

WEST DEVON HUB COMMITTEE



West Devon
Borough
Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **West Devon Hub Committee** held
on
Tuesday, 16th July, 2019 at **3.00 pm** at the **Chamber -
Kilworthy Park**

Present: **Councillors:**

Chairman Cllr Jory
Vice Chairman Cllr Samuel

Cllr Edmonds
Cllr Leech
Cllr Moody
Cllr Sellis

Cllr Mott
Cllr Cheadle
Cllr Pearce

In attendance:

Councillors:
Cllr Crozier
Cllr Ewings
Cllr Ratcliffe
Cllr Vachon

Cllr Daniel
Cllr Moyse
Cllr Southcott

Officers:
Chief Executive
Group Manager – Customer First & Support Services
Commissioning Manager
Section 151 Officer
Head of Assets
Head of Environment Services Practice
Head of IT Practice
Specialist Democratic Services

10. **Declarations of Interest**

***HC 10**

Members were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be discussed and the following were made:

Cllr A F Leech declared a personal interest in Item 9: 'Northern Outreach Service' (Minute *HC 15 below refers) by virtue of being a Member of Okehampton Town Council and involved with the Ockment

Centre. He remained in the meeting and took part in the debate and vote thereon;

11. **Confirmation of Minutes**

***HC 11**

The Minutes of the Hub Committee meeting held on 4 June 2019 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

A Hub Member requested that recommendations were presented within minutes in a consistent manner, i.e. that all recommendations were written in full and did not refer to 'as set out in paragraph x'. The Chief Executive agreed that in the interests of transparency it was correct that recommendations be written in full.

12. **Hub Committee Forward Plan**

***HC 12**

Members were presented with the Hub Committee Forward Plan setting out items on the agenda for Hub Committee meetings for the next four months, and the Forward Plan was agreed subject to a minor correction.

13. **Action Plan for Internal Audit Report on Tavistock Hotel - Cllr Edmonds**

HC 13

Members were presented with a report that set out the ten recommendations from the Internal Audit report (Tavistock Hotel Proposal) with the action recommended for each recommendation together with a timescale.

The Lead Member for Resources and Performance introduced the report.

It was then **RESOLVED** that Council be **RECOMMENDED** that the contents of the Internal Audit report (Tavistock Hotel) Action Plan attached at Appendix A of the published agenda report be approved.

14. **Commercial Investment Strategy - Cllr Cheadle**

HC 14

Members were presented with a report that sought approval of an updated and renamed Commercial Property Strategy, amended to take account of recommendations specific to 'in area developments on Council owned land'.

The Lead Member for Enterprise introduced the report and explained the amendments to the Strategy. The Head of Assets responded to questions of clarity, and the Chief Executive and s151 Officer provided further clarity.

During debate, it was recognised that the work of the Invest to Earn Committee and the Climate Change and Biodiversity Group would crossover, and Members needed to keep in mind the distinct purpose for each group.

It was then **RESOLVED** that Council be **RECOMMENDED** that the Commercial Investment Strategy in Appendix A of the published agenda report be approved.

15. **Northern Outreach Service - Cllr Moody**
***HC 15**

Members were presented with a report that considered the usage of the Northern Outreach Service and how best to offer Council services in the future.

The Lead Member for Customer First introduced the report and he and the Commissioning Manager responded to questions of clarity.

Members had a long and detailed debate on this item. A number of Members were concerned that the Council was withdrawing a service from Okehampton. In response, other Members saw this as an opportunity to provide services in a better way, by engaging with stakeholders. In response to requests to take more time over the decision, Members were reminded that reviewing the way services were provided in Okehampton had been put forward as a budget saving two years ago. Some Members also noted that service provision was important across the Borough, not just to Okehampton, and generally the Council should look to effective ways of delivering services to all residents. One Member noted the importance of a communications strategy when the service was closed, and ensuring all partner agencies had the correct signposting information to help residents. Members were also reminded of the cost of providing the current service. In concluding, the Lead Member advised that this should not be seen as a cessation of activity but an opportunity to do things differently.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the outreach service at the Ockment Centre be withdrawn as of 31 July 2019 and that an option appraisal on the future of Tavistock Reception be presented to the Hub Committee meeting on 5 November 2019.

To ensure that the withdrawal of the service has as minimal an impact as possible the following steps be implemented:

- Clear Communication: that all residents, agencies based at the Ockment Centre, Okehampton Library, Okehampton Town Council and local parish councils be advised of the withdrawal and given clear guidance on how best to contact the Council;
- Vulnerable Customers: in instances where customers are not able to engage with the Council online or over the telephone, that Mobile Locality Officers be on hand to assist these customers;

- Improved Customer Service: that the Council remain committed to improving customer satisfaction levels in line with its adopted Action Plan.

16. **Budget Update Report for 2020/21 -Cllr Jory
HC 16**

Members were presented with a report that presented a starting point for developing a meaningful five year strategy that set out the strategic intention for all of the different strands of funding available to the Council.

The Leader introduced the report. The s151 Officer responded to a number of specific questions on figures within the report. In responding to a question on the detail of the remedial works to the Tavistock Viaduct, the Chief Executive made clear that Health and Safety was a priority for the Council and if a surveyor advised that works be undertaken then her recommendation was that those works must be completed.

During debate, a Lead Member expressed frustration with the lack of information from central government. The Leader confirmed that at the recent Local Government Association Annual Conference, there was evidence of a great deal of lobbying by local government representatives to central government colleagues on the lack of information being announced by the government on the 2019 Spending Review.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. The forecast budget gap for 2020/21 of £0.4 million and the position for future years be noted;
2. The current options identified and timescales for closing the budget gap in 2020/21 and future years, to achieve long term financial sustainability be noted. These options are summarised as follows:
 - o Pensions Strategy (Actuarial Valuation);
 - o Council Tax Support Grant;
 - o Extended Leadership Team Budget Options;
 - o Senior Leadership Team Restructure;
 - o Asset Review;
 - o Negative Revenue Support Grant;
 - o New Homes Bonus allocations for 2020/21 onwards; and
 - o Use of Reserves as a temporary measure.

That Council be **RECOMMENDED**:

3. That the Borough Council consults with all of the Town and Parish Councils within the Borough on the basis that the Borough Council is 'minded to' withdraw the Council Tax Support Grant from Town and Parish Councils with effect from 1 April 2020; and

4. To approve a capital budget provision for remedial works to the Tavistock Viaduct as set out in exempt Appendix E and to fund the budget provision from usable capital receipts.

17. **Parking Order Amendments - electrical charging and additional parking in Okehampton - Cllr Pearce**
HC 17

Members were presented with a report that recommended adding three areas of the Borough Council owned land in Okehampton to the Off Street Parking Places Order and recommended that the Order be updated to allow for the future provision of electric charging points, and to allow enforcement should it be necessary.

The Lead Member for Environment Services introduced the report.

It was then **RESOLVED** that Council be **RECOMMENDED**:

1. That three areas in Okehampton (named: 'North Road', 'Rear of Northfield Road' and 'Neville Road') are added to the Off Street Parking Places Order, so that the land may be protected for the future and so that enforcement may be undertaken; and
2. That the Off Street Parking Places Order be amended to include reference to Electric Charging Points, to enable future provision and enforcement.

18. **Write Off Report Q4 18/19 -Cllr Edmonds**
***HC 18**

Members were presented with a report that informed them of the debt written off for revenue streams within the Revenue and Benefits service. Debts up to the value of £5,000 were written off by the s151 officer under delegated authority. Permission was sought to write off individual debts with a value of more than £5,000.

The s151 Officer responded to questions of clarity on bad debt provision and collection rates, and also confirmed that for 2018/19 the collection rates for the Council were higher than national average for council tax and slightly lower than average for non-domestic rates. A Lead Member asked that the relevant officers be thanked for their hard work in council tax collection.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. It be noted that, in accordance with Financial Regulations, the s151 Officer has authorised the write off of individual West Devon Borough Council debts totaling £62,632.91 as detailed in the appendices to the presented agenda report at tables 1 and 2; and
2. That the write off of individual debts in excess of £5,000 (totalling £24,407.89) be approved.

19. **SLT Restructure - Cllr Jory**
HC 19

Members were presented with a report following the request of Council at its 12 February 2019 meeting for the Chief Executive to present a report recommending a new management structure (Minute: CM 54 'Establishment Review' refers).

The Leader introduced the report. The Chief Executive then outlined her recommended approach.

It was then **RESOLVED** that Council be **RECOMMENDED**:

1. That, with effect from 1 September 2019, a new Senior Leadership Team structure be developed that has the capacity to meet the Councils' needs and addresses four key requirements:

- Customer Facing;
- Community Facing;
- Financial; and
- Governance and Assurance.

To meet these requirements, it is recommended that the team comprises of the Chief Executive and four Director roles: Strategic Director of Customer Service and Delivery; Strategic Director of Place and Enterprise; Corporate Director of Governance and Assurance; and Corporate Director of Strategic Finance (and Section 151 Officer).

For each of the four Director roles, it is recommended that the role profiles and salaries be approved as set out in Appendix A of the presented agenda report.

2. That the Chief Executive be requested to review and implement changes to the Extended Leadership Team and pay structure to take account of the new Senior Leadership Team structure, other recent changes in the organisation and benchmarking data by the end of December 2019; and
3. That it be noted that the combined restructures will achieve ongoing annual revenue savings estimated to be at least £120,000 per annum (£60,000 per annum for each Council)

20. **Lead Member Update - Corporate Strategy Update - Cllr Jory**
***HC 20**

Cllr Jory had circulated a paper to all Members in advance of the meeting that set out how the Corporate Strategy linked to Lead Member areas of responsibility. He accepted that a number of projects were cross-cutting and therefore likely to be across more than one theme, and that on occasion, workloads might require a report to be presented by a different Lead Member.

One Member asked that the circulated document be annotated with lead officer names. The Chief Executive confirmed that the list was not

exhaustive but would give an indication of areas of responsibility. In response to a query regarding officer availability, the Chief Executive confirmed that officers would be reminded of the need to prioritise meetings with Members over agile work arrangements.

21. **Reports of other bodies -Overview and Scrutiny Committee 11 June 2019: To include a recommendation to Hub Committee**
***HC 21**

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 11 June 2019

A: O&S 6 Customer Satisfaction Action Plan Progress

The Committee received the recommendations of the Committee and, with no questions or debate being raised, it was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the progress made to date in improving customer satisfaction in the Waste and Recycling Service and Development Management be noted; and
2. That the next steps in focusing on: pre-empting customer needs; managing expectations; improving the Council's website; social media and call waiting messaging; and preparing for the next Institute of Customer Satisfaction Benchmarking Survey be endorsed.

22. **Exclusion of Public and Press - to consider the following resolution to exclude the public and press:-**
***HC 22**

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 item of business as the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Act is involved.

23. **IT Procurement Update - Cllr Edmonds**
***HC 23**

Following a brief discussion, it was agreed that this report be deferred to the next meeting of the Hub Committee on 10 September 2019.

(NOTE: THESE DECISIONS, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF MINUTES HC 13, HC 14, HC 16 PARTS 3 and 4, HC 17 and HC 19 WHICH ARE RECOMMENDATIONS TO FULL COUNCIL ON 23 JULY 2019, WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE FROM WEDNESDAY 24 JULY, 2019 UNLESS CALLED IN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULE 18).

The Meeting concluded at 6.05 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
