MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on 6 November 2017 at 2.15 pm

Present Councillors F J Rosamond (Chairman)
Mrs H Bainbridge, Mrs A R Berry,
Mrs C P Daw, Mrs G Doe, T G Hughes,
Mrs B M Hull, F W Letch, Mrs J Roach,
T W Snow and N A Way

Also Present Councillor(s) P H D Hare-Scott

Also Present Officer(s): Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Kathryn Tebbey (Group Manager for Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), Jenny Clifford (Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration), John Bodley-Scott (Economic Development Team Leader), Sally Gabriel (Member Services Manager) and Julia Stuckey (Member Services Officer)

73 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no apologies given.

74 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from the members of the public present.

75 MEMBER FORUM

Cllr Roach highlighted a letter that had been in the Tiverton Gazette in the previous week regarding the purchase of property in Tiverton. She informed the Committee that the financial monitoring that went to Cabinet the day after Council included rental income for the properties and an increase to the maintenance budget for them. Cllr Roach queried why this was in the financial monitoring prior to the decision being made. The Chief Executive explained that the income was not shown in the financial monitoring reports, but in the draft budget for 18/19 which was based on best estimates at that point in time – and which would be subject to change as the numerous assumptions and estimates were finalised prior to adoption by council in February. The Group Manager for Legal Services confirmed that the purchase of the property had not yet been completed.

Cllr T W Snow raised a matter of a local resident that had received a reminder regarding the garden waste collection scheme in the month prior to the payment being due, which was followed up by a reminder. He asked why this was necessary.

Cllr T W Snow raised a matter regarding amendments to Minutes and the Group Manager for Legal Services informed him that she had found a solution which allowed an addendum to be displayed.

76 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

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

77 DECISIONS OF THE CABINET

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

78 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman drew attention to a planning appeal that Willand Parish Council had referred to at the last meeting of the Committee. He informed Members that the authority had won the appeal.

The AD Working Group had been on a visit to an AD plant in Exeter and one in Mid Devon, which had been extremely useful.

Members were reminded that an informal workshop had been scheduled for 20th November at 2.00pm in the Phoenix Chamber.

Following discussion with Mel Stride MP at a meeting of the Committee earlier in the year an appointment had now been made for a delegation to meet with the Housing Minister Mr Sharma on 13th November to discuss the 5 year land supply. The Chairman, Chief Executive, Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration and the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration would be attending.

79 TIVERTON TOWN CENTRE 00:16:48

At its meeting on 11 September 2017, the Scrutiny Committee noted the number of policies and action plans which appeared to have been on-going for a number of years. In particular, in relation to Tiverton Town Centre, the Scrutiny Committee passed the following resolution:

To recommend to the Cabinet that it acts upon the action plans to improve the Tiverton Town Centre and Pannier Market that were approved in 2011.

At its meeting on 28 September the Cabinet **RESOLVED** that a briefing paper be produced for a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee highlighting the work that was taking place with regard to Tiverton Town Centre. The Committee had before it and **NOTED** this briefing paper *.

The Economic Development Team Leader outlined the contents of the report, explaining that it contained a summary of actions that had happened since 2011 which would result in the development of a masterplan and a supplementary planning document.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The amount of money that had been spent on consultants in the development of the masterplan;
- Dates that the masterplan would be presented to the Cabinet;
- Consultation that would take place;
- Stakeholders and consultation with them;
- Signage within the town and from the A361 and restrictions that were in place regarding this.

Cllr Roach asked the Committee to note that the first series of street food markets had been organised by the PORTAS Fund and not by the Council.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Scrutiny Committee would review the Masterplan.

(Proposed by Cllr Mrs J Roach and seconded by Cllr N A Way)

Note: - Briefing paper * previously circulated and attached to Minutes.

80 GYPSY AND TRAVELLER PITCH PROVISION 00:29:20

The Committee had before it a report * from the Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration in response to its request for an update on the position of the Council regarding gypsy and traveller pitch provision.

The officer explained that the authority was required to have a 5 year supply of deliverable sites, as well as developing fair and effective strategies to meet longer term needs. The Council also had a public sector equalities duty (PSED) under the Equalities Act 2010. She explained that the Government had published the Planning Policy for Traveller sites (PPTS) in August 2015. It sat alongside the National Planning Policy Framework and provided specific advice on planning for traveller sites, and replaced earlier advice dated 2012. The PPTS defined gypsies and travellers as: *'Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependants' educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling show people or circus people travelling together as such.'*

The officer outlined statistical information within the report.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The level of private pitch provision within the district;
- Provision for travelling show persons;
- The nearest public site provision could be found at Haldon Hill and Bridgewater;

- A desire within the Local Plan to obtain a public site, which would need to be managed;

- The annual gypsy count that took place to measure the number of pitches nationally;

- Local residents often let officers know if there were breaches of conditions on sites.

It was **AGREED** that the Chairman would send a letter to the Cabinet Member for Planning, Economy and Regeneration stressing the need to provide a public site within the District.

Note: - Report previously circulated and attached to Minutes.

81 **CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE 00:51:31**

The Committee had before it and **NOTED** a briefing paper * from the Cabinet Member for Finance updating it regarding areas covered by his remit.

The Cabinet Member outlined the contents of the report informing the Committee that he considered the Finance service to be extremely well managed and that it had maintained its status as one of the first in the country to close its statutory accounts, as well as being in the top quartile for collection of Council Tax, Business Rates and housing rent. The Cabinet Member explained that there was a £180k variance with the General Fund which was in part due to some unexpected expenditure and a challenging leisure services budget. He also informed the Committee that he had some concerns regarding the implementation of Universal Credit and the impact that this may have on housing rent collection.

Moving forward the budget for 2018-19 was currently £617k short and this was a challenge. Group Managers had been tasked to find savings but 'the fat' had been removed in previous years and this now meant a number of other options were being taken forward to look at increasing the council's income, making property purchases and moving forward with the stand alone property company.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Inflation was built into the budget;

- Interest rates could go up;

- Universal Credits and issues regarding this;

- Investments in the Churches Charities and Local Authorities Investment Management (CCLA) which showed a good return;

- The cost of redundancy and restructuring;

- A 1% pay increase would add £100k to the wages bill;

- The Medium Term Financial Plan set out 4 years for direction of travel;
- An asset plan which was district wide;
- Staffing levels had fallen from 412 to under 400 in the last year;
- The process for Members to feed into the budget at Policy Development Groups and Member Briefings.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for his report.

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

82 **STRATEGIC THINKING UPDATE 01:24:40**

The Committee had before it and **NOTED** a report * from the Chief Executive regarding 'strategic thinking' training that had taken place. Earlier in the year, following assessment and interviews, the council secured the Charter for Member Development for a further three years (to April 2020). As part of ongoing member development activity, 11 members had recently participated in a development session focused on 'strategic thinking'. The report provided an update on that activity and highlighted emerging concepts for consideration.

The Chief Executive outlined the contents of the report, explaining that he had attended the training and that it had come forward as a result of the Peer Review.

The Chairman requested that the report be distributed to all Members.

It was **AGREED** that the Committee would discuss the report further at the informal workshop that was taking place on 20 November to agree a way forward.

Discussion took place regarding the benefit of all Members meeting informally regarding budget setting to allow ideas to be put forward.

It was **RECOMMENDED** to Council that in order to facilitate strategic development of the budget, 'away days' be reinstated.

(Proposed by Cllr Mrs J Roach and seconded by Cllr N A Way)

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

83 **FORWARD PLAN**

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

Clarification was sought regarding dates for the Community Engagement Strategy and the delegation of the Insurance Tender.

Note: - Forward Plan * previously circulated and attached to Minutes.

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

Cabinet Member for Community Well being
Disposal of Assets
Performance and Risk
Forward Plan
CCG – increase in population and pressures on hospitals

(The meeting ended at 4.04 pm) **CHAIRMAN**