

WEST DEVON HUB COMMITTEE



West Devon
Borough
Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **West Devon Hub Committee** held
on
Tuesday, 15th September, 2020 at **2.00 pm** at the **Via Skype**

Present: **Councillors:**

Chairman Cllr Jory
Vice Chairman Cllr Samuel

Cllr Edmonds
Cllr Leech
Cllr Pearce

Cllr Mott
Cllr Moody
Cllr Sellis

In attendance:

Councillors:

Cllr Bridgewater
Cllr Daniel
Cllr Heyworth
Cllr Kemp
Cllr Moyse
Cllr Ratcliffe
Cllr Southcott
Cllr Yelland

Cllr Crozier
Cllr Ewings
Cllr Hipsey
Cllr Kimber
Cllr Musgrave
Cllr Renders
Cllr Wood

Officers:

Chief Executive
Director of Place & Enterprise
Section 151 Officer
Director of Governance & Assurance
Head of Commissioning & Contracts
Head of Housing, Revenues & Benefits
Head of Strategy & Projects
Democratic Services Manager
Senior Specialist – Waste Strategy & Commissioning
Senior Specialist – Natural Resources & Green Infrastructure
Senior Specialist – Revenues
Specialist – Democratic Services

10. **Apologies for absence**
*HC 10
Apologies were received from Cllr R. Cheadle
11. **Declarations of Interest**
*HC 11
Members were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be discussed and none were made.
12. **Confirmation of Minutes**
*HC 12
The Minutes of the Hub Committee meeting held on 28 July 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.
13. **Public Questions**
*HC 13
There were no questions submitted by the Public
14. **Hub Committee Forward Plan**
*HC 14
Members were presented with the Hub Committee Forward Plan setting out items on the agenda for Hub Committee meetings for the next four months.

The contents of the Forward Plan were agreed.
15. **Coronavirus (COVID-19) Recovery and Renewal Plan Development Update**
*HC 15
The Leader gave an update on the draft Recovery Plan and noted the update from the Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) Committee meeting held on 1st September 2020. It was confirmed that, if the recommendation was approved by the Hub Committee, then the next stage would be for a further update to be presented to the O&S Committee meeting on 10 November 2020, then the Plan would return to the Hub Committee meeting on 1 December. Members were thanked for their input.

The Leader outlined some of his thoughts and priorities on the plan moving forward and the importance of the overarching themes of climate change, biodiversity and well-being. These were summarised as follows:
- Firstly, developing a virtual/hybrid council which would potentially allow the reuse of Kilworthy Park to support additional community activities;
 - Secondly, ensuring total Broadband connectivity for the whole Borough; and
 - Thirdly, fully supporting Tavistock as a gateway to the World Heritage site and thus promoting the Borough's economy and businesses – linking heritage and cultural nodes in the Borough via green transport, eg long distance walkways, cycling routes with cycle hire hubs, and electric charging points.

It was intended that the Council would be setting out real and achievable goals in housing, including affordable housing.

These emerging themes were likely to inform the future strategic direction of the Council and would enable officers to begin working on a new Corporate Strategy, which would then be taken to Full Council on 25th May 2021.

The Chief Executive relayed the thoughts of the Leader of the Opposition Group, who was unable to attend, which were:

- i) bringing services out into the Community by evolving the virtual aspect of the pandemic, with Formal Council meetings hosted across the Borough, thereby utilising Kilworthy Park as a site which would benefit the wider community, whilst retaining a Council presence in Tavistock and Okehampton Town Centres as a gateway to the Council;
- ii) enabling Broadband across the whole area to promote online transactions as the norm and giving connectivity to the community, helping to support the vulnerable;
- iii) active travel with cycling and walking linking the outstanding natural environment and tourism. He suggested that it is time to 'park' the rail link and focus on delivering a sustainable alternative which could be a legacy for this administration.

The Leader moved the recommendations and Cllr Samuel seconded.

It was then **AGREED** that the Hub Committee:

1. Note the Council's continuing response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic;
2. Note the outputs arising from the recent Member Workshops (as set out in Appendix 1 of the presented agenda report);
3. Note the progress on the development of the Recovery and Renewal Action Plan ('the Plan') as detailed in Appendix 1 of the presented agenda report;
4. Delegate authority to the Group Leaders, in consultation with the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to nominate Members to serve on the Task and Finish Groups (as outlined at Appendix 1 of the presented agenda report);
5. Take into account the conclusions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Plan;
6. Request that a further update on progress against the development and delivery of the Plan be brought back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting to be held on 10 November 2020; and

That, in light of the discussions at the Meeting:

7. Officers start working on the development of a new Corporate Strategy with a view to it being presented to the Annual Council Meeting on 25 May 2021 for adoption.

16. **Amended Budget 2020/21**

HC 16

Members were presented with a report that outlined the amended draft budget for 2020/21. It was noted that discussions at the workshop and the feedback from the online survey had been fulsome.

The Leader moved the recommendations that were then seconded by Cllr Samuel (and carried by a Unanimous vote).

It was then **RESOLVED** that the Hub Committee **RECOMMEND** to Council:-

- 1) The five options set out in 5.2 of the presented agenda report (totalling £501,000), in order to produce an Amended Revenue Budget for 2020-21;
- 2) To note the future capacity of reserves set out in 5.8 and 5.9 of the presented agenda report which may have to be called upon to meet any future financial challenges and/or additional requirements;
- 3) To use £70,000 from the Business Rates Retention Earmarked Reserve, to fund the Town Centre support initiative set out in Section 6 of the presented agenda report; and
- 4) To approve Tranche 4 of the Discretionary Business Grants Policy (as attached at Appendix 2 to the presented agenda report), to confirm that in accordance with the Government guidance, Town and Parish Councils are able to apply to the scheme if they meet the eligibility criteria (as Section 11 in the presented agenda report refers).

17. **Write Off Report**

*HC 17

The Lead Member for Resources and Performance gave a report on the Council's write offs for quarter four and year end. Officers confirmed that the Council collection rate of 97.71% for 2019/20 was above the national average for Council Tax collection in year 2019/20 and would circulate figures for Quarter One 2020/21.

The recommendations were moved by Cllr Edmonds and seconded by Cllr Mott.

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 totalling £71,500.75 as detailed in Tables 1 and 2 of the presented agenda report; and
2. That the write off of individual debts in excess of £5,000 (totalling £149,949.80) be approved as detailed in Table 3 of the presented agenda report.

18. **Council Tax Premium for Long-term Empty Property**

HC 18

Members were presented with a report that requested raising the Council Tax long-term empty property Premium to the maximum allowed by regulations. This increase was sought to encourage owners of long-term empty property to take action to bring these houses back into use.

Cllr Sellis moved the recommendations, which were seconded by Cllr Leech.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the Hub Committee **RECOMMEND** to Council:

- (a) An increase in the Council Tax long-term empty property Premium from the current 50% to the relevant maximums set out in the Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018
 - (b) That, from 1st April 2021 onwards, to increase the Council Tax long-term empty property Premium to 100% for properties that have been empty for 2 years or more*
 - (c) That, from 1st April 2021 onwards, to increase the Council Tax long-term empty property Premium to 200% for properties that have been empty for 5 years or more*
 - (d) That, from 1st April 2021 onwards to increase the Council Tax long-term empty property Premium to 300% for properties that have been empty for 10 years or more*
- (* Any period not exceeding six weeks, where the property is not empty, shall be disregarded for the purposes of calculating the two, five or ten year empty period).

19.

Waste Collection Frequency Trial

*HC 19

The Committee considered a report that updated on the trial of 1,000 households who had moved onto three weekly residual collections and enhanced recycling service. It was acknowledged that the figures had been skewed due to increased waste and recycling during the pandemic.

Cllr Mott proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Cllr Moody.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the Hub Committee:

1. Approves the continuation of the trial of three weekly refuse collections to around 1,000 households in the Borough until March 2021 to allow a full year of data to be analysed.
2. Receives an outcome report in March 2021 that will include an officer appraisal over whether or not the Committee should recommend to Council that a three weekly refuse collection should be implemented for all households in the Borough with a potential start date of Autumn 2021.

3. Notes the success of the enhanced recycling service.

20.

Signing up to the Coastal Concordat

*HC 20

The Lead Member for Environment introduced the Coastal Concordat report which was an agreement between the main regulatory bodies and coastal Local Planning Authorities which provides streamlined processes for applicants or users. It was noted that the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) had encouraged all Local Authorities to sign up to this Concordat.

Cllr Mott proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Cllr Sellis

It was then **RESOLVED** that the Hub Committee agrees to sign up to the Coastal Concordat with immediate effect

The Meeting concluded at 3.22 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
