

## **Scrutiny Officer update 18<sup>th</sup> February 2019**

### **1. Homelessness Working Party Report**

Members will be aware that the group has been deliberating since July 2017. In that time Housing services have restructured and new legislation (Homelessness Reduction Act) has been introduced by the national government. A new homelessness strategy is due for completion in March 2019 and the report provides recommendations on how the consultation process will be carried out.

### **2. Broadband in Mid Devon**

Following the formal part of this Scrutiny meeting Members will have the opportunity to discuss informally broadband roll-out in Mid Devon in preparation for the upcoming visit by Keri Denton, Head of Economy, Enterprise and Skills, Devon County Council. All Members have been asked to submit any questions in preparation for the visit.

### **3. Scrutiny Workplan**

Members will recall that at the previous committee meeting the Policy framework was presented. This document may provide some points of discussion in relation to the Scrutiny Committee workplan for the coming year during which time there will be a new committee.

### **4. State of the District Debate - summary**

Held on 24<sup>th</sup> January speakers the following guest speakers provided their view of how Brexit was having an impact:

- Linda Middleton-Jones, Mid Devon Business Forum/International Trade Matters
- Charles Baughan, Westaways Sausages
- Andrew Butler, NFU
- Darren Beaven, Gregorys

Linda Middleton-Jones raised concerns about borrowing money, stockpiling, the country was far from being self-sufficient and businesses being reliant on the migrant workforce. Filling vacancies with local people and teaching business how to export goods and services were challenges and potential opportunities.

Charles Baughan quoted that 17% of employment in the west was tied to food and drink. He raised concerns about time sensitive products being delayed at ports. Though he currently exports to Europe he stated that his company may need to wait until things settle and concentrate on other markets such as China.

Andrew Butler from the NFU stated that between 800-900 farms drove the local economy. Farming required a good Brexit deal which meant frictionless trade and free movement of labour. The farming industry was heavily entwined with Europe via regulations and financial support. A no deal scenario could lead to trade embargoes, rising prices and inflation.

Darren Beaven from Gregorys Transport employs around 2,600 people in 26 sites. The company no longer covered Europe however new trucks and parts were all manufactured in Europe. A potential big impact on the business would be fluctuations in the exchange rate and they had a big reliance on EU drivers. Support for the migrant workforce with any potential new process would be important for his company though he did have concerns about a shortage of drivers. Darren also noted that some stockpiling was already taking place by firms and there had been a big demand for additional warehouse space.

Consideration was then given to the following issues:

- What would happen on 29 March?
- The long term implications of staying in the EU
- The impact on local businesses such as Lloyd Maunder
- The impact on tourism and health
- The fact that migrant workers were already planning to leave the country before 29 March
- The need to support and care for migrant workers and share best practice on this issue
- Whether farmer cooperatives should be encouraged
- Whether local people were aware of the impact of Brexit on their jobs when they voted in 2016
- The fact that people voted on headlines and whether they were misinformed
- What would be a good deal
- The need for free movement and continued trade
- Whether the Government would continue to support the subsidies paid by the EU
- The impact of Brexit on the local economy
- Whether another referendum would change the outcome and whether the EU would further negotiate with the UK
- Whether the recruitment of UK born staff would be encouraged and would these staff be able to replace seasonal workers