

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on Monday 10 November 2014 at 2.15pm

Present

Councillors: Mrs J Roach (Chairman), E J Berry, A V G Griffiths, M R Lee, Mrs J R Rendle, Cllr T W Snow and N A Way

Apologies

Councillors: T G Hughes and Mrs M E Turner MBE

Also Present

Councillors: R M Deed, Mrs L J Holloway, M A Lucas, D F Pugsley, R L Stanley, K D Wilson and N Woollatt

Also Present

Officers: J May (Head of Human Resources, Learning and Development), J Guscott (Head of Planning and Regeneration) A Tregellas (Head of Communities and Governance), S Noyce (Waste and Transport Manager) and J Stuckey (Member Services Officer)

91 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no members of the public in attendance.

92 **MEMBERS FORUM**

There were no issues raised under this item.

93 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING – 20 October 2014**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 October 2014 were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

94 **DECISIONS OF THE CABINET – 30 October 2014**

The Committee **NOTED** that none of the decisions made by the Cabinet on 30 October 2014 had been called in.

95 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman had no announcements to make.

96 **WASTE AND TRANSPORT MANAGER**

The Chairman introduced the new Waste and Transport Manager, Mr Stuart Noyce, to the Committee.

The Officer gave some background to the Route Optimisation project that had taken place in April 2014. He explained that the project had taken place with the intention of;

- Coinciding with the annual issue of collection calendars;
- Matching collection days for waste and recycling;

- Reducing costs by making routes more efficient;
- Introducing zone working.

He was pleased to confirm that all but 200 properties now had waste and recycling collections on the same day and that zone working was in place. This allowed for more economical management of events such as vehicle breakdown. The new routes had not proved to be as efficient as anticipated and savings had not materialised, however minor 'tweaking' was still taking place which would show some efficiencies.

The performance for missed collections had improved in the last quarter and was now back to a normal, or better than normal, level.

Recycling staff had been moved to 'task and finish' working on a trial basis and this had proved to be positive. The Officer was meeting with Human Resources that week to discuss options for making this permanent. A meeting had been scheduled for the waste staff to clarify task and finish.

Mileage for the recycling fleet had reduced following the move to the new depot in Tiverton. The Waste and Transport Manager agreed to provide the group with mileage savings following the meeting.

In general he informed the Committee that staff moral had improved and performance was back to normal levels.

Ten new recycling vehicles had been ordered which would be delivered over the next two months, with the first two vehicles expected shortly.

He continued by informing the Committee that the extra costs of implementing Route Optimisation, and dealing with the problems which occurred, was shown on Financial Monitoring as a variance. The Committee requested clarification about what figures were extra costs and which were savings not found.

Discussion took place regarding:

- New vehicles and their suitability to 'do the job';
- Savings that would be made on maintenance when the new vehicles were in service;
- The possibility of holding another WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) Amnesty at Station Yard;

The Committee discussed the matter of communal storage areas for recycling and waste at new developments in the District. The Head of Planning and Regeneration explained that there was a policy in place which required developers to provide adequate facilities for waste and recycling. He agreed that the Planning Service and Waste Service needed to liaise over future provision when the new scheme was agreed for October 2015.

The Waste and Transport Manager informed the Committee that he had staff (District Officers) that he would task to look into the ongoing matter of bins being permanently left outside at new properties in Cullompton. The Officer also informed the Committee that it was possible to educate/enforce recycling regarding households that continued to put out black sacks and not recycle at all.

RECOMMENDED that the Managing the Environment Policy Development Group look into areas of concern regarding the provision of facilities for waste and recycling in new developments.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

97 **HARLEQUIN VALET**

The Committee had before it * supportive documents provided by Councillors Mrs N Woollatt and Mrs L J Holloway who had requested that the Committee scrutinise the 'Independent Review of Matters Concerning Harlequin Valet, Cullompton' to consider whether the content of the report sufficiently addressed and answered the concerns which had led Cllr Woollatt to call for an inquiry, and to seek answers to any gaps which may be found.

Secondly, that based on the findings of the review and any subsequent findings from their scrutiny, that recommendations were formed to address problem areas.

Councillor Woollatt informed the Committee that in her opinion it was lucky that no serious injury or fatality had occurred following the collapse of the building concerned.

She explained that her concerns into how the matter had been dealt with had led to the original request for an inquiry which had resulted in the report which was being discussed today. However Councillor Woollatt considered that there were questions that remained unanswered and gaps in the time line which needed to be answered.

The Councillor pointed out that there was nothing in the report to say what action had been taken between 11th January 2010, when there was a fire at the premises and the 6th January 2011 when parts of the soffit and fascia fell from the building and then from December 2011 until January 2014 when there was a partial collapse at the building.

Councillor Mrs Holloway explained that she did not consider the 'Summary and Points for Consideration' part of the report to be specific enough. She felt that there needed to be recommendations put in place for actions that would prevent a similar situation occurring in the future.

It was **AGREED** to defer this item until the next meeting of the Committee so that Officers could investigate the time-line and fill any gaps. Also that recommendations be developed from the section titled summary and points for consideration.

Note: * previously circulated, copy attached to the minutes.

98 **COUNCILLOR D F PUGSLEY (01hrs.32mins.00secs)**

Councillor Pugsley asked the Committee if they considered the Council to actually have a powerful and effective system for holding decision-makers to public account?

Councillor Pugsley also asked why, with regard to a planning appeal at Bampton which ended up costing the Council £30K, the Planning Committee did not take the decision to resist the planning appeal at all costs?

Discussion took place regarding the effectiveness of the Councils Scrutiny function. It was agreed that if decisions were not made properly it was the role of the Scrutiny Committee to investigate. The earlier agenda item regarding the Harlequin Valet was an example of this.

The Committee discussed the lack of Officer support to the Committee and the fact that Officer support given is from the Committee Clerk and not a designated Scrutiny Officer and that the Lead Officer for Scrutiny had recently been changed. It was AGREED that lack of resource was part of the problem.

It was further **AGREED** that in future if the Committee requests the attendance of a decision maker, every effort should be made to ensure that this happens.

The Committee also discussed minutes of meetings and the fact that Chairman do not get to see the minutes before they were published on the internet.

RECOMMENDED to Council that in future all minutes of meetings are seen by the Chairman of the meeting prior to publication on the internet.

(Proposed by Cllr N A Way and seconded by A V G Griffiths)

It was felt that although there was still room for improvement the Scrutiny Committee was moving in the right direction with regard to holding decision makers to account.

99 **UPDATES AND ITEMS TO NOTE REGARDING OUTSTANDING ISSUES:
(02hrs.08mins.00secs)**

The updates were noted.

100 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING: 8 December 2014**

No additional item/s, other than those already identified in the work programme, were requested to be discussed at the next meeting:

Performance and Risk
Staff Recruitment – to include the use of Consultants
The Pro's and Cons of Cabinet v Committee
The cost of holding a referendum
Harlequin Valet

(The meeting ended at 4.23 pm)

CHAIRMAN