

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on 4 January 2016 at 2.00 pm

Present

Councillors

F J Rosamond (Chairman)
Mrs C P Daw, Mrs S Griggs, T G Hughes,
Mrs J Roach, T W Snow, N A Way, R Evans
and R F Radford

Apologies

Councillor(s)

Mrs H Bainbridge, Mrs J B Binks, B A Moore,
Mrs E J Slade and Mrs N Woollatt

Also Present

Councillor(s)

R L Stanley, N V Davey, C J Eginton, F W Letch and
R Wright

Also Present

Officer(s):

Kevin Finan (Chief Executive), Amy Tregellas (Head of Communities and Governance and Monitoring Officer), Andrew Jarrett (Head of Finance), Liz Reeves (Head of Customer Services), Stuart Noyce (Waste and Transport Manager) and Julia Stuckey (Member Services Officer)

99 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs J B Binks, Cllr B A Moore who was substituted by Cllr R F Radford, Cllr Mrs E J Slade who was substituted by Cllr R Evans and Cllr Mrs N Woollatt who was substituted by Cllr R M Deed.

100 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions from members of the public present.

101 **MEMBER FORUM**

There were no issues raised under this item.

102 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Subject to clarification regarding whether updates for the Pannier Market (Minute 95) would be three monthly or six monthly, the minutes of the last meeting were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

103 **DECISIONS OF THE CABINET**

The Chairman informed the Committee that Councillor Mrs J Roach supported by Councillors R M Deed, R J Dolley, F W Letch, J L Smith, Mrs N Woollatt and R Wright had called-in Minute 100, Car Parking Charging Proposals of the Cabinet meeting 17th December 2015.

Cllr Mrs Roach informed the Committee of her reasons for the call-in, explaining that in her opinion:

- There had not been a business case to clearly weigh up the effects of these increases on the economic viability of the three towns.
- The decision was contrary to stated aims of regenerating the three towns and the aim to improve the economy of the whole district. It was therefore against Council policy.
- No provision had been made for the people who might want to use the long stay car parks for one or two hours. This could well include people who wanted to visit MDDC offices. The Phoenix House car park was frequently full of people making use of the 'free' period thus forcing people into the multi storey.
- The charging structure as proposed had inconsistencies.
- The impact on the short stay car parks had not been factored into the equation. It was likely to result in an increased use of the short stay car parks and a subsequent and significant reduction in income in the multi storey.
- The multi storey was for many years underused because of the fear of vandalism to cars, some people also found it intimidating as there were so few cars using it, over the past twelve months there had been an increase in the number of cars using the multi storey and it no longer had the feeling of desolation.
- In Tiverton, people may also go back to using the M&S car park thus resulting in a loss of retail sales in the town centre and a loss of income to MDDC.

Cllr Roach further explained that she could not understand why decisions such as this were being taken in isolation and not being looked at holistically. She requested that the Committee consider the viability of the towns and the impact that a raise to parking charges could have.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The valued work undertaken by the Car Parking Working Group and the Policy Development Group;
- The effect of increased parking charges to on-street car parking;
- Competition from neighbouring districts for retailers;
- Reductions to short stay tariffs and free parking included in the proposals;
- The need to encourage dwell time in the town centres.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the Cabinet review its decision regarding the proposal from the Policy Development Group for Car Parking Charges.

(Proposed by Cllr Mrs J Roach and seconded by Cllr F J Rosamond)

Notes:- i) Report previously circulated and attached to Minutes.

ii) Cllr N A Way declared a personal interest as a Devon County Councillor

104 **CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING (00:34:28)**

The Committee had before it a position statement * from the Cabinet Member for Housing, summarising key areas within his portfolio.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Rough sleepers - of which 7 were currently registered with the authority. The Cabinet Member confirmed that arrangements were in place to accommodate these people in severe weather, if they required it;
- Right to buy – the Cabinet Member informed the Committee that calculations were currently being carried out to identify where the ‘tipping point’ would be with regard to the sale of properties. He explained that the authority held a debt on the properties and that income from rent was needed to cover this. There would become a point at which too many properties had been sold to cover the cost. He informed the Committee that building new properties was a way to avoid this as they were protected from right to buy for 15 years. The target was to build 300 homes in the next four years;
- Modular units and their advantages;
- The possibility of building on garage sites;
- The Government was pushing for home ownership rather than social renting;
- Affordability problems with property prices in Mid Devon;
- Temporary accommodation costs had been reduced by assisting people into private rent rather than bed and breakfast.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Chairman write, on behalf of the Committee, to the Minister for Housing to make the point that people in low paid employment, who were in Band E on the housing list, were in private rental accommodation with no security or long term tenure. They had no hope of buying their own home without a deposit, on a low income, or if self-employed. The Minister was to be asked what help would be given to help these people if social housing was not available?

(Proposed by Cllr Mrs J Roach and seconded by Cllr F J Rosamond)

Note: - * Position statement previously circulated and attached to the Minutes.

105 **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE (01:01:07)**

The Committee had before it and **NOTED** a quarterly update * from the Economic Development Officer.

The Head of Communities and Governance outlined the contents of the report and informed the Committee that all members of the Economic Development Team were

undertaking training in order that they could offer support and advice to businesses within Mid Devon.

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

106 **HEART OF THE SOUTH WEST FORMAL DEVOLUTION BID**

The Committee had before it and **NOTED** a report * from the Chief Executive, informing Members of the work being undertaken to draft a business case for a devolution bid for the Heart of the South West (HotSW). Members were invited to consider the report to inform debate at a future Council meeting.

The Chief Executive informed the Committee that nineteen authorities had met and had talked in broad terms regarding what Devolution might mean. The bid was being led by the Leaders of Somerset and Devon County Councils, all Somerset and Devon Districts, Torbay Council, Plymouth City Council, Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks and the Local Enterprise Partnership. It was hoped that finalised documents would be prepared which could be debated at an Extraordinary Meeting of Council on 27th January 2016.

The Committee discussed the difficulty in moving forward with Devolution due to the number of as yet 'unknowns' and the Chief Executive agreed that at this stage Members needed to be aware of what was being discussed in order to ensure that the Authority was involved in decision making when the time came.

Note:- * Report previously circulated and attached to Minutes.

107 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman informed the Committee that the Mr Mel Stride MP had offered to attend a meeting of the Committee at 5.00pm on a Friday. The Committee **AGREED** that a Special Meeting be put in place for this. It was **AGREED** that an officer from the Clinical Commissioning Group be invited to attend the same meeting.

The Committee expressed their thanks to the Chief Executive for this hard work and wished him well in retirement.

108 **UPDATES AND ITEMS TO NOTE REGARDING OUTSTANDING ITEMS (01.33.59)**

The Committee had before it * the results of a survey undertaken regarding Devon Safeguarding.

The Head of Communities and Governance explained that the survey had been carried out in the previous year and that Mid Devon had submitted 49 responses. Since the survey had been carried out all staff at Mid Devon District Council, with Safeguarding responsibilities, had attended training.

Discussion took place regarding a recent safeguarding incident that had taken place at a property managed by Mid Devon District Council Housing Services. The Officer explained that a review regarding the circumstances at the property was being undertaken by a multi-agency group, including Devon County Council and the Police. Housing staff had been aware of issues at the property and had attended to deal with

anti-social behaviour reports. However, there had been no children at the property on each occasion that officers had visited. It appeared that a number of referrals had been made to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) by the school but that these reports had not been acted upon.

It was **RESOLVED** to invite the Chairman of the Devon Safeguarding Board, the Devon County Council Portfolio Holder and the senior officer at Devon County Council to attend a meeting of the Committee to answer questions regarding the number of referrals, who they had been made by, whether or not they were followed up and if not why not.

(Proposed by Cllr Mrs J Roach and seconded by Cllr F J Rosamond)

Note: - * Survey previously circulated and attached to Minutes.

109 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

Closure of Hospital Wards
Rural Broadband
Digitalisation for Members
Town Hall Development Site
St Andrews Street Project
Policy for the removal of Gypsies and Travellers from Council owned land
Planning Enforcement Performance
Budget
Cabinet Member for Working Environment and Support Services
Environment Agency Contamination Report
Planning Enforcement Performance
Mel Stride MP

(The meeting ended at 4.03 pm)

CHAIRMAN