

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on 18 April 2016 at 2.00 pm

Present

Councillors

F J Rosamond (Chairman)
Mrs H Bainbridge, T G Hughes,
Mrs J Roach, T W Snow, Mrs G Doe,
Mrs A R Berry, R Evans, D J Knowles and
Miss C E L Slade

Apologies

Councillor(s)

Mrs C P Daw, Mrs S Griggs, N A Way and R M Deed

Also Present

Councillor(s)

R L Stanley and Mrs M E Squires

Also Present

Officer(s):

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

153 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs C P Daw who was substituted by Cllr Miss C E L Slade, Cllr Mrs S Griggs, Cllr N A Way and Cllr R M Deed who was substituted by Cllr D J Knowles.

154 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public present.

155 MEMBER FORUM

Cllr Mrs J Roach raised the matter of Safeguarding and the review that was being undertaken by Devon County Council following an incident in Tiverton. The Head of Communities and Governance informed the Committee that the appreciative enquiry had now been completed and that a high level verbal summary had been issued. The officer was waiting for the lead officer to report back to her and hoped that an update would be provided at the next meeting.

Cllr T W Snow raised the matter of recycling materials being sent to landfill in some areas of the country due to the fall in their value. The Head of Communities and Governance assured the Committee that officers kept a close eye on the value of materials and worked with other local authorities to ensure that the best prices were obtained.

156 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

157 DECISIONS OF THE CABINET

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

158 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman thanked the Committee for their contribution in the last year.

159 CABINET MEMBER FOR THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT AND SUPPORT SERVICES

The Committee had before it a report * updating it on services covered within the remit of the Cabinet Member for the Working Environment and Support Services.

The Cabinet Member outlined the contents of the report. Discussion took place regarding:

Community Safety – a project to upgrade the CCTV system in Tiverton was underway which would improve picture quality;

Fly tipping and whether offenders could be prosecuted if evidence of their address was found within the waste;

Anti-social behaviour and statistics which were reported to the Community Well Being Policy Development Group (PDG) annually;

Modern Day Slavery was considered to be a high risk in Mid Devon owing to the high number of jobs in agriculture;

The Cabinet Member attended the monthly Police and Crime Commissioners Scrutiny Panel;

Computer fraud and the risks of this;

Electoral Services were busy organising two elections, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the EU Referendum;

Electoral Registration encouraged 16 years olds to register to ensure that they could vote when they were 18;

Legal Services – whether or not the Legal Service was adequately staffed to cope with the high level of work that was being processed due, in the main, to property sale and purchase. The Head of Communities and Governance informed the Committee that a new Business Support Officer had been appointed and that the Legal Executive was leaving and was being replaced by a Solicitor. She was

constantly reviewing the situation, was aware of issues caused by delays in legal work and was working with the team to rectify this;

Public Health – Concerns regarding the health of staff and their ability to continue manual lifting as they would be required to work to an older age and the question of whether they would be able to undertake such physical work;

The Public Health agenda appeared to give no reference to diet and nutrition;

How the Public Health agenda was determined;

Customer Services – The Crediton Office had closed and the Town Council had been moved downstairs. The Town Council were being very helpful in dealing with the public and had been provided with a leaflet giving all contact details for the authority. A surgery was being held fortnightly to ease the transition;

A personal experience of the ‘tell us once’ scheme was praised;

The Annual Complaints report which was reported to Cabinet annually;

Freedom of Information data files not being published on the website which the Cabinet Member would look into;

Human Resources – the annual appraisal system was being reviewed to consist of more regular discussion throughout the year.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for her comprehensive report.

Notes: i) Cllr Mrs J Roach declared a personal interest as she was working with a charity that was purchasing a property from the authority and the Legal Service was dealing with the sale.

ii) * Report previously circulated and attached to Minutes.

160 **RIPA UPDATE**

The Committee had before it a six monthly update * from the Legal Services Manager regarding RIPA.

The Head of Communities and Governance outlined the contents of the report, confirming that there had been no cases of RIPA being used in the year 2015-16. Usage had decreased due to the Protection of Freedoms Act which prevented the use of covert surveillance for crimes that did not hold a sentence of at least six months.

The Officer confirmed that recommendations and actions from the Office of Surveillance Commissioners had been completed, other than training which was ongoing.

Discussion took place regarding;

- There was a potential to use covert surveillance to prosecute for fly tipping;

- It was necessary to go before the magistrates for permission prior to any investigation;
- Successful prosecutions had taken place in the past regarding fly tipping but could be expensive.

Note: * Report previously circulated and attached to Minutes.

161 **COMMUNICATIONS WORKING GROUP SIX-MONTHLY REVIEW**

The Group had before it a report * from the Head of Customer Services regarding recommendations from the Communications Working Group. The Officer explained that the Working Group had been put in place in August 2013 and progress on their recommendations had been reviewed six-monthly since then.

Discussion took place regarding the fact that the Chief Executive had shown some concerns regarding communication and it was **RESOLVED** that this matter be left with him to move forward.

It was **AGREED** that an agenda item be added for 12 months' time in order that Members could assess progress from a Members perspective.

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

Note: Report previously circulated and attached to Minutes.

162 **COUNCIL WEBSITE**

The Committee had before it a report * from the Head of Customer Services regarding the authority's website. The officer explained that the website should be the first port of call for members of the public and should be seen as a 'shop window' as well as a place for carrying out tasks.

Discussion took place regarding recent changes which had made it more difficult for Members to access Committee pages and the need for improvements to the search facility regarding the Councillor and Democracy pages. The Head of Customer Services agreed to look into this.

Note: Report previously circulated and attached to Minutes.

163 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT**

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a draft report * by the Chairman on the work of the Committee since May 2015. Subject to a few minor grammatical changes a final copy of this report would be submitted to Council on 27 April 2016.

Note: - Report previously circulated and attached to Minutes.

164 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

Tiverton Pannier Market

Review of Planning Committee Procedures
Devolution
Safeguarding
5 Year Land Supply
PORTAS

(The meeting ended at 4.00 pm)

CHAIRMAN