

## **MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**MINUTES** of a **MEETING** of the **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on 2 December 2019  
at 2.15 pm

### **Present**

#### **Councillors**

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

### **Also Present**

#### **Councillor(s)**

R M Deed, G Barnell and L J Cruwys

### **Also Present**

#### **Officer(s):**

Jill May (Director of Corporate Affairs and Business Transformation), Kathryn Tebbey (Group Manager for Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), Maria De Leiburne (Solicitor), Clare Robathan (Scrutiny Officer) and Carole Oliphant (Member Services Officer)

## **85 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (00.01.44)**

There were no apologies.

## **86 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (00.01.56)**

There were no declarations.

## **87 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (00.02.18)**

Members of the public present asked the following questions in relation to item 8 on the agenda:

1. Will the Scrutiny Committee look into independent, and I stress independent, peer reviewed research into the harmful effects of electromagnetic radiation and frequencies and invoke, as have other councils, the precautionary principle until independent research shows this is safe?
2. Is it Mid Devon District Councils intention to include discussion or open debate with reference to 5G roll out within any future broadband committee consultation?
3. Are you going to add 5G onto future Scrutiny meetings as I am alarmed that 5G is not on your agenda? I urge you to look at all the research and the websites. We are asking for fibre instead of masts. Studies show that infants and children absorb 5 times as much radiation as adults. Can you do a Scrutiny meeting on this subject as soon as possible?

4. What are the alternative schemes, pilot schemes that have been successful? Which areas of Mid Devon are included in these schemes and if they are not directly connected to 5G why would 5G be considered over the already successful alternatives?
5. I would like to find out if the Gigaclear contract could be resurrected as fibre is a safer way. Local councils have a liability and the loss of pollinators is of great concern. To lose our pollinators affects our food production. Has any impact assessment been done?

In response the Chairman informed members of the public present that the responsible authority for providing broadband was Devon County Council (DCC) and that they were currently conducting a spotlight review into 5G starting with a survey for residents to complete. They could find a link to the DCC survey on the news section of the DCC website. DCC had received over 400 responses to date and would be inviting members of the public who had registered with them to go and talk to County Councillors about their concerns with 5G.

#### 88 **MEMBER FORUM (00.16.51)**

There were no items raised.

#### 89 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

A Member apologised for comments made at the last meeting and this apology was acknowledged by the members of the Committee.

The minutes of the last meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2019 were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

#### 90 **DECISIONS OF THE CABINET (00.19.58)**

The Committee **NOTED** that none of the decisions made by the Cabinet on 21<sup>st</sup> November had been called in.

#### 91 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (00.20.08)**

The Chairman had no announcements to make.

#### 92 **BROADBAND UPDATE (00.20.19)**

Matt Barrow, Stakeholder Engagement Officer from Devon County Council, (DCC) addressed the Committee and explained that DCC were charged with delivering superfast broadband across the District. He explained that in phase two of the project the region was divided into 6 lots and 5 of these were awarded to Gigaclear. The contract with Gigaclear was not a success and it was therefore terminated. He informed Members that out of approximately 36,800 properties in Mid Devon 30,900 were now connected to superfast broadband.

He explained that the main focus of the project at this time was to procure a contractor to deliver superfast broadband to the properties that Gigaclear had missed. He explained that the procurement process took time and that they would be going out to tender in early 2020 with the contract not expected to start until mid-2021.

He explained to Members that the Government had introduced a voucher scheme in July which was designed for rural communities to club together to procure and install their own superfast broadband. He described some successful communities which had used the scheme to get superfast broadband installed.

In response to questions asked he explained why the Gigaclear contract had failed and why it had taken so long to discover that they had not been delivering on their contract.

Consideration was given to:

- Issues with providing superfast broadband to the 2% of properties in rural areas
- The amount of rural businesses which were affected
- Issues with existing businesses on old broadband connections not being able to connect to new installations of superfast fibre broadband
- Urban properties not being able to access superfast broadband due to legal and commercial issues
- The effect a new Government could have on the procurement process.

He explained that the clear direction of travel was to deliver fibre technology.

### 93 **FORWARD PLAN (00.57.09)**

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

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

### 94 **WORK PLANNING SESSION (00.57.30)**

The Scrutiny Officer suggested that the Committee split the work programming planning into 2 short discussions.

With regard to the shortlisting considerations Members offered the following observations:

- That items that only affected people across Mid Devon was too prescriptive and that there would be issues that may only affect certain areas of the District
- The need to consider items that the District Council had a control over, like our vehicle fleet.
- The need to agree outcomes of work undertaken and agree targets and how these were measured.

Members brought the following items for consideration for areas to be investigated by the Scrutiny Committee:

- How the Council dealt with staff going through the menopause or menstruation and what was in place to make things better for staff who were suffering
- How did the current procurement process fits in with the environmental aspirations of the Council
- Acting with integrity – How do we facilitate the public to engage and come and ask questions. Involving the public on what the council does.
- Future generations and youth – How can the Council bring future generations into the decisions being made
- Look at the introduction of teleconferencing for internal meetings
- Introducing communication on what powers and duties the Council has and what areas it should be lobbying County Council and Central Government

Members discussed a suggestion about fly tipping and the introduction of mobile CCTV cameras and were advised by the Deputy Monitoring Officer that covert surveillance on the public was regulated under the RIPA legislation.

## 95 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETING (01.17.47)

Members agreed for the following items to be added to a future agenda:

- 5G – a report detailing the current arguments, both for and against, 5G technology and the current status of the DCC public consultation and the spotlight review.
- Anaerobic Digesters – an update of the September 2018 report to be presented to Members to understand the current environmental and transport issues and if these had significantly changed.

(The meeting ended at 3.40 pm)

**CHAIRMAN**