

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **CABINET** held on 7 July 2016 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors

C J Eginton (Leader)
R J Chesterton, P H D Hare-Scott,
C R Slade and R L Stanley

Apologies

Councillor(s)

N V Davey and Mrs M E Squires

Also Present

Councillor(s)

Mrs J Roach and F J Rosamond

Also Present

Officer(s):

Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Amy Tregellas (Head of Communities and Governance and Monitoring Officer), Jenny Clifford (Head of Planning and Regeneration) and Julia Stuckey (Member Services Officer)

30. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors N V Davey and Mrs M E Squires.

31. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public in attendance.

32. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Subject to an amendment to Minute 21 to show that Cllr C R Slade declared a personal interest the minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 June 2016 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

33. PROPOSED CHANGES TO COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME

Arising from a report * of the Head of Finance, the Community Well Being Policy Development Group has made the following recommendation: that Cabinet note the reasons for the proposal, the consultation process and requirement to approve a revised scheme by 31 January 2017.

The Cabinet Member for Finance explained that Council Tax Reduction (CTR) (also known as Council Tax Support) was introduced on 1 April 2013 and replaced Council Tax Benefit, which had been previously fully funded by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

CTR was a local reduction scheme. The scheme for working-age customers (those below the age to claim State Pension) was set out in the CTR Scheme Policy. The requirement to have a policy was within S13A and Schedule 1a of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

The scheme for pension-age customers was a national scheme and was prescribed within Government legislation. Pensioners were protected in order to receive the same level of support they received under the DWP Council Tax Benefit Scheme up to 31 March 2013.

The scheme had been discussed at a recent meeting of Chief Executives in Devon and it had been agreed that minor changes should be considered. In order to undertake any changes it was necessary to go out to consultation. It had been agreed that Devon County Council (DCC) would undertake the consultation. Proposed changes were to align to the current criteria for housing benefit claims and Universal Credit.

Results of the consultation would be fed back to the Group in September.

Consideration was given to:

- Consultation which would be mainly web-based but would also involve direct communication with those known to be affected, and consultation with stakeholders such as CHAT (Churches Housing Action Group) and the Citizens Advice Bureau would also take place;
- Proposed changes only applied to those making new claims from April 2017 and self-employed applicants.

RESOLVED that the reasons for the proposal, the consultation process and requirement to approve a revised scheme by 31 January 2017 be **NOTED**.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

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

34. **SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY AND PROCEDURES JULY 2016 (00:06:00)**

Arising from a report * of the Head of Communities and Governance, the Community Well Being Policy Development Group had made the following recommendation: that subject to an amendment to make clear that the Lead Member referred to within the report was the Cabinet Member for the Working Environment and Support Services the Cabinet approve the Devon District Councils joint Safeguarding Policy and the MDDC guidance and procedures.

The Head of Communities and Governance outlined the contents of the report, informing Members that she had been working with other Devon Authorities to form a joint policy. This policy clearly defined the roles to be played. A training programme for officers and Members would be rolled out once the policy was agreed.

Clarification was given regarding who was the 'Lead Member' referred to in the policy. It was confirmed that the Lead Member was the Cabinet Member for Working Environment and Support Services.

Consideration was given to:

- The reporting form at appendix C should be easily available for Members and officers to access;
- The term vulnerable adults should be replaced with adults at risk throughout the report, for consistency;
- Adequate training must be provided and the potential to provide external training to be investigated.

RESOLVED that the recommendation be approved.

(Proposed by Cllr C R Slade and seconded by Cllr P H D Hare Scott)

Note: - *Report previously circulated, copy attached to minutes.

35. **EARLY HELP SERVICES (00:17:00)**

Arising from a report * of the Head of Communities and Governance, the Community Well Being Policy Development Group had made the following recommendation: that Cabinet approve the Working Practice Agreement for the sharing of information to support Early Help Provision.

The Cabinet Member for the Working Environment and Support Services outlined the contents of the report explaining that the Troubled Families Programme was set up by Central Government in 2011 to 'turn around' the lives of 'the most troubled families' in Britain. The three-year funded programme was extended in 2014 for a further 2 years with the intention that the 'new approach' should be mainstreamed as part of the preventative services available to support children and families in need.

In Devon over the last two years, the Troubled Families Programme had evolved into 'Early Help'. Early Help described a range of multi-agency support services offered to children, young people and families in response to their emerging needs. 'Early Help' aimed to prevent the multiple and often complex needs of families escalating to a degree where they required more expensive specialist support or legal intervention. In this way the service had the dual objectives of protecting children and of reducing the costs of multiple interventions.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Housing Services were working with the multi agencies to identify those at risk;
- Links with Safeguarding;
- Current levels of staffing and whether they were sufficient.

RESOLVED that the recommendation be approved.

(Proposed by Cllr C R Slade and seconded by Cllr P H D Hare-Scott)

Note: - *Report previously circulated, copy attached to minutes.

36. **DEVOLUTION FOR MID DEVON WITHIN THE HEART OF THE SOUTH WEST (00:23:56)**

The Cabinet had before it a * report of the Chief Executive seeking agreement on the principle of a Combined Authority for the Heart of the South West, as set out in the Prospectus for Productivity, as the basis for negotiation with Government towards a Devolution Deal for the area.

The Leader outlined the contents of the report stating that the principle was to create a combined authority and that the intention was that it would be a non-mayoral authority. He explained that a number of authorities involved had already stated that they were not prepared to be involved with a Mayoral combined authority.

Consideration was given to:

- The use of language within the report and some areas not being clear;
- The report was common to all 17 authorities;
- The report was not about becoming a unitary authority or being 'taken over' but was about finding a suitable governance system. It sought to make clear what form of governance needed to be put in place locally in order to take on devolved powers;
- Possible impacts on the junction 27 development;
- Potential changes to funding following BREXIT.

RESOLVED that:

The current approach to devolution be endorsed and the principle of creating a Combined Authority for the Heart of the South West, as set out in the Prospectus for Productivity, as the basis for negotiation with Government towards a Devolution Deal for the area be agreed;

The following be **NOTED**: giving this endorsement does not commit the Council to entering into a Devolution Deal or becoming a member of a Heart of the South West Combined Authority. This would be subject to future debate and agreement by the Council and subject to negotiations with Government.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Note: - *Report previously circulated, copy attached to minutes.

37. **SENIOR OFFICER STRUCTURE REVISIONS (00:42:00)**

The Cabinet had before it a * report of the Chief Executive seeking to modernise the senior officer structure and allow for changes to terms and conditions that strengthen the link between performance, delivery and members' ability to hold their senior officers to account; and to amend annual leave entitlements as part of ongoing employee relations.

The Chief Executive outlined the contents of the report stating that since he had been in post he had been looking at where the authority was, what was needed and where it was going. The report outlined the structure that would help to get there. He explained that the new posts would require different terms and conditions to other officers and would not be on a standard 37 hour week. Assessment of these staff would be linked to the Cabinet and opposition leaders in order that they could have a say in how senior officers served the council. Levels of pay would not exceed levels in neighbouring authorities. The Chief Executive also explained that he was undertaking a formal process to imbed the three days extra leave normally taken by officers during the Christmas/New Year close down period within normal leave allowances. The offices would not be closed during the following Christmas/New Year period.

Consideration was given to whether senior officers should be part of the flexi scheme and who would undertake appraisals.

RESOLVED that

1. The Chief Executive revises the staffing structure of his most senior staff as per this report.
2. Subject to any issues raised during consultation, the Chief Executive and the three Director posts are moved to a 'spot point' system on a 'whole time' basis and that the stated 37 hour week and rights to TOIL/flexi-time are contractually removed.
3. The assessment and appraisal mechanism of the Chief Executive and the three Director posts is linked to achievement of the council's corporate plan and that any future pay/reward element is determined (locally) by the Cabinet, having mind to the national pay offer where appropriate, and the input of opposition group leaders.
4. Pay levels of the revised posts are set in consultation with SW Councils, will not exceed their current position relative to other Devon Districts, and that decisions on any future pay increases for the Chief Executive/Director posts are reported to full council within the annual Establishment Report to ensure full transparency.
5. Revision is made to contractual annual leave allowances for all staff, subject to consultation with the union, to recognise the longstanding 'extra' day that has been given to staff due to the closure of offices over Christmas.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Note: - *Report previously circulated, copy attached to minutes.

38. PROPOSED GREATER EXETER STRATEGIC PLAN (00:50:46)

The Cabinet had before it a report * of the Head of Planning and Regeneration requesting consideration of a proposal for a joint strategic plan for the Greater Exeter area which would be prepared in partnership between East Devon District Council,

Exeter City Council, Mid Devon District Council and Teignbridge District Council with assistance from Devon County Council. The plan would cover the geographical area of the 4 partner authorities (excluding the area of Dartmoor National Park) but would be limited in scope to cover strategic issues and strategic allocations within those areas with local issues to be considered through linked local plans prepared by each partner authority for their area.

Councils were required to work together on strategic planning issues under the duty to co-operate that forms part of the National Planning Policy Framework, which must include consideration by those councils of preparing joint plans. In the case of the “Greater Exeter” area a joint plan covering strategy matters was considered to be a particularly appropriate way of ensuring a collaborative and co-ordinated approach to the delivery of the development needs of the Greater Exeter area. The functional geography reflects the travel to work area and housing market area. There were also considered to be potential cost saving benefits to the joint preparation of a plan. The report has been agreed jointly by Exeter City Council, East Devon District Council, Mid Devon District Council and Teignbridge District Council officers.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration explained that it was still early in the process and that the Local Plan had not yet been adopted. This was about working closely with the 3 neighbours regarding planning and growth and would feed into Local Plans of the future.

Consideration was given to:

- How the plan would work with devolution;
- Exeter needed to expand and the authority would be part of the decision making process for this;
- Ward Members would be involved in consultation;
- Governance arrangements would be in a further report.

RECOMMENDED that:

A Strategic Plan be prepared for the development of the Greater Exeter area intended to cover the period up to 2040 and that it be jointly prepared by East Devon, Mid Devon and Teignbridge District Councils and Exeter City Council with the support of Devon County Council.

A joint budget of £330,000 be established for the current financial year to fund the preparation of the necessary evidence base for the plan on the basis of an equal split of £70,000 per district level authority with DCC also contributing and holding the joint budget.

A detailed scope, timetable, terms of reference, governance and staffing arrangements be worked up for a joint Strategic Plan and reported to Members at their next available meeting.

(Proposed by Cllr R J Chesterton and seconded by Cllr C R Slade)

Note: - *Report previously circulated, copy attached to minutes.

39. **ASSET MANAGEMENT AND CAPITAL STRATEGY PLAN (01.04.05)**

The Cabinet had before it a * report of the Head of Housing and Property Services (deferred from 10 March 2015 meeting) regarding the revised Asset Management and Capital Strategy Plan for 2016-2020.

The Cabinet Member for Housing outlined the contents of the report stating that the Asset Management Plan (AMP) set out the Councils approach to strategic management of its land and building assets. It was developed in consultation with the senior officers and Members of the Council that formed the Capital Strategy Asset Management Group (CSAG). The AMP sought to ensure that assets were used in the most effective and efficient way to support and deliver the Corporate Plan.

Consideration was given to the need to be fair and consistent and options regarding the Town Hall site.

RESOLVED that the Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan 2016 – 2020 that provides the base for future asset management planning be endorsed.

(Proposed by Cllr R L Stanley and seconded by Cllr R J Chesterton)

Notes: - i) *Report previously circulated, copy attached to minutes.

ii) Cllr Mrs J Roach declared a personal interest as she was involved with the Room4U project.

40. **CABINET MEMBER INDIVIDUAL DECISION**

The Cabinet **NOTED** that following decision has been made by the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration under delegated powers:

To provide funding for Crediton Town Team to organise the Crediton Festival 2017, the Crediton Food Festival 2017 (in liaison with Crediton Arts Centre) and events to celebrate and raise awareness of the life of St. Boniface. Together with the annual Crediton Flags Project and Crediton at Christmas, which are funded separately, the Crediton Festival, Food Festival and St. Boniface celebrations are activities that contribute significantly to raising the profile of Crediton and bringing more business into the town. However, all of these events are entering a stage of transition as their established organisers are winding down their involvement or moving on to new initiatives. In order to retain continuity during this period of change and establish all events on a more sustainable financial footing for 2017 and beyond, the proposal is for the Town Team to contract an organiser/facilitator to ensure the 2017 events happen while the Council's Grants and Funding Officer identifies sustainable funding streams for 2018 and beyond. The cumulative cost of bringing in an organiser/facilitator for the next 12-18 months is £8,325, which will be paid from the remnants of the High Street Innovation Fund and the Council's LABGI (Local Authority Business Growth Incentive) budget.

41. **NOTIFICATION OF KEY DECISIONS**

The Cabinet had before it, and **NOTED**, its rolling plan * for July 2016 containing future key decisions.

Note: * Plan previously circulated; copy attached to the signed Minutes

(The meeting ended at 3.26 pm)

CHAIRMAN