * from the Chief Executive and Director of Growth providing it with an update on performance against the Corporate Plan and local service targets for 2017/18 as well as providing an update on the key business risks.

Brief discussion took place regarding:

- Whether there was still a problem with the amount of commercial land supply. It was explained that an Employment Land Review had been undertaken to inform the emerging Local Plan and Forward Planning are currently re-evaluating this work to ensure it is still fit for purpose. It was also noted that once the Local Plan is adopted that will release further sites. Similarly the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan will also be identifying additional sites for commercial development through its processes. There was increasing demand for space which was seen as positive.
- There was also recognition that commercial development can occur in a range of locations, not just on those sites allocated in development plans, provided that they are consistent with policies.
- A lot of the work that the Economic Development Officer undertook was to try and find spaces that worked for businesses.

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

71 **MEETING MANAGEMENT**

The Chairman informed the Group that she would be taking the EHOD item and the Broadband item together since they were closely linked.

72 **UPDATE ON THE EXETER AND HEART OF DEVON (EHOD) SHARED ECONOMIC STRATEGY (00:43:00)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Chief Executive and Director of Growth updating Members on progress with regard to the first year actions of the Exeter and Heart of Devon (EHOD) Shared Economic Strategy.

The Group were informed that the EHOD partnership was working well with each local authority still leading on various themes. Mid Devon was leading on the business transformation agenda although there were opportunities to work collaboratively across the whole EHOD area.

The Council had supported the development of a bid for £2.4m to deliver gigabit broadband vouchers to the business community. The outcome of this would not be known until mid to late spring but it aimed to make it affordable for business communities to significantly improve the quality of their broadband speeds.

The EHOD Strategy had recently won a national award from the Institute of Economic Development, as the 'Most Innovative Strategy in the UK'. The Group felt that this ought to be commended.

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

73 **DESTINATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR MID DEVON (00:50:43)**

The Group had before it a report * from the Chief Executive and Director of Growth presenting it with the finalised Destination Management Strategy.

It was explained that ultimately the Strategy would have an Action Plan but this would also need to take into consideration the Economic Strategy therefore it would be premature to present it at this stage.

Brief discussion took place regarding:

- A finding from the 2016 visitor survey which stated that the lowest satisfaction rates were for nightlife/evening entertainment and availability of public toilets. Officers would be coming back to Members with ideas as to how change in this area could be realised.
- The Visit Devon website did not have anything relating to shopping in the major towns of Mid Devon and this was seen as not being reflective of a the quality shops on offer.
- Gold Street had recently been voted the 'trendiest' street in Devon.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that the Destination Management Strategy be recommended to Council for approval.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

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

74 **MARKET SCHEDULE OF TOLLS (00:55:55)**

The Market Manager provided a verbal update to the Group on the Market Schedule of Tolls which included the following:

- The new format of tolls would commence on 1 April 2018. Traders had had a chance to comment but generally the new format had been well received.
- It was difficult to predict whether all traders would keep up their payments.
- A lot of traders were taking up standing orders as they received a 10% discount.
- Direct debit was the preferred option but this was currently not possible although it was being looked into.
- Some new traders were moving away from traditional market options and more towards stalls offering crafts and artisan foods.
- The Cabinet had earlier that day approved the Tiverton Town Centre Masterplan which included some initial considerations about what could be done with the market. The Masterplan would shortly be going out for consultation.
- It was reported that several coach loads of people had visited Tiverton and its market recently and that this was an increasing trend, parking was a challenge however.

It was requested that the Committee Clerk find out why it was not possible for traders to pay by direct debit, what was being done about it and report back to the Group.

75 BROADBAND UPDATE

Discussion relating to Broadband had taken place under the EHOD item.

76 CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2017/18 (01:09:05)

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a draft report * by the Chairman on the work of the Group since May 2017, a final copy of this report would be submitted to Council on 25 April 2018.

The Group wished to pass on its thanks to the Economic Development Team for their hard work in submitting a large number of bids throughout the course of the year.

Note: - Report previously circulated and attached to Minutes.

77 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (01:10:25)

No further items were identified for the next meeting other than those already listed in the work programme.

(The meeting ended at 6.40 pm)

CHAIRMAN