

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on 8 July 2019 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors

F W Letch (Chairman)
R J Chesterton, R Evans, Mrs I Hill,
B A Moore, R L Stanley, Ms E J Wainwright,
B G J Warren and A Wilce

Apologies

Councillor(s)

Mrs C P Daw and B Holdman

Also Present

Officer(s):

Andrew Jarrett (Deputy Chief Executive (S151)), Maria De Leburne (Solicitor), Alan Keates (Group Manager for ICT and GMS Services), Lisa Lewis (Group Manager for Business Transformation and Customer Engagement), Catherine Yandle (Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security) and Carole Oliphant (Member Services Officer)

14 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (00.00.46)

Apologies were received from Cllr B Holdman and Cllr Mrs C P Daw

15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (00.01.10)

There were no declarations made

16 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (00.01.17)

There were no members of the public present.

17 MEMBER FORUM (00.01.36)

There were no issues raised under this item.

18 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (00.01.42)

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th June 2019 were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

19 DECISIONS OF THE CABINET (00.01.48)

The Committee **NOTED** that none of the decisions made by the Cabinet on 27th June 2019 had been called in.

20 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (00.01.57)**

The Chairman had no announcements to make.

21 **LEADER'S ANNUAL REPORT - ANNUAL REVIEW AGAINST THE CORPORATE PLAN FOR 2018/19 (00.02.07)**

The Committee had before it a *report of the Chief Executive presenting the Annual review against the Corporate plan for 2018/2019.

Members questioned the absence of the Leader to present the report and **RESOLVED** that the item be deferred to a future meeting when the Leader could attend.

(Proposed by Cllr R J Chesterton and seconded by Cllr R Evans)

Note: *report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

22 **REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN REPORT 2018-2019 (00.07.27)**

The Committee had before it and **NOTED** a *report of the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) presenting the Revenue and Capital Outturn 2018/2019.

He gave an overview of the report and explained it was the overarching position and had been presented to the Policy Development Groups and the Cabinet.

He explained that the Council had maintained sufficient reserves and that the levels of reporting by the Finance team had been extremely accurate.

Note: *report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

23 **UNIVERSAL CREDIT UPDATE (00.13.57)**

The Committee received an update from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) on the roll out of Universal Credit across the district.

He explained that currently 1500 people were in receipt of Universal Credit across the district and this was expected to rise to 3500 when the roll out had been completed.

Cllr B G J Warren left the meeting at this point and did not take part in the following discussion.

Members discussed the effect of Universal Credit and stated that they were not receiving any complaints from the public about not being able to contact the Department of Work and Pensions. They had however noted that more people were contacting Citizens Advice and Churches Housing Action Team for advice.

Members agreed to invite Lee Tozer (DWP) Partnership Manager Greater Devon to host an evening Members briefing giving an overview of the roll out of Universal Credit.

Cllr B G J Warren returned to the meeting.

24 **CLIMATE CHANGE DECLARATION (00.28.24)**

Members discussed an appropriate response to the Climate Change Declaration adopted by Full Council on 26th June 2019 and agreed that the Scrutiny Committee should act as a catalyst for the Council to ensure that enough urgency was being focused on the issue.

The Chairman of the Audit Committee informed members that meetings had already begun with the internal audit team to free up officer time in the coming months to look specifically at the risks associated with the Council response. He confirmed that the internal audit programme was being investigated to see what could be added to support the Declaration.

The Deputy Chief Executive (S151) explained that as an immediate response to the Declaration all officer reports presented to members would detail a climate implication. He explained the Devon County Council (DCC) action plan and the monies which had already been put aside by DCC to establish a Net Zero Task Force and confirmed that MDCC officers would be involved. He confirmed that officers had been tasked with providing members with current baseline data. He stated that initial officer and members meetings were required and that whatever was agreed moving forward would be thought through and planned for.

The Chairman of the Environment PDG explained that he had called an informal meeting of the Group to discuss what could be done, the priorities involved and what was realistic. He stated that the PDG would be mindful of cost and officer time and he was keen that the Group produced something meaningful.

Members then discussed the lobbying which had taken place by members keen to be involved in the process which had been delegated to the Environment PDG. Some members felt that the current discussion was premature and that it should take place when the Environment PDG had devised a plan to move forward.

Members suggested that the Climate Change issue could be a topic for the next State of the District Debate. The Chairman agreed to suggest this as a topic with the Leader.

Members **AGREED** that the progress of achieving the Climate Change Declaration should be reported back to the Scrutiny Committee in 6 months' time.

(Proposed by Cllr B A Moore and seconded by Cllr B G J Warren)

25 **SCRUTINY PROPOSAL - INVESTIGATE DIGITAL INCLUSION AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION (00.46.15)**

The Committee had before it a *Scrutiny Proposal form proposing that the Committee investigate digital Inclusion and digital transformation.

Members discussed the proposal and highlighted the following:

- New Expenses software

- Telephone line failures
- Different departments using different software
- Website appearance and usability
- CRM management systems
- The ability to remotely attend Member briefings via skype

In response to questions the Group Manager for Business Transformation and Customer Engagement explained to members that the recent telephone issues had been caused by an offsite failure in the telephone exchange and were out of the Council's control.

She explained that the current website had adopted the Government guidelines for Council websites and the format was the same used by a majority of Councils in the UK. She did however welcome any suggestions from members.

Discussing the proposal she stated that she had concerns about the current scope of the suggested plan working group and that she would welcome further discussions with members to define the specific areas to be investigated.

The Chairman confirmed that he would meet with the officer and define the scope of the working group before bringing it back for agreement at a future Scrutiny Committee meeting.

The Group Manager for ICT and GMS Services informed the Committee that new software was due to be installed which would enable members to remotely attend Member briefings and he would provide further details of the timings of the introduction of the service.

Note: *Proposal form previously circulated and attached to the minutes

26 **FORWARD PLAN (01.00.32)**

Members discussed the Forward Plan.

Notes: * Plan previously circulated, copy attached to minutes

27 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS (01.01.22)**

The Committee **AGREED** that the Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Commissioner be invited to attend a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee to discuss policing levels in the district and High Street security.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

(The meeting ended at 3.21 pm)

CHAIRMAN