

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on 10 August 2015 at 2.00 pm

Present

Councillors

F J Rosamond (Chairman)
Mrs H Bainbridge, Mrs J B Binks,
Mrs C P Daw, R M Deed (substituting for
Cllr Mrs N Woollatt), Mrs S Griggs,
B A Moore, Mrs J Roach, Mrs E J Slade and
T W Snow

Apologies

Councillor(s)

T G Hughes and Mrs N Woollatt

Also Present

Councillor(s)

Mrs A R Berry, R F Radford and R L Stanley

Also Present

Officer(s):

Amy Tregellas (Head of Communities and Governance and Monitoring Officer), Liz Reeves (Head of Customer Services), Chris Shears (Economic Development Officer) and Julia Stuckey (Member Services Officer)

28 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Apologies were received from Councillor T G Hughes and from Councillor Mrs N Woollatt who was substituted by Councillor R M Deed.

29 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no members of the public present.

30 **MEMBER FORUM**

There were no issues raised under this item.

31 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Following the addition of the wording "it was stated that not all Zest customers were contacted when their membership was due for renewal, despite assurances being given" to bullet point five of Minute 23, the minutes of the last meeting were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

It was **RESOLVED** that an Officer from Leisure Services be invited to attend the next meeting of the Committee to explain why Members whose Zest Membership was ending were not contacted.

(Proposed by Cllr T W Snow and seconded by Cllr R M Deed)

32 DECISIONS OF THE CABINET

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

33 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman had no announcements to make.

34 DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

The Committee had before it and **NOTED** a report * from the Head of Customer Services updating them on how the Authority was responding to Digital Transformation.

The Officer outlined the work that had taken place since 2005 and explained that the project had evolved to include the introduction of efficiencies in working methods, in order to do more with less.

The Head of Communities and Governance explained that Parish Councils could use the authority's website to host their own web pages; however following the recent upgrade these pages had not yet been updated. The Officer explained that this was in hand, but that in the meantime Parish Councils would be complying with the Transparency Code if they published information to their own notice boards. She further asked that Members that attend Parish Council meetings use this opportunity to remind Parish Councillors of the need to return their declaration of interest forms and to remind them of the need to notify her as Monitoring officer of any change to their circumstances.

It was **AGREED** that Members would receive a briefing at the next meeting of the Committee on Parish Councils and how they were supported.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The equality impact of digital transformation and could everyone afford the necessary equipment. Members expressed concern that those that could not use technology could be disadvantaged. The Head of Customer Services explained that although benefit applications were now all completed on line appointments were available for those that required help. She further explained that for many residents using a digital device to make contact with the authority was cheaper than attending in person.
- Local groups, such as Parish Councils, libraries, community shops and groups could act as community hubs for access to equipment and broadband;
- The balance between what was most effective and efficient for the authority and what was most convenient for the customer;
- Digital Transformation allowed for all types of access and customers could still call at the offices in person, contact by telephone or by post;

- The need for people to be able to contact the authority at differing times of day;
- The length of time for telephone calls to be answered during peak periods;
- The possibility that Parish Councils could benefit from the use of surplus computer equipment.

It was **RECOMMENDED** to the Cabinet that means of contacting the authority be reviewed to avoid exclusion for those that could not use digital methods.

(Proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Cllr J Roach)

Note: - Report previously circulated and attached to Minutes.

35 **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (01.01.00)**

The Committee had before it and **NOTED** a briefing paper * from the Economic Development Officer, updating them on progress within the District.

The Officer explained that he had been working directly with businesses in Mid Devon, to help them to grow and that jobs could be created in the local area with a positive effect on the local economy. He had been working with land agents to encourage new business, either established businesses moving to the area or new businesses being established.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The possibility that a hotel chain may develop a site in Tiverton and the impact on local businesses;
- The Chief Executive would be attending a meeting with local business representatives to discuss Tiverton town centre;
- The level of help being given to rural and urban businesses and whether this was balanced;
- LEADER funding and how this could be used to help the rural economy;
- The appointment of a new Town Centre Manager for Tiverton;
- The proposed roof for the Tiverton Pannier Market.

It was **AGREED** that:

- a) A Member briefing note be circulated to all Members to update them on LEADER funding;
- b) That a report be presented to the Committee following the Chief Executives meeting with local businesses regarding plans for Tiverton town centre;

- c) That the Committee receive a quarterly update on Economic Development.

Note: - Briefing paper previously circulated and attached to Minutes.

36 **SUPPORT FOR SCRUTINY**

The Chairman updated the Committee on progress to date regarding support for the Committee. He explained that there was a possibility that an intern from Exeter University could be appointed to help with a research project. Members of the Reviewing the Effects of Efficiency Measures Working Group had requested that the intern undertake a research project on their behalf.

It was **AGREED** that the Head of Customer Services pursue this matter and update the Committee on progress at the next meeting.

37 **SAFEGUARDING**

The Head of Communities and Governance gave a presentation to the Committee regarding safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, explaining the District Councils role in this area.

The Officer explained what safeguarding and child protection meant to the authority, the legislation involved and gave examples of types of abuse. She gave some examples of high profile cases and some local incidents.

It was **AGREED** that a member briefing be put in place to update all Members on Safeguarding and that the Committee receive regular updates from the Head of Communities and Governance.

38 **CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP**

Cllr Mrs J Binks had requested that the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) be invited to attend a meeting of the Committee in order that they could be questioned regarding the decision to permanently remove inpatient beds at Crediton Hospital.

A representative of the CCG was scheduled to attend a meeting of the Community Well Being Policy Development Group on 18th August, it was therefore agreed that questions from the Scrutiny Committee be considered at that meeting.

It was **AGREED** that the representative of the CCG be asked to explain:

- a) The process undertaken to arrive at the decisions made;
- b) The consultation that took place
- c) The current financial situation.

39 **QUESTIONS FOR NEIL PARISH MP (02.36.35)**

Discussion took place regarding questions to put to the Member of Parliament, Neil Parish, at the Special Meeting being held on 24 August 2015.

A number of questions had been submitted by Members of the Committee. These would be compiled and forwarded to the MP in advance to allow him to answer them fully at the meeting.

40 UPDATES AND ITEMS TO NOTE REGARDING OUTSTANDING ITEMS (02.36.35)

The update was noted.

41 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

Members discussed possible items for inclusion in future agendas. These included:

Support for Parish Councils
Tiverton Town Centre update
Anaerobic Digesters
Leisure Services – renewal of Zest Membership

(The meeting ended at 4.50 pm)

CHAIRMAN