

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on 20 October 2025
at 5.00 pm

Present

Councillors

C Adcock, E Buczkowski, A Cuddy,
G Czapiewski, M Farrell, C Harrower,
L Knight, J Poynton and R Roberts

Apologies

Councillors

D Broom, L G J Kennedy and G Westcott

Also Present

Councillors

J Buczkowski and J Wright

Also Present

Officers

Maria De Leburne (Director of Legal, People & Governance (Monitoring Officer)), Lisa Lewis (Head of Digital Transformation & Customer Engagement) and Sarah Lees (Democratic Services Officer)

Councillors

Online

G Duchesne, M Fletcher, S Keable and L Taylor

Officer Online

Richard Marsh (Director of Place and Economy)

45 ELECTION OF CHAIR

There was a need to elect a Chair for the meeting as both Cllr L Kennedy (Chair) and Cllr G Westcott (Vice Chair) had sent apologies.

RESOLVED that Cllr G Czapiewski be elected Chair for the purposes of this meeting only.

(Proposed by Cllr C Adcock and seconded by Cllr E Buczkowski)

Note: Cllr G Czapiewski chose not to elect a Vice Chair.

46 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Cllr L G J Kennedy and Cllr G Westcott.

47 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

No interests were declared under this item.

48 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

49 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 29th September 2025 were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chair.

50 **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair's had the following announcements to make:

1. Unfortunately South West Water had been unable to send a representative to the meeting this evening. Given the strength of feeling regarding the outstanding SWW issues the Chair (Cllr L G J Kennedy) had agreed that this item be deferred to a future meeting and as soon as possible. This was so that a representative could be present to answer any queries and provide clarification in person.
2. There may be a need to cancel the next scheduled meeting on 17th November, as the 'Complaints and Compliments' report which was due to come to that meeting would now be going to the Service Delivery & Continuous Improvement PDG in the first instance and then to the Scrutiny Committee in December.

However, this would not be the case if:

- a) There was a "Call-in" following the Cabinet meeting on 4th November.
- b) The Committee wished to discuss a new item at the next meeting.
- c) If South West Water were able to attend the next meeting. The Clerk confirmed that she should be able to confirm this one way or the other by the end of the week and as soon as this information became available.

51 **DECISIONS OF THE CABINET**

The Committee **NOTED** that none of the decisions made by the Cabinet on 7th October had been called in.

52 **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION & ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION REQUESTS - QUARTERS 1 & 2 (00:10:00)**

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Head of Digital Transformation & Customer Engagement providing a quarterly dashboard update report regarding the monitoring of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and Environmental Information Requests (EIR). It also updated the Committee on any decision notices that had been provided during quarters 1 & 2.

The contents of the report were outlined with particular reference to the following:

- Bringing the report to the Committee now had allowed officers to capture both the data for Quarter one and Quarter two.
- 483 requests had been made during this period.
- Of the 483, 4 requests exceeded the 20-working day period statutory time, making the percentage responded to within the statutory time limit, 99.2%. 1 was 21 working days and another took 30 working days. All requests dealt with outside the statutory time limit were due to absences of the relevant staff collating the data.
- There were 4 Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) cases closed during Quarters 1 and 2. 2 were not upheld, 1 was withdrawn and 1 was upheld.
- Providing such reports to Members always provided an opportunity to review what the service did and how it did it.
- A revised disclosure log had been provided on the Council's website. It was live and being used although the numbers were still relatively low.
- Work was continuing on the publication scheme.
- An all Member briefing was being organised on Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Requests (EIR) for 1 December 2025. The appointment would be sent out shortly. This would be online only and start at 5.15pm.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The disclosure logs on the website referred to 'attachments'. These by their nature were extremely large in terms of data and it was not manageable to include them on the Council's website, however, they could be provided upon request. The website explained how to do this.
- 2 officers worked in the FOI/EIR area, although they did not solely deal with FOI and many officers across the Council provided their own responses to requests. The all Member briefing would provide more information regarding the time and costs involved. Specific subjects would not be detailed but examples would be given.
- It was noted that the service was able to respond over 99% of the time within prescribed timescales.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

53 **REVIEW OF RESPONSES AND ACTIONS FROM SOUTH WEST WATER (00:20:00)**

This item was deferred to a future meeting.

54 **WORK PROGRAMME**

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

Suggestions made for the Work Plan were:

- Highways concerns, specifically the frequent damage caused to Bickleigh Bridge by heavy goods vehicles and what could be done to address this? The suggestion was made that an officer from the Highways Authority be invited to attend a future meeting. The Councillor making the suggestion was asked to complete a Scrutiny proposal form in the first instance to ensure that the issue met all of the necessary criteria first before being progressed.
- Speeding in Palmerston Park, again the Councillor was requested to either complete the necessary proposal form or speak to the Police direct.
- An up to date report on Town and Parish assets. It was suggested by the Chair that the Councillor raising the issue discussed the matter with the Chief Executive or Leader direct to see what could be gleaned as it was still too early in the Local Government Reorganisation process to bring any meaningful information to the Committee.

Note: * Forward Plan and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme were previously circulated.

(The meeting ended at 5.32 pm)

CHAIR