

# Public Document Pack



Please reply to: Darryl White  
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Dear Councillor

## **SOUTH HAMS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - THURSDAY, 4TH NOVEMBER, 2021**

I refer to the agenda for the above meeting and attach papers in connection with the following item(s).

<b>Agenda No</b>	<b>Item</b>
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3.	<b><u>Urgent Business - Call In (Pages 1 - 18)</u></b>
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brought forward at the discretion of the Chairman;

Call-In of Executive Minute E.56/21: Garden Waste Service

9.	<b><u>Review of Localities New Service (Pages 19 - 24)</u></b>
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10.	<b><u>Contact Centre Performance Report (Pages 25 - 34)</u></b>
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11.	<b><u>Task and Finish Group Updates: (Pages 35 - 40)</u></b>
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a) Climate Change & Biodiversity Action Plan – Concluding Report

Yours sincerely

Darryl White  
Democratic Services Manager

Encs



# Agenda Item 3

Dear Andy

I am writing to you in your capacity as Head of Paid Service pursuant to Chapter 3- Meeting Procedure Rules relating to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the Council's constitution. In accordance with clause 12.4 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules and in my capacity as Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny I give notice of call-in of the decision of the Executive at its meeting held on 14 October 2021 wherein it was resolved "That the Executive has considered the range of options (as set out in section 4 of the published agenda report) and agrees to continue the suspension of garden waste collections until Spring 2022".

The reaching of the decision is in breach of the principles for good decision-making because of the following.

1. Failure to adequately consult with Members prior to the meeting of 14 October 2021
2. Late delivery of report in support of recommendation. The report was only made available to Members on the morning of the meeting and as such many Members were not made aware of the serious nature of the recommendation until the last minute if at all prior to the decision being made.
3. Lack of openness in respect of the content of the report and the reaching of the decision. For example, it was not made clear as to whether or not FCC had requested a continued suspension.

In consequence of the call-in I propose that this be dealt with at O&S's next meeting on 4 November 2021 in accordance with clause 12.6 and 12.7.

To avoid any challenge as to whether or not this notice was served on time, I would draw your attention to clauses 12.2 and 12.3 dealing with the publication of the decision. A call-in notice is to be served on the expiry of five clear working days after the publication of the decision. Clause 12.2 requires a copy of the record of decisions to be sent to the Chairman of O&S. I have not received such a copy and it follows that the decision is yet to be published in accordance with the Constitution or in a proper form.

Please note that all references to the Constitution relate to those approved by Full Council on 15 July 2021.

Regards

John

Cllr John Birch  
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Panel  
SHDC Member for Totnes

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" Call-in – EXEMPT Executive Minute 56/21 Garden Waste Service.

To consider the attached call-in request from Cllr Birch. The Chief Executive has agreed that the request meets the criteria under Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 12.5. With the agreement of the Chairman, the Chief Executive has arranged for the request to be referred to this meeting, so that it is considered as soon as reasonably practicable after receipt of the call-in request. The report to the Executive together with the draft minute are also attached."

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**GARDEN WASTE COLLECTIONS**

Consideration was given to a report that presented a range of options to identify whether or not it would be possible to restore the garden waste collection service in the short term or to provide a single collection for all residents ahead of the winter.

During discussion, the following points were raised:

- (a) It was noted that the report that underpinned this agenda item was published just before this Executive meeting had started due to alternative solutions being sought right up until the last minute;
- (b) A number of Members expressed their upset, reluctance and disappointment that they were being asked to continue the suspension of garden waste collections until Spring 2022;
- (c) Members acknowledged that a one-off collection of garden waste by FCC Environment would unfortunately result in significant additional disruption to the statutory residual and recycling collections;
- (d) The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee highlighted the presentation delivered by FCC representatives at its meeting held on 13 October 2021 and the totally unsatisfactory responses that were provided by the representatives to Member questions. The Member proceeded to highlight the public perception that the Council was not being sufficiently robust in its dealings with FCC and reminded the meeting that the delivery of a garden waste collection service was part of their contractual obligations;
- (e) Members recognised that the shortage of qualified HGV drivers was a national problem and that a number of other local authorities were experiencing similar issues. Notwithstanding this issue, a Member also expressed the view that FCC Environment had woefully underestimated the number of drivers and operatives that it would require to deliver the new service;
- (f) The tireless work of all Members on the front line dealing with multiple constituent complaints and the lead officers who were trying to deliver service improvements were recognised;
- (g) An additional recommendation was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** that read as follows:

*'That delegated authority be granted to the Director for Customer Service and Delivery, in consultation with the Leader of Council and the lead Executive Member, to produce a letter to be sent on behalf of the Executive to all residents in the South Hams that provides an update on the waste and recycling collection service.'*

In discussion on the addition, Members felt that it was now right and proper for the Council to write to all of its residents setting out the current position and, when put to the vote, the addition was declared **CARRIED**;

- (h) At this point, Members wished to discuss the exempt minute of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 13 October 2021. As a result, it was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** and when put to the vote declared **CARRIED**:

**RESOLVED**

That in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business as the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Act is involved.

The Executive then considered and discussed the view of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting (as set out at Exempt Appendix A to these minutes) and reached an agreed conclusion.

It was then **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** and when put to the vote declared **CARRIED** that the press and public be re-admitted to the meeting.

It was then:

**RESOLVED**

1. That the Executive has considered the range of options (as set out in section 4 of the published agenda report) and agrees to continue the suspension of garden waste collections until Spring 2022;
2. That a further report be produced by the Director for Customer Service and Delivery (to be presented to the next Executive meeting to be held on 2 December 2021) on future options; and
3. That delegated authority be granted to the Director for Customer Service and Delivery, in consultation with the Leader of Council and the lead Executive Member, to produce a letter to be sent on behalf of the Executive to all residents in the South Hams that provides an update on the waste and recycling collection service.



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**NOT FOR PUBLICATION**

**Appendix A** to this report contains exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972

Report to: **Executive**

Date: **14<sup>th</sup> October 2021**

Title: **Garden Waste Collections**

Portfolio Area: **Cllr Keith Baldry, Executive Lead Member for Environment**

Wards Affected: **All**

Urgent Decision: Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken:

Author: **Steve Mullineaux** Role: **Director, Customer Service Delivery**

Contact: **Steve.mullineaux@swdevon.gov.uk**

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**Recommendations:**

**That the Executive:**

- 1. Considers the options set out in section 4 of this report;**
- 2. Agrees to continue the suspension of garden waste collections until Spring 2022;**
- 3. Receives a further report by the Director, Customer Service Delivery to the Executive in December on future options; and**
- 4. Considers the recommendation of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in Part 2 Appendix A of this report.**

**1. Executive summary**

- 1.1 The contractor FCC Environment ("FCC") still faces significant challenges daily with ensuring all waste collections rounds are sent out each day, therefore this report seeks the agreement of Members to continue with the garden waste service suspension until Spring 2022.

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- 1.2 Officers have explored a wide range of options to identify whether it would be possible to restore the garden waste service in the short term or provide a single collection for all residents ahead of the winter. Implementing any of these options would result in significant additional disruption to the statutory residual and recycling collections.
- 1.3 If agreed, Officers will bring a further report to the Executive in December exploring future options for the garden waste service.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1. The collection of garden waste is provided by FCC under the terms of the agreed contract. The garden waste service is free of charge to residents and there are currently 43,350 households in the South Hams that are eligible to receive a garden waste collection. The properties receive a collection once per fortnight and the contractor currently manages this over approximately 30 collection rounds per week.
- 2.2. South Hams is the only authority in Devon County that offers a free, year round garden waste service.
- 2.3. There have been significant issues with the performance of the waste contract following the implementation of the round changes in October 2020. The roll out of the Devon aligned service had to be halted with alternative collection methods put in place as an interim solution.
- 2.4. As previously reported to the Executive on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2021, due to the worsening performance of FCC in delivering the waste and recycling collection service, the operational decision was taken to suspend the garden waste collection service on 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021. This was to ensure that FCC directed all available resources to deliver the Councils statutory waste and recycling collections.
- 2.5. Regrettably, due to the short notice in which the garden waste suspension had to be initiated, it was not possible to communicate with all residents in advance. The Council recognises the suspension of garden waste was at very short notice and caused considerable disruption for residents. Some residents may have filled their bin and still have outstanding waste to be collected.
- 2.6. Additional challenges such as staff sickness, direct impact from the round review undertaken in October 2020, as well as the highly publicised national HGV shortage has exacerbated the issues around service delivery.

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- 2.7. As a waste collection Authority, the Council has a duty to provide statutory waste collections as outlined in the environmental Protections Act 1990 – Section 45.
- 2.8. The garden waste service is a non-statutory service, which is why other waste streams were prioritised when FCC began to experience daily operational challenges. This is in line with Defra advice 'service priority guidance' which is designed to protect other kerbside collections received by all households: food, recycling and residual (black bag rubbish) from further disruption. This was a key consideration in the decision making process.
- 2.9. Devon County Council has contractual responsibility for the composting of garden waste and directs the Council to the appropriate composting facility.

**3. Current Performance / Issues**

- 3.1. Performance of the waste service as a whole improved when the garden waste service was suspended, however this gradually declined despite efforts of Officers and FCC management. For the month of September, FCC failed to collect in excess of 22,000 recycling collections. October has seen an improvement in FCC's performance and so far they have been able to run all the statutory residual and recycling services.
- 3.2. The graph below illustrates the daily missed collections reported by residents and non-completed rounds since the suspension:



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- 3.3. The operational challenges faced by FCC at a local level has seen very little improvement. This has been exacerbated by the national shortage of HGV drivers, which has been well documented in the press and is affecting many other sectors nationally.
- 3.4. FCC advised the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> October that they had 20% vacancies across their South Hams workforce and that for HGV/LGV drivers they have 27% unfilled vacancies.
- 3.5. A number of Devon Authorities have experienced significant disruptions to waste collections with suspensions or delays to garden waste collections, as well as impacting other waste streams. It has also been documented nationally that Local Authorities are also facing significant serious disruptions.
- 3.6. Officers will provide a report to a further meeting of the Executive to consider future options for garden waste that assesses and reflects the Councils commitment to biodiversity and the climate change emergency. This will consider the waste hierarchy and options for greener ways of recycling garden waste such as home composting and supporting community composting groups.

## **4. Options available and considerations of risk**

- 4.1. There are 5 options for the Executive to consider. These are set out below. The options are:
  - Option 1 - FCC restore the service to contracted levels with immediate effect.
  - Option 2 – Use local composting / community composting schemes.
  - Option 3 – Use an alternative provider to carry out the green waste service.
  - Option 4 – FCC carry out a one-off collection to empty of all green waste bins as soon as is possible.
  - Option 5 - The service is suspended until Spring next year and the Council offers no further collection of the green waste bins.
- 4.2. **Option 1**
  - 4.2.1. FCC has advised that with the current resources and despite an extensive recruitment campaign they have not been able to recruit enough drivers and staff to be able to re-establish the garden waste service.

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### **4.2.2. Benefits.**

- Residents will receive a garden waste service.

### **4.2.3. Risks.**

- Implementing this solution without any additional staff will have a catastrophic impact on the Councils statutory residual waste and recycling service and will result in a further degradation of FCC's already unsatisfactory performance.
- This will result in significant disruption to residents residual and recycling collections with the cancellation of a minimum of 6-7 collection rounds per day across all services.
- Increase Residents dissatisfaction with the service, more complaints and further damage to the Councils reputation.

### **4.3. Option 2**

4.3.1. There are 6 existing community composting schemes across the district: Kingsbridge, Brixton, Ashprington, Dartington, Stoke Flemming, South Brent. These sites have a permitted exemption for the Environment Agency to collect and dispose of garden waste.

4.3.2. However the conditions of this exemption severely limit the amount of waste that can be collected. The total combined annual weight limit for all these sites represents less than 2% of the total tonnage of garden waste collected across the district.

4.3.3. As a result this does not present a practical solution to delivering a district wide green waste solution.

### **4.4. Option 3**

4.4.1. Officers have investigated whether a 3<sup>rd</sup> party could undertake this work and have approached established waste contractors and neighbouring Councils. All have stated that they are unable resource a single collection service.

4.4.2. Officers also considered creating a Council service to carry out this one off collection. However all the recruitment agencies approached stated that in the current marketplace whilst they could obtain staff, they could not guarantee that the Council would be able to retain these staff even for a short period of time. Also as this is part of the contracted service, the Council's ability to provide the service itself would depend upon the right being given the contract to do so and if not, would require a variation of the contract being agreed with FCC.

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### **4.5. Option 4**

4.5.1. Recognising the suspension of garden waste by the contractor was at very short notice and caused considerable disruption for residents and that some residents may have filled their bin and still have outstanding waste to be collected. To alleviate this, the Council could offer a single collection to empty these bins. Officers have investigated a number of options for this one of collection.

4.5.2. The key considerations are:

- Any one-off collection would have to be communicated to all residents.
- It would have to be reliable.
- It should not impact the existing statutory services.

4.5.3. No other provider was able to provide a one-off collection and Officers asked FCC how they would resource a single collection. As a result of detailed discussions with Officers the only potential solution is detailed below;

4.5.4. FCC could resource a one-off collection of all residents' garden waste by suspending the statutory co-mingled recycling service that is delivered to 14,500 residents for a minimum of 2 collection cycles.

4.5.5. This is the only part of the existing service that has the resources (types of vehicles and staff) need to carry out the Garden Waste Service.

#### **4.5.6. Benefits.**

- Residents will receive a one-off garden waste service.

#### **4.5.7. Risks.**

- Based on FCC's previous and current performance and their current resources, there is no guarantee that the garden waste collection would be completed as planned and would probably result in further disruption to the Council's statutory residual waste and recycling service and result in a further degradation of FCC's already unsatisfactory performance.
- This will result in further disruption to 14,500 residents that receive FCC's co-mingled recycling service. These residents do not receive a full recycling service with food waste being disposed of in the residual waste stream.
- The statutory recycling service for these residents is currently operating significantly below satisfactory performance, with FCC reporting that they failed to collect almost 15% of collections during the month of September.



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- Delivering a one-off garden waste collection to all residents (a non-statutory service) would disproportionately impact 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of residents' statutory recycling collection.

### **4.6. Option 5**

4.6.1. Whilst unpalatable, the Council could suspend the garden waste service until Spring 2022 without taking any further action. This would mean that residents would need to continue to either home compost, take their garden waste to the recycling centres.

#### **4.6.2. Benefits.**

- There would be no additional disruption to residents in relation to the Councils existing statutory residual and recycling services.

#### **4.6.3. Risks.**

- This option does not present any further operational risks to the service.
- Increase in residents' dissatisfaction with the service, more complaints and further damage to the Councils reputation.

## **5. Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

5.1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee met yesterday to hear from FCC representatives about FCC's proposals to recover the Devon Aligned Service. Appendix A sets out the details of a recommendation from the Committee to the Executive. The Executive is asked to agree the recommendation. The Executive is advised to exclude the press and public during the consideration of the recommendation, as the discussion is likely to result in exempt information being disclosed.

## **6. Implications**

5.1 To note the contents and approve the recommendations of this report.

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	The Council has a duty to arrange for the collection of household waste within its area. The arrangements must include the collection of at least two types of recyclable waste. The contract with FCC sets out those arrangements.

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		The recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is exempt on the basis that the discussion of the recommendation is likely to result in the disclosure of information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council) and/or information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings. In both cases, in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.
Financial implications to include reference to value for money	N	There are no financial implications for the available options.
Risk	Y	Detailed in Section 4 of the report
Supporting Corporate Strategy		
Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact		
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		Non as a direct impact of this report
Safeguarding		None as a direct impact of this report
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		None as a direct impact of the report
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		None as a direct impact of the report
Other implications		None

**Supporting Information**

**Appendices:**

Appendix A (Part 2 Exemption from public)

**Background Papers:**

Not applicable

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Report to: **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
Date: **4<sup>th</sup> November 2021**  
Title: **Review of Localities new service**  
Portfolio Area: **Customer First**  
**Portfolio holder: Cllr Nicky Hopwood**  
Wards Affected: **All**  
Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**  
Date next steps can be taken:

Author: **Dale Cropper** Role: **Operations Specialist & Acting Business Manager**

Contact: **Dale.Cropper@swdevon.gov.uk**

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## **Recommendations:**

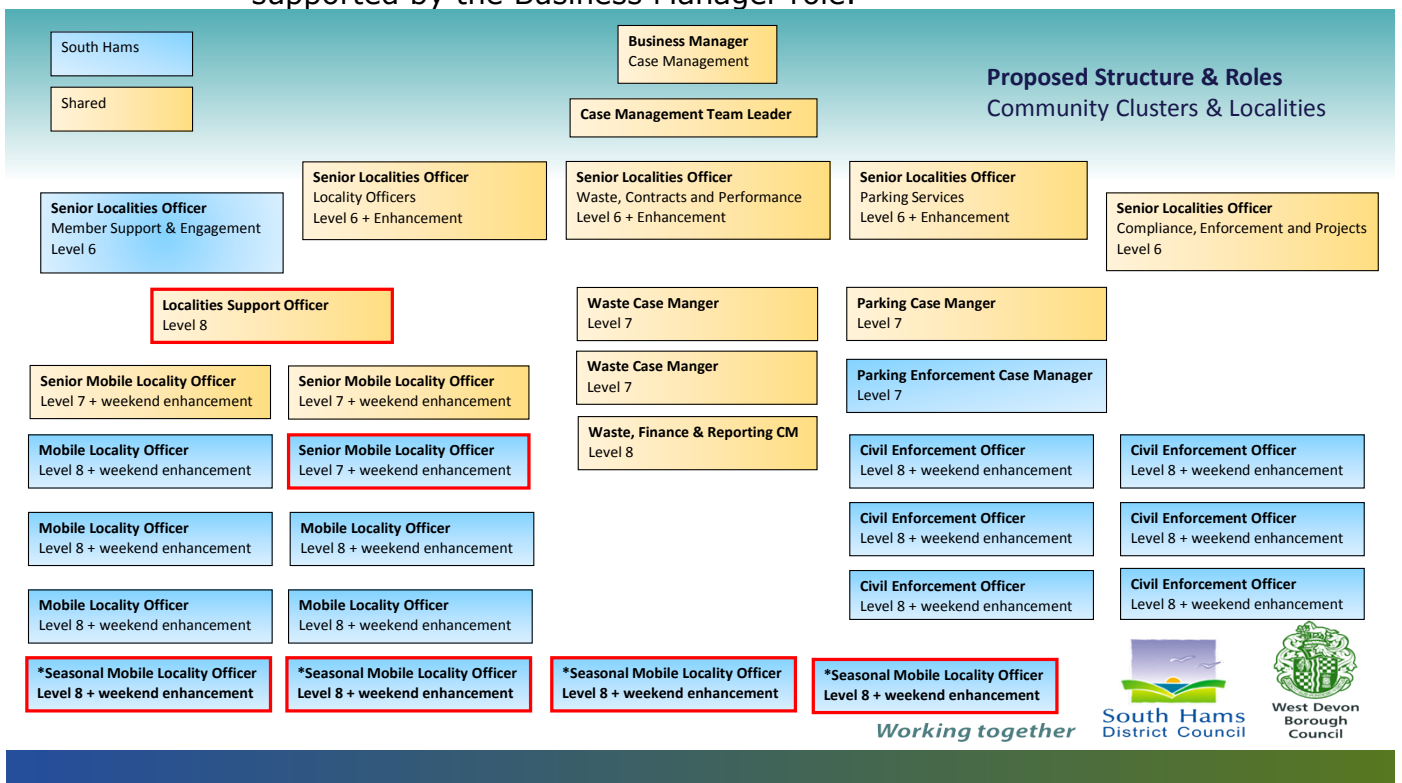
- 1. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee continues to support the current Locality working arrangements, pending ongoing monitoring and a further report in 12 months.**
- 2. That the Panel, note and acknowledge the work of the Locality service and the success of the seasonal working.**

### **1. Executive summary**

- 1.1 A report was brought to Overview and Scrutiny in January 2021 with the outcome of the Localities service review, with recommendations to adopt a seasonal operating model.
- 1.2 At this point it was agreed to fund four additional posts to operate from 01<sup>st</sup> April until 30<sup>th</sup> September (inclusive) each year to acknowledge the increase in footfall and demand on the service in the summer period.
- 1.3 This report will provide an update of the success of the Localities team, the new structure and the adaptation of the seasonal operating model.

## 2. Background

- 2.1 Since the inception of the Localities service in 2015, a full review of the tasks, staffing and roles hadn't been carried out before the review in January 2020.
- 2.2 At the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 5 September 2019, it was resolved to form a Task & Finish Group to review the Localities service and its future function (Minute O&S.25/19 refers).
- 2.3 Subsequently, a report was submitted to The Executive in Jan 2021 setting out clear recommendations for the Localities service which would support the council's emerging corporate strategy and were also reflective of the council's response to the Covid-19 Pandemic.
- 2.4 The Localities Team act as a liaison and support service to Elected Members, residents and visitors to the South Hams. The service also undertakes work on behalf of a number of services across the organisation.
- 2.5 Localities initially was an on the ground "observe and report" model for wider council services, but due to the outcome from the review, is now a service that is able to adapt to changes in demand and deliver solutions in real time "on the ground".
- 2.6 The current Localities service operates with a team of 11 permanent members reporting the Localities Team Leader, in turn supported by the Business Manager role.



- 2.8 Following the review, the Localities team moved to operating between 7:00 am and 8:00 pm over seven days a week (between April and September), with increased focus around litter picking, monitoring of the FCC waste contract, and liaising and engaging with visitors, residents and business.

### **3. Outcomes/outputs**

- 3.1 With seven day a week coverage during the summer, the service has increased visibility and presence in traditionally less visited areas, as well as in busy beach and town locations where demand is higher.
- 3.2 Daily enforcement and education patrols across the district with increased presence at key locations were carried out.
- 3.3 Early morning and evening presence in Council owned car parks was carried out to encourage compliance, provide support and prevent unauthorised camping with motorhome users was available.
- 3.4 The service was able to report on increased engagement with Town & Parish Councils and with visitors, business, residents and Members alike.
- 3.5 The Locality team were instrumental in supporting our waste contractor FCC, during the summer months with street cleansing and increased contract monitoring.
- 3.6 Seasonal Locality officers took over management of the markets, allowing Civil Enforcement Officers to be more visible and present in their enforcement patrols in our carparks.
- 3.7 Officers helped keep the district clean and free from litter carrying out daily litter picks, and able to report and clear fly tips more effectively.
- 3.8 There was increased engagement with the local homelessness community due to operating out of core hours. We were able to support and signpost vulnerable residents more effectively.
- 3.9 As set out in the review, Members were also given a dedicated and defined single point of contact via email, for resolving issues, providing feedback and requesting Locality officers to attend sites as required.
- 3.10 All of the above success was quantifiable by the following performance stats which have been captured from the weekend monitoring reports;
- Number of residents engaged with at weekends: 1771
  - Number of miles travelled by officers: 6279
  - Number of businesses engaged with: 383
  - Number of full bins reported to FCC: 334
  - Engagement with dog owners – 463
  - Dogs noted off lead in a prohibited area – 64
  - Number of people engaged with that avoided a FPN by correcting their behaviour – 133

- 3.11 All routine inspections of Council assets including signage, street furniture and play parks continued to be carried out by the team.
- 3.12 The Localities team have been instrumental in supporting with community safety and public compliance with any Covid related restrictions, working with businesses, residents and tourists in highlighting and addressing any areas of concern.
- 3.13 In carrying out their daily duties, the Localities team were able to engage pro-actively with public and business, engaging to enhance the reputation of the team and the Council. This was captured in many of the AOM (Localities reporting system) reports such as Mel who reported "I spoke to 12 people in Ivybridge whilst litter picking the high street all who were very positive and who thanked me for the work I was doing".
- 3.14 Below is a snapshot of numbers of tasks completed by the whole of Localities between April and September 2021;
- Over 15,000 emails received in the Localities inbox
  - 649 recycling bank inspections
  - 698 full bins reported to FCC
  - 442 toilet inspections
  - 92 life ring condition reports
  - 520 fly tips attended either collected or reported to FCC
  - 185 street cleansing inspections
  - 265 play park inspections
  - 71 Motorhome checks (a further 589 by Parking officers) this includes checking owners were parked a safe distance apart, not using bbqs, causing obstructions or generating noise or waste complaints.
- 3.15 During this period business as usual work was also carried out, including;
- Abandoned vehicles reports
  - Dog patrols
  - Planning notices
  - Water testing
  - Tree inspections
  - Supporting community events
  - Contract monitoring of FCC
- 3.16 The team will continue to work together to adapt and refine the effectiveness of how the team operate, working with key stakeholders to ensure tasks are delivered in the most efficient way whilst ensuring engagement with members, residents and visitors to the South Hams.



#### 4. Options available and consideration of risk

4.1 The Panel are asked to consider and agree the recommendations as set out in the report.

#### 5. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance		No direct impact.
Financial implications to include reference to value for money		No direct impact.
Risk		No direct impact
Supporting Corporate Strategy		No direct impact
Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact		No direct impact
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		No direct impact
Safeguarding		No direct impact
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		No direct impact
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		No direct impact
Other implications		No direct impact

#### **Supporting Information**

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Report to: **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
Date: **4<sup>th</sup> November 2021**  
Title: **Contact Centre Performance**  
Portfolio Area: **Customer First**  
**Portfolio holder: Cllr Nicky Hopwood**  
Wards Affected: **All**  
Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken:

Author: **Dale Cropper** Role: **Operations Specialist & Acting Business Manager**  
Contact: **Dale.Cropper@swdevon.gov.uk**

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## **Recommendations:**

- 1. That the Committee note the work of the contact centre over this financial year, and continue to support the work that will be undertaken to improve the contact centre and its performance.**
- 2. That the Committee note and endorse a comprehensive review of the contact centre to be carried out, to assess its performance and ability to meet customer demand.**

### **1. Executive summary**

- 1.1 This report will provide a high level overview on the current performance of the Contact Centre since April 2021.
- 1.2 A formal review of the contact centre and its performance in its entirety, has not been carried out in upwards of 5 years.
- 1.3 In Overview and Scrutiny 07/21, it was requested a report be presented on progress being made on improving the Contact Centre performance.
- 1.4 The way in which resident's access council services has changed significantly over recent years, and how we adapt this, will be supported with the work being undertaken on the customer access strategy.
- 1.5 The outcome from this report is a recommendation that we undertake a review of the contact centre in its entirety, including

staffing, scheduling, IT, customer expectations and service requirements aligning the approach with the corporate strategy.

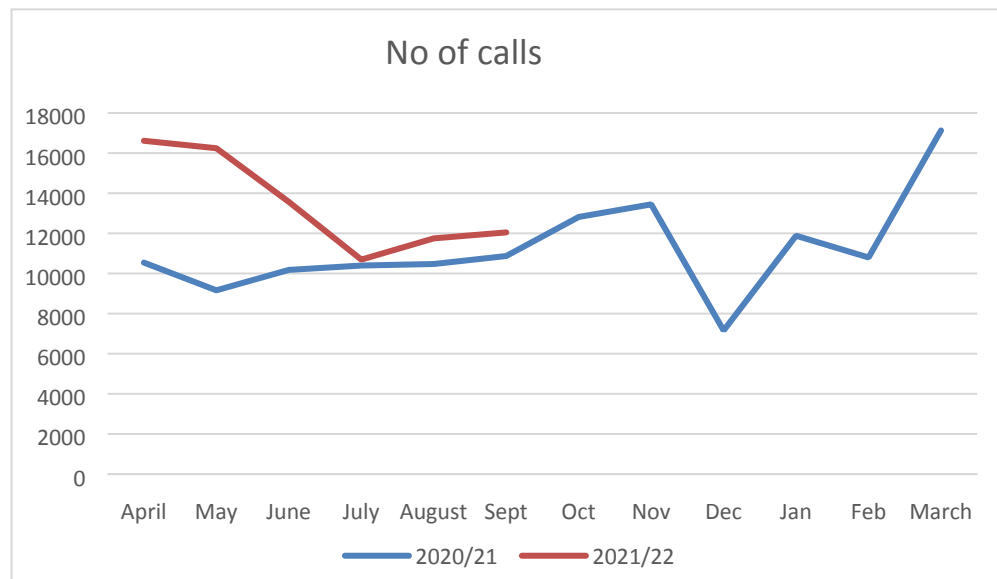
## **2. Background**

- 2.1 The contact centre take calls for most departments in the Council. They also directly manage and answer social media enquiries and web chats. Service requirements for all these lines vary in terms of how much detail and input is required.
- 2.2 The call centre aims to answer 80% of calls within 5 minutes.
- 2.3 Currently the call centre is fully staffed with 10.5 full time equivalents (There are 17 staff in total, many of whom are part time). There are currently 6 vacant posts in the establishment which are currently being filled by agency staff.
- 2.4 All staff report to the Case Management Team Leader, supported by the Business Manager.
- 2.5 In January 2020 a trial to move a small team of 5 staff from the call centre to handle only Revenues calls was started. The aim of this was to see if call wait times could be decreased when managed by the service. The call centre takes overflow calls to these lines when busy. The outcome of this is still being reviewed due to Covid related delays.
- 2.6 Training of staff and the inability to share information and best practice has been more difficult with staff working from home.
- 2.7 Retaining experienced staff within the call centre has often been challenging as it's often seen as a stepping stone to other roles, predominantly to case management.
- 2.8 There has been a large increase in new and complex calls in response to the business grant schemes as identified in the Pentana information, shared in the July Overview and Scrutiny meetings Performance Management report.
- 2.9 Increased demand in calls, particular with grants and waste, combined with reducing levels of experience and knowledge of staff has been a factor in increased call wait times.
- 2.10 Experienced staff have also been redeployed at various and key times this year, to help with processing of business grants to support the community in response to Covid 19.
- 2.11 Netcall, the new workflow software was introduced in 2016 and it functionality has been utilised year on year. This is allowing residents to contact us via multiple methods such as webchat, but there is still further opportunity to explore how we utilise this.
- 2.12 Queuebuster has been engaged on some lines to reduce call abandon rates and to offer greater flexibility to our customers. This allows the customer the option to leave their details and be called back rather than wait in a queue. 343 residents accessed this service in September.
- 2.13 The contact centre have experienced increased call volumes due to the challenges with the Waste services.

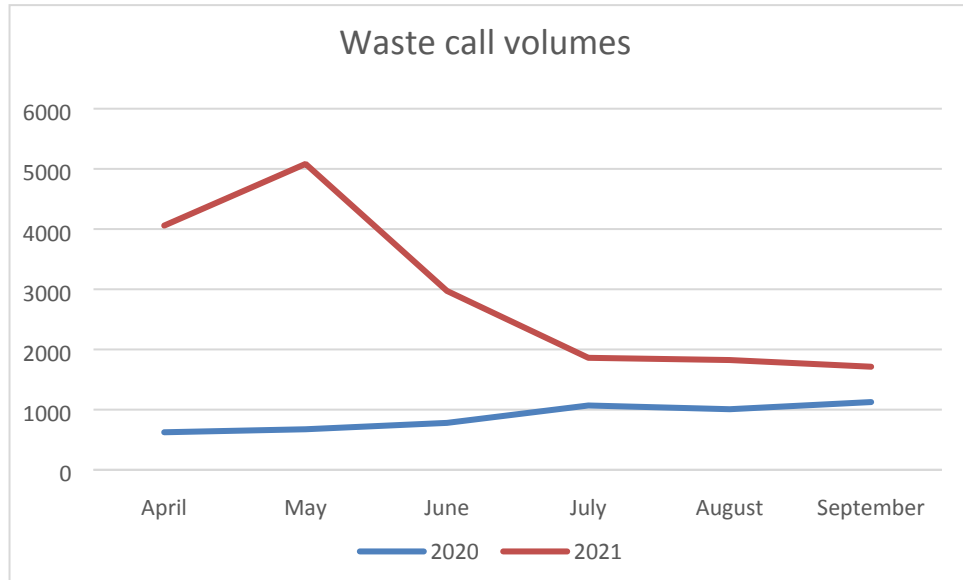
### 3. Performance

No of calls	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
April	27501	16478	19398	15040	10542	16614
May	26390	20874	19053	15981	9161	16243
June	29694	20427	15232	12471	10178	13568
July	25420	18745	16538	13897	10396	10691
August	27072	20480	16140	13271	10472	11749
Sept	24274	17439	14826	13430	10870	12048
Oct	21332	18123	16131	12134	12817	
Nov	18108	15750	13651	13958	13445	
Dec	11394	9546	7557	9037	7158	
Jan	18300	18810	14286	12098	11882	
Feb	15804	14431	10936	10439	10798	
March	21505	17544	14793	13483	17129	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>266794</b>	<b>208647</b>	<b>178541</b>	<b>155239</b>	<b>134848</b>	

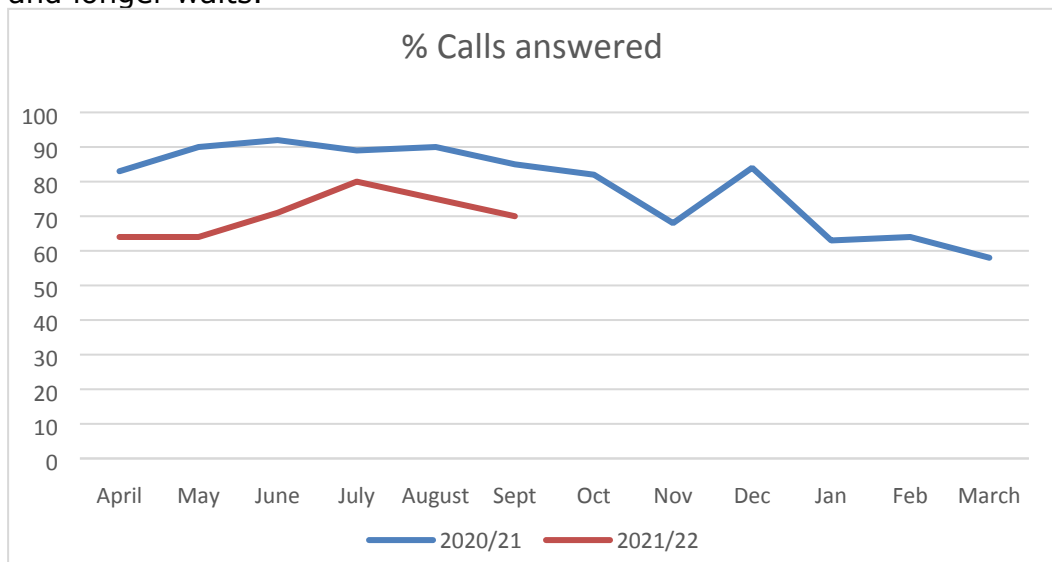
- 3.1 Emphasis in recent years has been placed on customers accessing our services through online methods via channel shift. We have seen an overall reduction in calls of 49.4% between 2016/17 and 2020/21 which indicates the changing needs of our customers and how they contact us and access our services.
- 3.2 However, the year (to date), an additional 19,294 calls have been taken compared to this time last year.



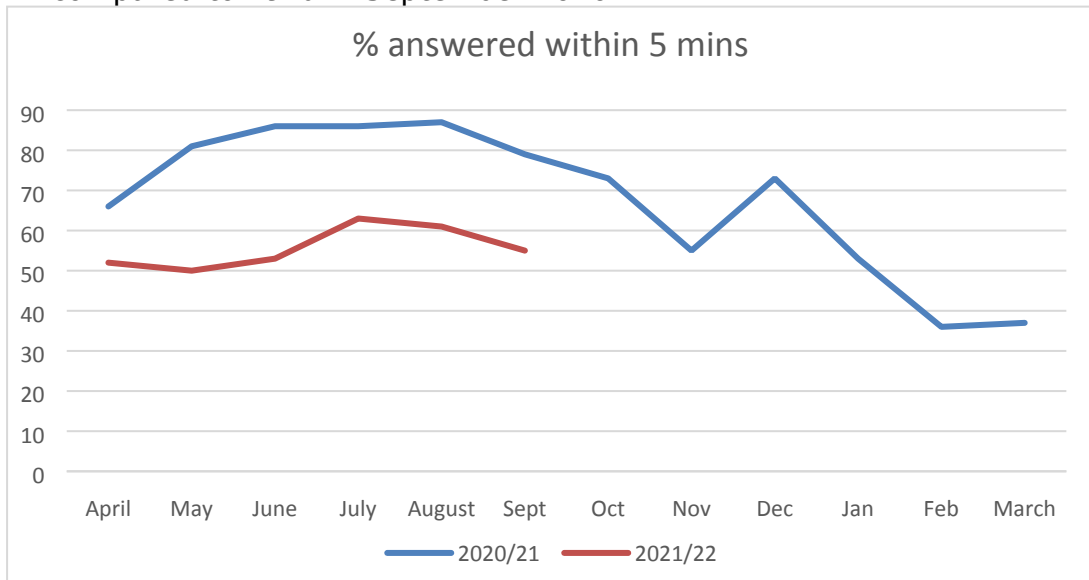
3.3 Waste call volumes were significantly higher between April and September compared to this time last year. In May 2021 we hit a high of 5083 waste calls. This was over 1000 calls a week more than the same time last year.



3.3 The total percentage of calls answered, has dropped by 18% compared to this time last year. In September 2021 it was 70% compared to 85% this time last year due to increased call volumes and longer waits.



3.4 The percentage of calls answered within 5 minutes, is also lower than this time last year, sitting at 55% in September 2021, compared to 79% in September 2020.



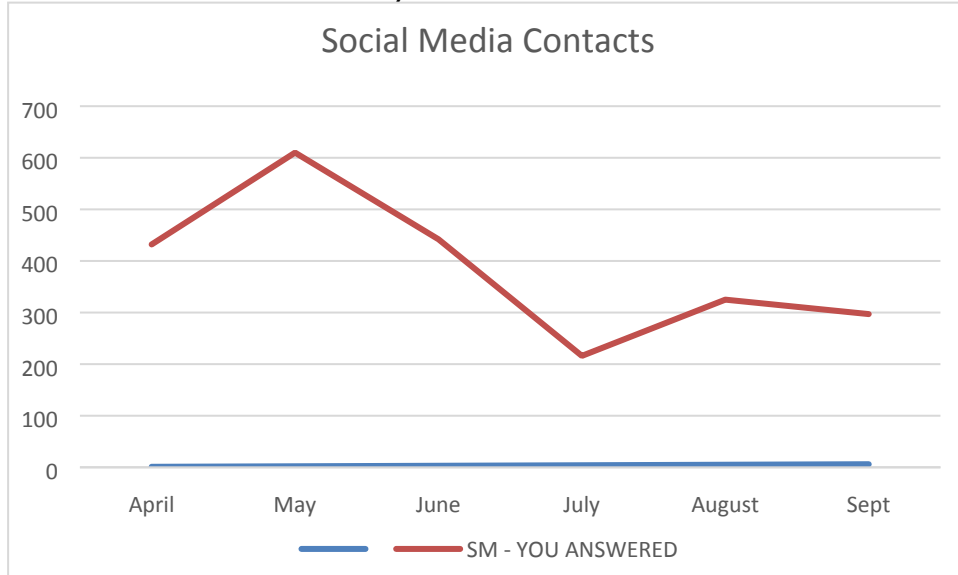
3.5 Staff sickness is running at an average of around 5% in the call centre which is within expected levels.

3.6 There has been very little growth this year in the amount of residents accessing webchat- 367 contacts last month (all answered). This is an area of opportunity.

3.7



3.8 However, there is a clear increase in demand for social media and web chat contacts, when call volumes increase. May 2021 being the busiest month for calls in waste, also was demonstrated in in being the busiest month for social media with 610 contacts in May and 640 via webchat.



3.9

3.10 Despite the challenges within the call centre, the team have worked hard to improve staff knowledge and welfare to ensure that whilst working from home regular contact is still maintained.

3.11 Since August 2021, the team have been working on improving knowledge through additional training of call centre staff.

3.12 Particular focus has been on improving Council Tax knowledge which was one of the longest wait times in the contact centre averaging over 20 minutes. Three additional staff now have this skillset.

3.13 Continuing efforts around integration of Queuebuster and Liberty Create (Performance Management Report 07/21 4.1) has also been identified as a way to reduce wait times as this will be considered as part of the review

3.14 It is clear that when call waiting times increased that customers access our services through different methods. This demonstrates an opportunity to focus on promoting these services moving forward.



#### **4. Proposed Way Forward**

- 4.1 A full review of the contact centre to be carried out independently, to assess current ways of working and call management to ensure we are delivering the best service possible.
- 4.2 The review to include;
  - Current staffing levels and retention of staff
  - Contact centre opening times and availability of staff.
  - Remote working vs office based working
  - Call arrivals and call volumes
  - How we forecast and staff for calls at peak times. I.e. Council tax mailings.
  - Reviewing staff occupancy (available time), utilisation (% of time actually on calls) and skillsets (which lines they can take).
  - Reviewing how we train and develop our staff.
  - The technology that is used in the call centre and how its utilised
  - Quality checking and coaching and how to get things right first time.
  - Service Level agreements (how long to answer the contact).
- 4.3 The acting Business Manager, has over 12 years' experience in managing call centres and call centre analysis, and will lead on this review.
- 4.4 Its expected that the acting Business Manager working closely with the Customer Service Improvement Manager and call centre staff, will complete the review within 3-6 months.
- 4.5 The review will take into consideration the outputs from the recently completed Revenues and Benefits review.
- 4.6 To identify and review and share internally and externally details of our SLA (service level agreements such as how long it takes to answer the phone) and our customer service charter.
- 4.7 That we shape the call centre into a service to be proud of that delivers against customer expectations linking in with the wider customer access strategy.

## Options available and consideration of risk

### 5.

- 5.1 The panel are asked to consider and agree the recommendations as set out in the report.
- 5.2 There is reputational risk of not adopting the proposals in particular for our most vulnerable residents if call wait times and abandon rates remain high, and our residents are unable to contact us.

## 6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance		No direct impact
Financial implications to include reference to value for money		No direct impact
Risk		No direct impact

Supporting Corporate Strategy		
Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact		No direct impact.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		No direct impact
Safeguarding		No direct impact
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		No direct impact
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		No direct impact
Other implications		No direct impact

**Supporting Information**

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Report to: **Overview and Scrutiny**

Date: **4<sup>th</sup> November 2021**

Title: **Climate Change and Biodiversity Task and Finish Group Recommendations**

Portfolio Areas: **Cllr Tom Holway**

Wards Affected: **All**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Author: **Cllr Dan Thomas** Role: **Chair of the Climate Change Task and Finish Group**

Contact: **Email: [drew.powell@swdevon.gov.uk](mailto:drew.powell@swdevon.gov.uk), [adam.williams@swdevon.gov.uk](mailto:adam.williams@swdevon.gov.uk)**

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

That Overview and Scrutiny Panel agrees the recommendations from the Climate Change and Biodiversity Task and Finish Group

### **1. Executive summary**

- 1.1 The Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy and an updated Action Plan was developed and presented to the Council on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2020 which was then adopted. At the same meeting it was agreed that updated progress of the action plan would be provided on 6 monthly intervals.
- 1.2 The first 6 monthly update was provided to Overview and Scrutiny committee on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021. It was resolved that a Task and Finish Group be set up to consider the report of the Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan.
- 1.3 The Group was tasked to report back with any recommendations to the meeting of the Panel to be held on Thursday 4 November 2021.

### **2. Background**

- 2.1 At Overview and Scrutiny committee on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021, Members considered an update on the Councils Climate Change and Biodiversity action plan.
- 2.2 Members felt that the report provided on 1<sup>st</sup> July was so detailed and raised many questions meant that it could not be reviewed sufficiently in the time allowed, therefore it was proposed the setting up of a time limited Task and Finish Group would be beneficial and that it would then present its conclusions back to Overview and Scrutiny committee on 4<sup>th</sup> November.
- 2.3 Four meetings we subsequently arranged, one in July, one in September and two in October.

### **3. Outcomes/outputs**

- 3.1 The Climate Change task and finish group held its first meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> July where the terms of reference was agreed, as well as the work programme. It was agreed that the second meeting would focus on an appraisal of identified goals and metrics and procedures to track. The third meeting would focus on Communications and Engagement where representatives from some community organisations would be invited to give a 10-minute presentation followed by discussion.
- 3.2 During the second meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> September, discussions took place over the importance of being able to measure and track, officers had indicated this was a straightforward exercise when measuring our own carbon footprint, but more of a challenge when it comes to outward-facing actions, recognising the challenge of tracking impacts around behaviour change for instance.
- 3.3 A new version of the action plan was presented which attempts to organise the actions into low to high impact as well as detailing whether SHDC has direct or indirect responsibility for the action whilst also listing key partners, at the same time acting as a data tracker to collate key information such as the districts Greenhouse Gas Emissions, the districts renewable energy capacity and the number of EV's registered in the area, to name a few. Members had expressed an interest in seeing a more visual representation of the plan where timelines can be better understood.
- 3.4 Discussion took place on the benefits of measuring and setting targets for our aim to work towards a net zero South Hams by 2050. Measuring this can be done by tracking locally derived data from national publications. However setting targets for areas we have little direct control over is a challenge.

- 3.5 The third meeting took place on 7th October, where the group heard from following organisations;
- a. Bioregional Learning Centre
  - b. Sustainable South Hams
  - c. South Dartmoor Community Energy
  - d. PL:21
  - e. Tresoc
  - f. Modbury Neighbourhood Plan Team/Wildlife Action Group
- 3.6 Each organisation presented for 10 minutes on how they could assist the District Council and vice versa. From the comments made by members and invitees at the end, it was clear that this was felt to be an extremely valuable session and that future collaboration should continue alongside noting some of the financial constraints community organisations operate under
- 3.7 The fourth meeting took place on 21<sup>st</sup> October to decide on the final set of actions to report to this Overview and Scrutiny Session.

#### **4. Recommendations**

- 4.1 The Action Plan will continue to be worked on alongside delivery of the Councils new Corporate Strategy, Better Lives for All, where Climate Change and Biodiversity is a key theme. To take account of the work of the Task and Finish Group, its recommendations to the Councils Executive is as follows.
- a) The Action Plan should contain recognition of the finite carbon budget available to the District of South Hams as well as the organisation of South Hams District Council, and the consequential targets taken over 5 years that are relevant to all who live here. These targets should define the purpose and goals of the Action Plan together with the final version of the Devon Carbon Plan.
  - b) The targets and indicators should align with the Devon Carbon Plan and be monitored on an annual basis. The first review of the strategy (specifically its monitoring framework) should commence following the adoption of the Devon Carbon Plan to update the action plan with relevant actions from the Devon Carbon Plan, and where relevant, its governance and monitoring framework.
  - c) The Action Plan should continue to acknowledge that the Council has an important facilitation and coordination role in the community it serves and that it is uniquely placed to be actively bringing key local organisations together, working with them to resolve issues where it has the relevant powers and/or influence, helping to access funds

as the need arises, helping to create a common understanding of goals and timescales and working with groups to achieve them. In light of this, a review of the adopted funding model will take place with a view to ensuring that, within available budgets, support is available to enable community groups to undertake specific tasks, such as community engagement, as required by the Council's adopted CC&B strategy.

- d) In recognition of the role outlined in 3, the Council should setup a CC&B Community Partnership Group that brings together the range of expertise and energy to achieve the goals of the Action Plan. This could be established through a revision of, the current Community Forum. It is suggested that the six organisations that presented to this Task and Finish Group are invited to join the existing Community Forum members) along with relevant officers, any elected member, and the lead member for Climate Change and Biodiversity. A revised Terms of Reference will be agreed to set the context for the group with a rotating chair
- e) It is recognised that officer resources are limited, notwithstanding the remit of the Task and Finish Group, urgent consideration should be given to identify additional funds for CC&B and accessing other available funding streams to support our specialist Adam Williams either through recruitment or through employing relevant expertise.

## 5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1 The overview & Scrutiny Panel is recommended to agree the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group as set out in 4.1 and recommend these to the Councils Executive in December 2021.

## 7. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance		
Financial implications to include reference		The Climate Change and Biodiversity Earmarked Reserve, which has a balance of £480,000. £200,000 has been set aside for use through Crowdfunder, the recommendations will commit the



to value for money		Executive to review this, using some of this allocation for another fund mechanism alongside Crowdfunder
Risk		
Supporting Corporate Strategy		Wellbeing, Homes, Climate Change and Biodiversity
Equality and Diversity		No direct implications
Safeguarding		No direct implications
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		No direct implications
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		The provision of energy efficiency measures will have a positive impact on the health, safety and wellbeing of the households.
Other implications		

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