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MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on 20 February 2023 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors

S J Clist (Chairman)
G Barnell, W Burke, L J Cruwys, Mrs S Griggs, F W Letch,
S Pugh, Mrs E J Slade and B G J Warren

Apologies

Councillors

E J Berry and Mrs E J Lloyd

Present

Officers:

Maria De Leburne (District Solicitor and Monitoring Officer),
Andrew Seaman (Member Services Manager), James Hamblin
(HR Business Partner) and Matthew Page (Corporate Manager
for People, Governance and Waste) and Andrew Seaman
(Member Services Manager)

77 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs E Lloyd and Cllr J Berry.

78 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT

No interests were declared under this item.

79 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Questions were received from Nick Quinn, the Chairman read out the following on his behalf:

I have read the report of the District Solicitor and Monitoring Officer regarding “the rights of members to place items for discussion relating to Council business on the agenda of the Scrutiny Committee”. At paragraph 2.4 - reference is made to “Each member of the scrutiny committee when they join is given training and a Flow Chart for Scrutiny Prioritisation and a Selection Criteria and a Scrutiny Proposal Form”. For Members of the Public to understand how Scrutiny Committee works in Mid Devon, it would be useful to see copies of:

1. The Scrutiny Proposal Form
2. The Selection Criteria
3. The Flow Chart for Scrutiny Prioritisation

Please can copies of these documents be attached to the Minutes of the Meeting?

The District Solicitor & Monitoring Officer confirmed that, for reference these document would be attached to the minutes.

80 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the last ordinary meeting held on the 16 January 2023, were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman subject to additional wording added within minute 71:

“So, hopefully Mr Quinn that gives you reassurance that we will address that in terms of the papers going forward to February Cabinet, where the budget will be approved. I would just add that, up to this point, we have not actually borrowed externally for 3 Rivers and the intention is not to, going forward, as long we have that capacity internally. So, hopefully, that answers that question.”

The minutes of the special meeting held on the 13 February 2023, were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman subject to altered wording under minute 76 so that it read ‘Resolved’.

81 DECISIONS OF THE CABINET

No decisions had been called in.

82 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman noted that the next scheduled meeting would be on the 20 of March 2023.

83 ESTABLISHMENT

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, a *report from the Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste which provided an update on both the Establishment of the Council together with its performance.

Officers raised that:

- Mid Devon District Council faced increasing levels of sickness and that Covid-19 remained a factor. However for January it was reported that sickness levels had started to drop.
- A new digital exit interview process had been launched to better capture feedback from those leaving the organisation.
- Staff benefits had also been emphasised, which included reduced leisure centre membership fees.
- Mid Devon District Council was awarded the Petroc Employer of the Year award in June 2022.

The following was discussed:

- Consideration for colour-blindness needed to be given when infographics were used in the report.
- Clarification over hybrid working was sought, the Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste explained that circa 70% worked in a hybrid way, with 2-3 days in the office each week.
- Asked if there was a model guide for hybrid working, the Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste explained that support was given to

managers and emphasised the importance of communication. With training along with tips and guides were available.

- Asked what the biggest challenge had been, an officer explained that sickness had been higher than in previous years.
- It was felt that officer attendance within Phoenix House could be better and that a senior officer should be present.
- Asked if staff were subsidised for working from home the Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste confirmed that staff were not provided allowances when working from home.
- Clarification was sought over risk assessments of home offices, to which an officer confirmed that assessments were carried out.
- It was highlighted that it could be difficult to reach officers remotely and that the Phoenix House opening times had also made this difficult. The Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste reassured that Members that officers should be readily available even working in a hybrid fashion.
- Clarification was sought over agency staff, to which an officer highlighted that agency staff were able to demand higher wages particularly in technical and managerial roles.
- That there should be an office area for Member to be able to work in.
- That technology needed to be available to all Members.
- That all staff should be on 3CX.

Note: *report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

84 **SCRUTINY AGENDA PROCESS**

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, a *report from the District Solicitor and Monitoring Officer which outlined the process for items to be added to the Scrutiny Committee's agenda.

The following was discussed:

- That Scrutiny and items added should be accessible with the correct procedure followed.
- The process was established to support scrutiny.
- That article 7 should be read.
- That there was a form to be used as part of the scrutiny process.

85 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED** the *Forward Plan and the *Scrutiny Work Plan.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following items be added to the Scrutiny Committee's work programme:

- That an independent authority look into the process that was taken on the 3 Rivers business plan.
- Vacancy Control
- A more strategic approach to the services that need heavy subsidy.

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

(The meeting ended at 4.11 pm)

CHAIRMAN

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