

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on 22 May 2017 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors

F J Rosamond (Chairman)
Mrs H Bainbridge, Mrs A R Berry,
Mrs C P Daw, Mrs G Doe, T G Hughes,
Mrs B M Hull, Mrs J Roach, J L Smith,
T W Snow and N A Way

Apologies

Councillor(s)

S G Flaws

Also Present

Officer(s):

Andrew Pritchard (Director of Operations), Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Sally Gabriel (Member Services Manager) and Julia Stuckey (Member Services Officer)

1 **ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED that Cllr T G Hughes be elected Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the municipal year 2017/18.

2 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Apologies were received from Cllr S G Flaws.

3 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions from the members of the public in attendance.

4 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

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

5 **DECISIONS OF THE CABINET**

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

6 **MEMBER FORUM**

Discussion took place regarding Crosssparks, which had been an agenda item at the previous meeting, and a meeting that had taken place with Devon County Council and Public Health England on 24th April. Officers had been in attendance, and the Ward Members had asked to attend. An update from this meeting was requested. Members also requested that a thorough report regarding Crosssparks be on the agenda for the next meeting.

7 MEETING MANAGEMENT

The Chairman proposed that item 8 on the agenda be taken before item 7.

8 LOCAL POLICE INSPECTOR

The Chairman welcomed Sector Inspector Steve Bradford and Sergeant Mike Warriner to the meeting. The following questions were asked:

How can the Force continue to defend their woeful front line officer levels when a burglary in progress, 50 yards from Tiverton Police Station was not attended, resulting in the offenders returning a second time to remove more property, even though reported on both occasions by the public?

Inspector Bradford informed Members that the force had been going through a restructure and reduction in officer numbers for a number of years. He could not defend the fact that the burglary was not attended but confirmed that his officers had been committed to other incidents at the time. He had reviewed the incident and was using it in order to improve future service. He confirmed that the crime was now being investigated. With regard to numbers Inspector Bradford informed the Committee that numbers of officers had fallen, that funding cuts had to be dealt with and that restructuring had taken place. He was therefore looking at how best to deploy the resources he had and was considering the use of different types of response. Specialist resources would be drawn on and going forward he would be considering how best to deal with situations and how to make best use of resources available.

What is your view of the night time Economy in the three towns -Tiverton, Cullompton and CREDITON? Are there problems?

Inspector Bradford informed the Committee that he had spoken to the Licensing Officer who confirmed that problems regarding the night time economy within the main towns had lessened. He reported that there were the expected alcohol and alcohol related incidents but that the numbers of incidents had reduced. Officers were deployed as and when incidents occurred and at times of high demand, such as bank holidays, officers were on patrol. Cullompton and Crediton did not have nightclubs but Tiverton did and officers worked with the Licensee and Licensing Officers regarding this.

Is MDDC proactive enough?

The Inspector considered that they were and that there was a good relationship between the Police Licensing Officers and Mid Devon's Licensing Officers. Joint visits to premises were undertaken. Police Officers also worked in partnership with officers from the Housing Service regarding anti-social behaviour.

What are your policing priorities?

Inspector Bradford responded that he had to be able to deal with incidents as they happened so there was an element of reaction but there was also an understanding of what was happening and where it was necessary to put patrols or work with

partners or preventative work. Priorities had changed over the last few years and issues such as organised crime and safeguarding children had become priorities. Officers were dealing with issues such as child sexual exploitation and modern day slavery. There was a change in emphasis but policing was still about looking after people.

The Inspector was asked how the removal of the Police Community Safety Officer would affect the service provided and he replied that his neighbourhood teams were working on safeguarding and long term problem solving. He outlined the resources available in the district and explained that there was a need to maintain a visibility but also to deal with ongoing incidents.

Many express concern about the absence of community policing, particularly in rural areas, and the poor response from 101 when situations are reported. Do you share those concerns?

The Inspector said that policing had changed and that resources were drawn towards the centre. Officer time was better spent carrying out duties rather than attending Parish Council meetings, to which a report could be sent, freeing up officer time. The urban areas had more issues.

Tiverton Station was a very intimidating place. Many police officers were often present but offered no access for the public except for a very public and exposed external telephone to report concerns. The PCC said that she would look into making access more "customer friendly" Is there likely to be any action on this?

The Inspector informed Members that methods of contacting the force were changing. The public were urged to use the 101 line and email. The Force was considering office-sharing in some areas, with local councils, but this was not currently planned for Tiverton, he did however agree that the Authority needed to listen to concerns.

Please could Parish Councils have a direct line number to report crime, when there is an emergency, rather than going through the 101 service?

The Inspector informed the Committee that this was not something that he would be considering and he explained that it was better for callers to use the Force system so that calls were registered and prioritised.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The recent burglary near to the Police Station and an explanation from Sergeant Warriner regarding the allocation of resources at the time of the incident;
- The reporting of parking issues and the need for the Police to prioritise their workload;
- The suggestion that Councillors provide photographic evidence of parking issues that could then be taken up by Police officers;

- The fact that officers were dealing with higher profile incidents that were not visible to the public in the way that parking issues were but were higher priority due to their seriousness;
- The increase in cybercrime and identity theft and the work that was being undertaken to combat this by prevention;
- The constant review of back office functions and the move towards mobile data working;
- Specials, and what was being done to recruit them in the District;
- The recent high profile resignation of a female officer in the area and programmes that were in place to look after the welfare of officers.

The Chairman thanked Inspector Bradford and Sergeant Warriner for their attendance.

9 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman informed Members that he had received a letter and note from Mel Stride MP regarding the matter of the 5 year land supply that the MP was planning to discuss with the Secretary of State. He confirmed that this matter would be discussed if he was re-elected at the General Election.

10 PARISH LIAISON WORKING GROUP

The Committee had before it a report * from the Parish Liaison Working Group.

At its meeting on 19th August 2016 the Committee had resolved to form working group following a report from a Parish Council that they had not received important information which Parishes in East Devon had received. Members considered that more information should be passed to Town and Parish Councils and in particular that there had been a lack of information regarding Planning Enforcement. The Committee had agreed that information and contact with Town and Parish Councils had reduced over recent times.

The Working Group consisted of Cllr F J Rosamond, Cllr Mrs G Doe and Cllr A R Berry. The Working Group was assisted by Sally Gabriel, Member Services Manager and Julia Stuckey, Parish Liaison Officer.

The Member Services Manager outlined the contents of the report, explaining that the officer who had undertaken Parish Liaison in the past had been moved to different projects a number of months prior to the formation of the working group and that her work regarding Towns and Parishes had not been covered. As a budget saving exercise this work had since been transferred to the Member Services Team, with a team member being appointed as Parish Liaison Officer, and that this would allow the team to better communicate with Towns and Parish as well as District Councillors.

The Parish Liaison Officer had proposed some means of improving communication with Towns and Parishes and some of these had been implemented. The Town and

Parish Newsletter had been reinstated and the towns and parishes had been asked to contribute good news stories. Some joint training had taking place with regard to iPads and social media.

Cllr Doe reported that she had taken a delegation of Parish Councillors from Lapford to Uffculme to meet with Councillors there who had set up a café in the square. She reported that all concerned had found it to be a worthwhile exercise and that she would provide an update on this for the Town and Parish Newsletter.

The Working Group had been pleased with the work that had been undertaken and had put forward some recommendations for further improvement.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The Chairman of the Council visiting Town and Parish Councils throughout the year;
- The need for Members to be kept informed so that they could in turn update Town and parish Councils;
- The benefit of Members attending local meetings to keep them up to date.

The Committee reviewed the recommendations from the group and it was **RESOLVED** that:

- Parish Councils be asked to share 'good news' with other towns and parishes via the newsletter;
- Silverton Parish Council be asked to share information regarding their Neighbourhood Plan with others via the newsletter;
- Uffculme Parish Council be asked to share good news regarding their 'café in the square';
- A Parish Clerk be invited to write a 'profile of a clerk';
- A couple of Members had been identified as not attending or cascading information to their Parish Councils and the Member Services Manager would speak to them regarding this;
- An item be placed in WIS to remind all Members of the importance of liaising with towns and parishes;
- A report be put together for the Scrutiny Committee to update them.

And it was further **RESOLVED** that:

- That a method of keeping Ward Members informed be implemented regarding matters pertaining to their Ward.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

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

11 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT SIX MONTHLY UPDATE

The Committee had before it a report* from the Member Services Manager regarding Member Development.

The officer outlined the contents of the report, highlighting the fact that the South West Charter for Member Development had been secured for a further three years following a lengthy evidence gathering exercise which also included Members and senior officers attending interviews with the examining board. Reassessment to secure the Charter took place in 2014 and again in April of this year by the Chief Executive and Head of Learning at South West Councils, alongside a Councillor from Bristol City Council.

Feedback regarding the Charter included positive comments for the parish liaison work being undertaken, additional work that could be undertaken if Charter Plus should be sought in three years' time, suggestions that there was a need for Members to continue learning and strategic links to corporate priorities.

The report also included information regarding training delivered, the need to revisit personal development plans and future development opportunities.

The officer further informed Members that the Member Development Group had asked officers to try and establish what barriers there were to training and to survey preferred timings for Member briefings.

Mid-term training was planned for Scrutiny and Policy Development Groups (PDG's). The Peer Review had identified the need for the PDG's to become more strategic.

The Chief Executive highlighted the importance of Member attendance at briefings and stressed the need for Members to have full information when challenging officers. He informed the Committee that he was writing a discussion paper for the PDG's and their Chairmen, which would be reviewed by the Programming Panel. This paper would scope how the Groups should go about their business and how they could become more involved in policy development. The Chief Executive went on to suggest that in order to remove conflict from an officer leading a team and reporting to the Committee a research officer could undertake work on behalf of Members and report back independently.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Attendance at briefings;
- The cultural change needed;
- Crediton Leisure centre and remote attendance at briefings;
- Personal Development Plans could be used to discuss attendance.

Members requested that their thanks to the Member Services Manager and her team be **NOTED**.

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

12 COMMUNICATIONS WORKING GROUP

The Chairman of the Communication Working Group informed Members that the Group had carried out one consultation in Tiverton. He reported that the Group had been pleased with the response and that residents had appeared happy to speak and it was not all 'doom and gloom'. Further consultation would be taking place in Crediton and Cullompton and Ward Members were invited to attend.

13 PERFORMANCE AND RISK

The Committee had before it 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 was unable to attend the meeting so had asked that any questions regarding this report be forwarded to her for response following the meeting.

The Committee reviewed the report and the following was discussed:

- Instances where an injunction had been required to gain entry into a tenant's house for gas testing. It was **AGREED** that the Housing Service be asked to consider external points for testing;
- Whether or not Food Safety Certificate information regarding who had passed the course could be available to view on the internet;
- Empty shops in the District and whether or not there was any correlation with car parking fees;
- Whether Legionella testing was undertaken in Council Housing?

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

14 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Peer Review
Crosspark Farm update
Leaders Annual Report
Performance and Risk
Community Safety Partnership Annual Report

(The meeting ended at 4.08 pm)

CHAIRMAN