

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on 16 March 2015 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors

Mrs J Roach (Chairman)
M D Binks (substituting for E J Berry),
A V G Griffiths, Mrs S Griggs, T G Hughes,
M R Lee, Mrs J Rendle, T W Snow and
N A Way

Apologies

Councillor

E J Berry

Also Present

Officers:

Andrew Jarrett (Head of Finance), Amy Tregellas (Head of Communities and Governance and Monitoring Officer), Liz Reeves (Head of Customer Services) and Julia Stuckey (Member Services Officer)

150 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Councillor E J Berry who was substituted by Councillor M D Binks.

151 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from members of the public present.

152 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the last meeting were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

153 MEMBER FORUM

There were no issues raised under this item.

154 DECISIONS OF THE CABINET

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

155 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman informed the Committee that the local Police Inspector was attending the next meeting to update them on crime detection rates. The Chairman asked that questions for the Inspector be submitted to the clerk in advance of the meeting date.

156 MEETING MANAGEMENT

The Chairman informed the Committee that she intended to take agenda item 11, Safeguarding, after agenda item 8, to allow the Officer to return to her work.

157 PANNIER MARKET, TIVERTON (00:04:06)

The Committee had before it a briefing paper * from the Head of Communities and Governance. The Officer outlined actions that had been taken to bring people into the market, explained the issues and challenges and detailed what was taking place at the present time.

The Officer informed the Committee that since she had written the report an advert had been placed, and a press release issued regarding the Street Food Market, asking for expressions of interest. Following the closing date of 29 March 2015 the applications would be short listed and applicants invited to attend to discuss their proposals. An agreement would be in place with the first event taking place on 2 May 2015 and would be for a period of 6 months.

She also informed the Committee that Facebook 'likes' were now at over 500 and that the page was growing rapidly.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The Action Plan and how it would differ from previous plans. The Officer explained that the Plan was in the process of being drawn up and project costed. It would be a five year rolling plan which would be reviewed and fed into the business plan every year. There was a plan to set up a stakeholder forum which would comprise of representatives from the Town Council, Portas Group and Local Trader Group to agree if the focus was in the right area at the right time. Regular updates would be presented to the Community Well Being Policy Development Group;
- Governance of the Market. In the past the Pannier Market had been under the governance of the Borough Council. When the Borough Council ceased to exist responsibility passed to the District Council. The officer explained that if the Town Council were interested in taking over the Pannier Market an approach would need to be made;
- The size and design of the Market. Members felt that the design of the market, with the glass and narrowing of the building was not best use. The Officer explained that it was necessary to make the best of what was available;
- The Corporate Plan. The focus of the Corporate Plan for 2012-15 had been a thriving economy and regeneration. The Officer was asked if the Pannier Market had achieved this. The Officer explained some of the issues that had occurred, such as stall holders not turning up for events that they had booked a pitch for. She also explained the actions that had been taken to rectify this. There was an ongoing 'chicken and egg' issue of stall holders not attending if there were not enough public but the public not attending if there were not enough stalls. The Officer explained that the Market was now open for 6 days

per week and that the Deli Shack and Café had reported that they were seeing new customers on the extra days. There had been concerns that opening for more days would simply dilute the existing number of customers over more days. A package was being put together to try and encourage stall holders to stay;

- Bench marking had taken place against other successful markets in Devon;
- It was agreed that the Pannier Market should be a hub for the community and should benefit the town as a whole. The market was not yet a driver for the town but that this was the long term intention;
- The website, which was not run by the Council, was out of date with Christmas events still listed. The Officer explained that this website was not run by the Council but there was a plan to build a new website which would be controlled by officers;
- Comparisons were made to other market towns;
- Frustrations that planned works had not been carried out. The Officer explained that work to convert an undercover area into stalls was planned and works were due to take place. This had been chased up. The planned works for a covered area, with a canvas roof, had been delayed due to changes to the design. There had been planning issues that had prevented the original cover, which had been budgeted for and new plans would require further funding. European grants were being explored for this project;
- Work was being undertaken to hold continental markets and other themed events. A model railway event had been planned which it was hoped would attract more customers.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Pannier Market Strategy be reviewed by the Scrutiny Committee in June to identify any concerns and then be reviewed every three months.

(Proposed by Councillor T G Hughes and seconded by Councillor Mrs S Griggs)

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

158 **HIGH STREET INNOVATION FUND (00:58:15)**

The Head of Communities and Governance had been invited to the meeting to update the Committee on the High Street Innovation Fund.

The Officer explained that the authority had received £100k from the Government to spend on high street renovation. The Authority had consulted with Councillors, Town Councils and trade groups for views on how to spend and administer the fund.

Fifteen bids had been received and ten successful bids had been identified with an agreed amount totalling £88,141.00. Examples of these were signage to local businesses in Bampton, Cullompton Street Market and ACTIV Rickshaw scheme in

Tiverton. The Rickshaw project had not taken place due to access issues and the money had been put back in the pot.

Other successful bids that had not come to fruition included Tiverton Town Team performance and footfall monitoring, Crediton Chamber's website and the Crediton Chambers Shoppers magazine. The funding for this had been reallocated.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Crediton Chamber of Commerce and funds that had been reallocated to the Crediton Town Team;
- £20k allocated for small business loans to Tiverton Trade Association. Although 5 applications were received for these loans none of the applicants completed their application due to the volume of paperwork required;
- £15k had been allocated by the Cabinet to a shop front enhancement scheme in Tiverton which was due to be launched shortly;
- Whether or not remaining funds could be allocated to the Pannier Market;
- The Business Advice Services which was funded by the Authority and could provide advice on all aspects of running a business:
- The amount available to be claimed currently stood at approximately £13k.

It was **RECOMMENDED** to the Cabinet that information about the amount of monies outstanding in the High Street Innovation Fund be circulated to those that had bid in the past to invite further bids for the funds.

(Proposed by Councillor M Binks and seconded by Councillor Mrs S Griggs)

Note: - Councillor Mrs S Griggs declared a personal interest as she was the Chairman of the Tiverton Portas Group.

159 **UPDATES AND OUTSTANDING ITEMS TO NOTE REGARDING OUTSTANDING ITEMS - SAFEGUARDING**

The Head of Communities and Governance informed the Committee that she was a member of the Devon Districts Safeguarding Group. She was not aware of any Child Sexual Exploitation issues in the Mid Devon area. She confirmed that the Devon Safeguarding Board were keeping a close eye on the situation and had been looking at the Jay Report and ensuring that policies were up to date. There was also guidance on anti-terrorism.

County Council Members had been invited to awareness meetings and it was **AGREED** that the Member report back to this Committee.

The Officer confirmed that Safeguarding training would be provided for all Members on the new Council.

160 **CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE (01:34:30)**

The Committee had before it and **NOTED** a report * from the Cabinet Member for Finance. The Cabinet Member had been invited to attend the meeting to update Members regarding areas covered by his remit.

The Member informed the Committee that he considered that it had been a good year and that the year-end accounts would be a balanced, excluding the payments made for redundancy. He also confirmed that the Authority had received good audit reports for both governance and value for money.

Reserves were held at £2.3m, which maintained the optimum level in case of disaster but did not mean sitting on funds for the sake of it.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The cost of changes to the waste scheme;
- Government grants were continuing to be reduced;
- Tiverton Town Centre Regeneration as a long term vision;
- Partnership agreements and progress made. The lead role in IT was currently shared with North Devon and other avenues were being investigated. The Waste Service was working in partnership with Teignbridge DC for procurement of waste containers.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for his report.

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

161 **HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT: BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE SCRUTINY (01:52:00)**

The Committee had before it a document * from the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) 'Hiding in plain sight: barriers to effective council scrutiny'.

The Head of Customer Services reported that as she was new in post, along with the Clerk, she had attended Scrutiny Committee meetings at another Local Authority to observe how their Scrutiny function was carried out.

The Officer informed the Committee that she had witnessed some areas of the meetings that were carried out in a better way but had also returned from the meetings reassured that Mid Devon was operating well. A suggested area of improvement was that questions were submitted in advance of meetings so that the Officer presenting the report could make sure they were in possession of the facts to answer at the meeting, rather than reporting back at a later date. The Chairman had agreed with this and had subsequently asked for questions to the Chief Inspector for the next meeting of the Committee to be submitted to the Clerk in advance.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Political balance of the Committee;

- The reluctance of the Cabinet to be scrutinised;
- Affective scrutiny that had taken place;
- The lack of officer support;
- The fact that effective scrutiny could save the authority money.

It was **RECOMMENDED** to the Cabinet that officer time to the Scrutiny Committee be increased.

(Proposed by Councillor T W Snow and seconded by Councillor N A Way)

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

162 UPDATES AND ITEMS TO NOTE REGARDING OUTSTANDING ITEMS - PLANNING PROCEDURES (02:19:20)

The Chairman informed the Committee that she had received an email informing her that there had been further delay in preparing the Planning Procedures report which would be considered by the Planning Committee. They would not be reviewed by the Planning Committee until after the election.

The Committee had been waiting for these procedures for a considerable length of time and it was possible that some of the Members that had worked on them, or submitted comments, would no longer be with the Authority when they were submitted to planning for approval.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Planning Procedures, in their current form, be put to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for review.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

163 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

Legal Services – update
 Performance and Risk
 Crime Detection Rates
 Joint East and Mid Devon Crime and Disorder Panel Minutes
 Planning Policy Procedures
 Performance Management Guidance.

(The meeting ended at 4.50 pm)

CHAIRMAN