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MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on 12 February 2018 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors

F J Rosamond (Chairman)
Mrs H Bainbridge, Mrs A R Berry,
Mrs F J Colthorpe, Mrs G Doe,
Mrs B M Hull, F W Letch, Mrs J Roach,
T W Snow and N A Way

Apologies

Councillor(s)

Mrs C P Daw and T G Hughes

Also Present

Councillor(s)

R L Stanley

Also Present

Officer(s):

Jill May (Director of Corporate Affairs and Business Transformation), Maria De Leburne (Solicitor), Catherine Yandle (Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security), Kevin Swift (Public Health Officer) and Julia Stuckey (Member Services Officer)

119 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Mrs C P Daw and T G Hughes.

120 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

There were no interests declared.

121 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no members of the public present.

122 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

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

123 **MEMBER FORUM**

There were no issues raised under this item.

124 **DECISIONS OF THE CABINET**

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

125 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman highlighted the successful Housing Infrastructure Fund bid of £18.2m following the work of Scrutiny and Mel Stride MP.

126 ESTABLISHMENT

The Committee had before it a report * from the Group Manager for Human Resources informing Members of the overall structure of the Council and showing the management and deployment of officers.

The Director of Corporate Affairs and Business Transformation explained that the report highlighted the establishment figures and explained that the full time equivalent (FTE) figure of 408.02 was much the same as the previous year, 408.81. Sickness absence for long term sickness had increased which was mainly due to ailments such as heart attacks and cancer, for which, other than some prevention work such as 'Well Being Week' there was little that could be done to reduce. There was currently a staff turn-over rate of 11% which was high and the officer explained that 'exit interviews' were used to identify the reasons why people were leaving, but that she considered the reasons to be mainly due to pay levels and pressure of work. Four people had been offered employment but had failed to take up the posts, which could be due to receiving a better offer elsewhere.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Fixed term contracts and the fact that they were used to cover a specific purpose for a period of time;
- Concerns that staff were under stress, but that stress was not always work related. To help with this staff could be supported by a short term reduction in hours or removing part of a workload;
- Working from home and the numbers of staff that did so and how the level of work undertaken was monitored;
- Agency workers were not included in the figures for the establishment.

It was **AGREED** that the establishment be reviewed by Scrutiny in 6 months' time to consider the level of resignations and the reasons for them.

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

127 PERFORMANCE AND RISK 00:58:08

The Committee had before it and **NOTED** a report * from the Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security providing Members 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.

The officer outlined the contents of the report explaining that areas within Waste and Street Scene were on target and that Home Gas safety Certificates had expired for 3 properties but that this was being dealt with following laid down procedures. She

highlighted long term and short term sickness figures. These at an average over 8 years of 8.3 days per employee were in line with LGA benchmarking figures for 2016/17 of 8.2 days. Responses to Freedom of Information requests had improved and none had exceeded target time.

Discussion took place regarding:

- There were 26 Council houses at Palmerston Park due for completion in October/November and 4 at Birchen lane due for completion in September/October;
- The number of Fixed Penalty Notices issued and how to benchmark these;
- Recycling and how to reduce the number of black sacks put out for collection;
- The possibility of becoming a 'plastic free' District;
- The possibility that community groups and volunteers could undertake recycling education work on behalf of the authority and potential grant funding for this;
- Business continuity and the risk of cyber-attack;
- The risk of data breaches and training that was in place to prevent this;
- The Devon-wide Emergency Plan;
- Praise for the Private Sector Housing team in bringing a high number of empty homes back into use;
- Workplace welfare and a risk identified regarding levels of work in the Legal Services Team.

It was **AGREED** that the Director of Corporate Affairs and Business Transformation would discuss community engagement, and how volunteers could be encouraged to help the authority in areas such as recycling, at Leadership Team, and report back.

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

128 **WHISTLEBLOWING UPDATE 01:01:50**

The Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security informed the Committee that there had been no cases reported since the last update.

129 **SCRUTINY OFFICER UPDATE 01:03:28**

The Committee had before it and **NOTED** information * from the Scrutiny Officer regarding various areas that he had been asked to look into on their behalf.

Delayed Transfer of Care

The officer highlighted a link to NHS statistics and informed Members that Devon County Council Scrutiny would be receiving a report from the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) regarding hospitals over the winter period. The officer would provide Members with this report and it was **AGREED** that Dr Squire be asked to attend the next meeting to give his view on the situation.

Members were reminded that the MP Neil Parish had offered to look into specific incidents of bed blocking if details were provided.

Ageing Workforce

The officer had provided information regarding 'fitness for work' in light of the removal of a compulsory retirement age and the fact that employees may stay in work longer.

Discussion took place regarding:

- How mechanised working methods could help but could also have a cost implication;
- The fact that it was not just physical health that could deteriorate with age but also cognitive and that this could also result in a drop in performance.

It was **AGREED** that the Group Manager for Street Scene and Open Spaces be asked to provide a report regarding planning for the future with an ageing workforce.

Cornwall Housing Allocations Policy

The officer highlighted a report from Cornwall Council regarding their housing allocations policy.

The Cabinet Member for Housing outlined a new scheme in place, 'Rent Plus' which allowed those on Band E of the housing list to rent for an agreed number of years with the potential that when they moved on from that property to receive a deposit of 10% to purchase their own property.

The Cabinet Member explained that Devon Home Choice used a process for eligibility which included local need and income. The banding that applicants were allocated to reflected their circumstances. Devon Home Choice was a Devon Wide scheme and individual Districts could not change the criteria. However, it was possible that Devon Home Choice might not continue in the future as a couple of Districts were considering leaving.

It was **AGREED** that the Cabinet Member would cover housing allocation at his next Cabinet Member report to the Committee.

Road maintenance and repairs in Mid Devon

The officer highlighted links to the Devon County Council website for reporting potholes and stressed the need for the public to report each pot hole individually.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The condition of rural roads;
- A new contractor was in place and whether or not the service had deteriorated;
- If there was a cluster of pot holes they needed to be reported individually;
- The depth of pot holes that would be repaired.

It was **AGREED** that the Scrutiny officer be asked to make further investigations regarding the criteria for pot hole repair, make enquires with regard to an officer from Highways attending a meeting and prepare a written update for the next meeting of the Committee regarding the situation in Mid Devon.

Active Start (GP exercise referral program)

The Scrutiny Officer provided current figures for the Active start programme which in 11 months had seen 112 referrals. Of those referrals 47 had been at Tiverton, 45 at Cridton and 20 from Cullompton. Of the 112 referrals 33 customers had taken out memberships.

Discussion took place regarding the Exe Valley referrals group at Tiverton, which met as a social group for coffee after sessions and had seen a better retention rate than the other centres. The officer was tasked to make enquires as to whether a similar scheme could be put in place at all centres.

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

- ii) Cllr N A Way declared a personal interest as he was a Devon County Councillor.

130 FORWARD PLAN

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

Discussion took place regarding:

- The Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan and whether it would include provision for public transport with a bus station. It was **AGREED** that the Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration be asked to attend a meeting of the Committee regarding this.
- The 'Tiverton Town Centre Masterplan' and 'Proposals for Improvements to Tiverton Town Centre'; whether they were the same thing and whether it was appropriate for consultation to be undertaken for one while the other was being put out to tender.

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

131 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

Cabinet Member for Planning
RIPA
Member Development Update
Dr James Squire
Scrutiny officer update
Three Rivers SPV

(The meeting ended at 4.08 pm)

CHAIRMAN