

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on 12 September 2016 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors

F J Rosamond (Chairman)
Mrs H Bainbridge, Mrs A R Berry,
Mrs C P Daw, S G Flaws, Mrs S Griggs,
T G Hughes, Mrs J Roach, J L Smith,
T W Snow and N A Way

Apologies

Councillor(s)

Mrs G Doe

Also Present

Councillor(s)

R M Deed, Mrs M E Squires and R L Stanley

Also Present

Officer(s):

Jill May (Director of Corporate Affairs and Business Transformation), Catherine Yandle (Internal Audit Team Leader) and Julia Stuckey (Member Services Officer)

48 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs G Doe.

49 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no members of the public present.

50 **MEMBER FORUM**

There were no issues raised under this item.

51 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

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

52 **DECISIONS OF THE CABINET**

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

53 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman welcomed Cllr S Flaws to the Committee and welcomed Cllr T G Hughes back following an injury.

54 ESTABLISHMENT

The Committee had before it and **NOTED** a report * from the Director of Corporate Affairs and Business Transformation updating Members on numbers of staff, staff movement and any areas of concern. The officer explained that a significant amount of change had been undertaken during the past 12 months and this continued to deliver a more effective and efficient service. It was clear, however, that more needed to be done and changes to the structure of the Council would be ongoing. As a result of service restructures, 16 posts had been removed from the establishment. In addition, 7 employees were dismissed, 5 completed their fixed term contracts, 1 was a non-starter and the remaining 43 were voluntary resignations/retirements. The officer explained the thorough process that had to be completed in order to gain authority to fill a vacancy, which included asking the manager to consider other options such as reduced hours or splitting the role.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Succession planning and the need to ensure that staff had the right skills to move forward in the future;
- 6 apprentices had been taken on and some had been appointed to permanent posts;
- Agency workers and the fact that they could be used to cover annual leave and sickness;
- Discussions that were taking place with Waste and Recycling staff regarding 'catch up' Saturdays following Bank Holidays;
- Managers had been trained to help them identify the signs of stress;
- Staff turnover was 12.75% with the national average being 9%;

It was **AGREED** that a report regarding the establishment be received annually by the Committee.

Members thanked officers for the work that had been done to bring down stress levels from 17% to 10%.

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

55 PERFORMANCE AND RISK

The Committee had before it and **NOTED** a report * providing Members with an update on performance against the Corporate Plan and local service targets for 2016-17 as well as providing an update on the key business risks.

The Audit Team Leader explained that the Performance Indicators within the report had been amended to reflect the new Corporate Plan.

Discussion took place regarding:

- An officer had been appointed in conjunction with Exeter City Council to look at initiatives to bring empty homes back into use;
- Planning performance and the fact that 37 applications had exceeded 13 weeks;
- Car parking issues at leisure centres and the options available to relieve the problem;
- Structural issues at the Pannier Market with the glass doors and the potential to make changes to the area.

A staircase in a property at St Andrews Street that did not meet current building regulation standards due to conservation requirements was discussed and it was **AGREED** that further clarification be sought regarding this.

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

56 **CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING**

The Committee had before it and **NOTED** a briefing paper * from the Cabinet Member for Housing updating it regarding areas covered by his remit.

The Cabinet Member outlined the contents of the report and discussion took place regarding:

- DARS (Deposit and Rents), a loan scheme that provided deposits so that people could rent a property privately;
- The number of repairs that were carried out and procedures that were in place to recharge when appropriate;
- The housing stock was old and therefore expensive to maintain;
- Tenancy Agreements stipulated that properties and gardens must be kept in good order;
- The caretaker service which maintained communal areas;
- The cost of repairs for void properties;
- Rent reductions imposed by Government and the impact on funding available for future repairs and investments;
- The potential future expense of removing asbestos from properties;
- The project at Palmerston Park which had fallen behind schedule and the work that had been undertaken with the contractor in an attempt to resolve issues;

- Waddeton Park and the possibility that the developer would not be progressing the project at this stage;
- The potential to buy 'off plan' from developers;
- 'Pay to Stay' and the difficulties in operating the scheme.

The Committee commended the Cabinet Member for his report.

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

57 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

- Planning Design Guides – how do Mid Devon Planners agree housing design?
- Flood Prevention, Land drainage responsibilities
- An overview of the expenditure Section 106 monies
- Clinical Commissioning Group

(The meeting ended at 4.15 pm)

CHAIRMAN