

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on 15 July 2024 at 5.00 pm

Present

Councillors

L G J Kennedy (Chair)
D Broom, E Buczkowski, G Czapiewski,
M Farrell, C Harrower, B Holdman, L Knight,
R Roberts and S Robinson

Apologies

Councillor(s)

G Westcott

Also Present

Councillor(s)

J Buczkowski, G Duchesne, J Lock, J Wright and D Wulff

Also Present

Officer(s):

Andrew Jarrett (Deputy Chief Executive (S151)), Dean Emery (Head of Revenues, Benefits & Leisure), Matthew Page (Head of People, Performance & Waste), James Hamblin (Operations Manager for People Services), Angie Howell (Democratic Services Officer) and David Parker (Democratic Services & Policy Research Officer)

Councillors

Online

L Taylor

12 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Cllr G Westcott.

13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT

No interests were declared under this item.

14 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No members of the public asked questions.

15 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 17 June 2024 were **APPROVED** as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chair.

16 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair had no announcements to make.

17 DECISIONS OF THE CABINET

The Committee **NOTED** that none of the decisions made by the Cabinet on 9th July 2024 had been called in.

18 CARE LEAVER FRIENDLY EMPLOYER BRIEFING

The Committee had before it and **NOTED** a report* from the Head of People, Performance and Waste and the Operations Manager for People Services. The Cabinet Member for People and Development introduced the report.

The following was highlighted within the report:

- In 2016 the Government launched its “Keep on Caring Policy Document” to support young people from care to independence.
- In agreeing to the Charter put forward the Council would be making a commitment in the areas of recruitment, tracking and development of care leavers in the Mid Devon area.

Discussion took place with regard to:

- Tracking the number of applicants and the progress of any persons applying.
- There were around twelve individuals in the Mid Devon area to whom this policy was applicable.
- Other groups are also supported such as those from the Armed Forces, however, under the Corporate Parenting legislation, the Council had a duty to look after these individuals.
- The costs were relatively limited and absorbed in that the Council was updating its own processes and identifying a point of contact for people to approach. With regard to development it was expected that Managers were developing their staff already.
- The Apprenticeship programme was being reviewed across the Council and the Council could highlight vacancies to those such as care leavers by advertising them on Devon County Council’s jobs portal.
- Equality Impact Assessment wording would only be relevant when the Council changed its recruitment process.
- The support that was offered to individuals when applying for positions.
- Care Leavers were offered a Council Tax reduction if they were liable, they were also given free Leisure Centre memberships up to the age of 25.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that Mid Devon signs the Care Leaver Friendly Employer Charter.

Reasons for the Decision: The Charter puts in place the opportunity for the Council to take a clear stance.

Note: * Report previously circulated

19 ANNUAL CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee had before it and **NOTED** a report* from the Head of People Performance and Waste and the Corporate Performance and Improvement Manager.

The following was highlighted within the report:

- The report presented the Performance Outturn Report for financial year 2023/24.
- This was the final performance report on the Council's previous Corporate Plan which was adopted in February 2020.
- The report and its appendices were structured according to the four themes of that Corporate Plan: Homes, Environment, Economy, and Community, with climate change being a cross cutting theme of the plan.
- Performance information on a wide range of corporate performance indicators was also detailed at Appendix 5.
- At Section 2 of the report additional analysis on several of the performance indicators was provided.

Discussion took place with regard to:

- Whether the Council provided sufficient space for Gypsy, Traveller and Showman communities? **
- Whether the target that was being set for complaints should have been reduced to take into account the new reduced timescales or whether the Council should aspire to keep to the previous higher target? The Ombudsman had not set a particular target so far but the Council had to evidence that they were working to the code. The new rules came into effect on 1 April 2024 and the cost of improving the complaints service was, at present, unquantifiable. It was **agreed** that the new targets on the report would be kept but that they would be brought back to the Scrutiny Committee in six months' time to be reviewed.
- Self-build plots. – should the table show “self build plots completed” **
- Community Support schemes. Are the Council getting Communities involved as much as they should be? **
- Electric Car Charger points**
- Emergency Repairs**.

Note: * Report previously circulated

** The Head of People, Performance and Waste said that he would investigate and report back in writing on these matters.

20 UPDATE ON LAND SALE THAT WOULD UNLOCK 70 AFFORDABLE HOMES

The Committee received and **NOTED** a verbal update from the Deputy Chief Executive (s151 Officer) regarding the land sale that would unlock 70 affordable homes.

The following was highlighted:

- As previously reported the Council's Housing Revenue Account had decided that they would not themselves tender to build 70 social homes at Post Hill and so the land was put up for sale. Exchange had taken place and completion on the land sale was due to take place within the next 2 weeks. The developer was keen to get on site by September and would deliver in accordance with the existing planning application that 70 affordable homes be built on that land.

Discussion took place with regard to:

- Traffic Control on Putson Lane, did the developer have any concerns? – No they were keen to build out within the existing planning application so as not to waste time.
- Once the sale was complete, communications regarding the positive news would be planned.

21 **PORTFOLIO PRESENTATION FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR SERVICE DELIVERY AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

The Committee received and **NOTED**, a presentation regarding his portfolio from the Cabinet Member for Service Delivery and Continuous Improvement.

Discussion took place with regard to:

- The presentation would be circulated to Members of the Scrutiny Committee by e-mail and placed on the Members' Sharepoint site.
- Street Scene – waste prevention should be the aim of the community in the future.
- The Housing Repairs team was congratulated with regards to emergency repairs, healthcare, air monitors and mould.
- Whether dog mess was increasing or whether the collection of it was decreasing? All the enforcement data was on the right trend and was going down. The Council had 4 dog wardens across the whole district but they were also responsible for other areas including car parking and fly tipping.
- With regard to the new Customer Management System – the new system would create more work but it had better reporting tools and so the Council would have better information as to customer activity and areas of concern.
- There was some concern that members of the public voiced that “the Council don't care”, however, it turned out that they did not know which Council they should be addressing their concerns to. It was agreed that Mid Devon District Council (MDDC) should communicate to residents what they did and what other levels of councils ie Devon County Council, Parish Councils etc did. Perhaps a flyer could be put in with Council Tax bills. Mid Devon District Council would encourage all their residents to call Customer First who could signpost them to the correct council or department.

22 WORK PROGRAMME

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

The Clerk took the Committee through the Work Programme and highlighted the following:

- The items on Void Properties and Air Management Control in Cullompton and beyond had been brought forward to the meeting to be held on 9 September 2024.
- The Establishment – 6 month update had to go to the Service and Continuous Improvement Policy Development Group on 23 September and so should go to the Scrutiny Committee after that, therefore, it would now go to the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 28 October. As the Whistleblowing – 6 month update were prepared by the same team that report too, would go to the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 28 October.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The timing of the Annual Report relating to Complaints and Compliments.
- Was there any progress on the Council becoming a Trauma informed Council?
- When South West Water would be invited to this Scrutiny Committee?
- The number of households who were classified as 'Homeless' in this region. It was **agreed** to add Homelessness to the Scrutiny Work Programme.

Note: The Clerk would like to remind Members of the requirement to complete a Scrutiny Proposal Form, to enable officers to focus on exactly what Councillors wanted to see within the report.

(The meeting ended at 6.32 pm)

CHAIR