

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on 15 April 2019 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors

F J Rosamond (Chairman)
Mrs H Bainbridge, Mrs F J Colthorpe,
Mrs C P Daw, R M Deed, Mrs G Doe,
Mrs S Griggs, T G Hughes, Mrs B M Hull,
F W Letch and N A Way

Apologies

Councillor(s)

T W Snow

Also Present

Councillor(s)

Mrs M E Squires

Also Present

Officer(s):

Jill May (Director of Corporate Affairs and Business Transformation), Sally Gabriel (Member Services Manager), Catherine Yandle (Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security), Lisa Lewis (Group Manager for Business Transformation and Customer Engagement), Lynsey Chilcott (Customer Services Manager), Maria De Leburne (Solicitor), Kevin Swift (Public Health Officer) and Carole Oliphant (Member Services Officer)

161 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (01.38)**

Apologies were received from Cllr T W Snow.

162 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (02.01)**

There were no declarations made

163 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (02.20)**

There were no questions from members of the public present.

164 **MEMBER FORUM (02.31)**

There were no issues raised under this item.

165 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (02.41)**

The minutes of the last meeting held on 18th March 2019 were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

166 **DECISIONS OF THE CABINET (03.10)**

The Committee **NOTED** that none of the decisions made by the Cabinet on 4th April 2019 had been called in.

167 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (03.32)**

The Chairman stated he would make his announcements at the end of the meeting.

168 **CABINET MEMBER FOR WORKING ENVIRONMENT AND SUPPORT SERVICES (03.41)**

The Committee received and **NOTED** the *report from the Cabinet Member for Working Environment and Support Services who gave an overview of the area's within her remit.

Providing her overview she updated Members on the following:

- Human Resources – A new post of Senior Business Support Manager had been introduced since the retirement of the Group Manager and would support structural changes across the Council
- New job evaluation software had been introduced which would allow for a review of grades and roles
- Gender pay gaps were being calculated and submitted by Payroll
- Health and safety incidents had been investigated and the safety policies were all up to date
- Learning and Development – All staff required training including health and safety policies. The apprenticeship levy had brought opportunities for existing staff
- The Electoral Services team had undertaken three parish by-elections and one district by-election in Cranmore in the past 12 months. They were currently busy with the Town and District Elections and were making preparations for the European Elections
- The Member Services team continued to support Members with iPads and the weekly information sheet. The Civic officer had organised a number of high profile Civic events including the 100 year anniversary of the end of the First World War and commemoration of the Suffrage Movement.
- The Policy Research officer was leaving post and she wished him well for the future
- Public Health continued to support residents with issues such as fuel poverty and the prevention of cardiovascular disease
- The Customer Service team had reverted to cashless payments, saving the Council £24k per annum. There had been a fall in the number of face to face interactions with customers but a rise in on line contact

She explained that she represented the Council on Community Safety Partnership meetings and was on the Police and Crime Commissioners Scrutiny Committee.

In response to questions the Director of Corporate Affairs and Business Transformation stated she would provide salary costs and rationale on the changes in Human Resources to the Scrutiny Committee.

There was a general discussion about air quality reporting.

Members expressed concerns about the workload of the Elections team and that the European Elections would directly follow the upcoming District and Parish elections. The Director of Corporate Affairs and Business Transformation confirmed that additional staff would be brought in to assist the team.

Members discussed the Council's approach to going cashless and expressed concerns that elderly people in the District did not have any electronic means to pay and were situated in rural areas where there was no access to Post Offices to pay by cheque. The Group Manager for Business Transformation and Customer Engagement explained that they received very few official complaints from residents since the new policy was introduced and where comments were received staff had been sign-posting alternative methods available. She explained to Members the different ways that customers could pay including setting up direct debits.

Note: *Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

169 **FORWARD PLAN (31.27)**

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

The Committee requested involvement in the S106 Governance arrangements as they wanted to understand the process for Town and Parish Councils.

Note: Forward Plan* previously circulated and attached to the minutes

170 **CHAIRMAN'S DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT (41.25)**

The Committee received and **NOTED** the Chairman's draft annual *report on the work of the Committee since May 2018, which was due to be submitted to Council on 24th April 2019.

The Chairman gave an overview of his report and thanked the Scrutiny officer for assistance in compiling it. He stated that the Committee had had a busy but productive year.

There was a general discussion and Members felt that going forward the Committee should not direct officer time at researching issues to which the District Council had no powers to influence or solve.

Members discussed the call in process and generally felt that the Committee had acted in a non-political manner. There were concerns from some Members that the Scrutiny Committee had not been able to change a Cabinet decision on the sale of Crediton Town Hall to a commercial buyer and that the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee did not carry enough weight. The Chairman responded by reminding the Committee that the call in procedure had worked as it was supposed to and had ensured that the Cabinet had revisited and reinvestigated its original decision. He stated that it would not be appropriate for a Scrutiny Committee to be able to overrule the Cabinet and its role was a critical friend to be able to question and investigate why decisions had been made.

The Vice Chairman commented that this was the last meeting that the Chairman would be presiding and on behalf of the Committee he thanked him for his contribution and wished him well in his retirement.

Note: *Report previously circulated and attached to the minutes.

171 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS (51.02)

There were no items identified for future meetings.

172 CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS (51.10)

The Chairman thanked the Members of the Committee for their support and enthusiasm over the past 12 years. He stated that the Committee had conducted its business pragmatically and in a non-political way. He especially thanked the Members who had served on working groups and had put in the extra time to see these to fruition.

(The meeting ended at 3.08 pm)

CHAIRMAN