

SOUTH HAMS EXECUTIVE



Minutes of a meeting of the **South Hams Executive** held on **Thursday, 19th December, 2019** at **9.30 am** at the **Repton Room - Follaton House**

Present: **Councillors:**

Chairman Cllr Pearce
Vice Chairman Cllr Bastone

Cllr Hopwood
Cllr Hawkins

Cllr Baldry
Cllr May

In attendance:

Councillors:

Cllr Abbott
Cllr Brazil
Cllr Foss
Cllr Kemp
Cllr Pennington
Cllr Smerdon
Cllr Taylor

Cllr Birch
Cllr Chown
Cllr Holway
Cllr Long
Cllr Rowe
Cllr Spencer

Officers:

Deputy Chief Executive
Section 151 Officer
Director of Place & Enterprise
Commissioning Manager
Specialist – Democratic Services

55. **Minutes**

The minutes of the Executive meeting held on 31 October 2019 were confirmed as a true and correct record and signed off by the Chairman.

56. **Declarations of Interest**

Members and officers were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of this meeting but none were made.

57.

Public Question Time

It was noted that the following public questions had been received in accordance with the Executive Procedure Rules, for consideration at this meeting. The responses are set out in bold, and were circulated at the meeting.

From Ella Dangerfield:

I have a question relating to the recent publication of the Climate and Biodiversity Action Plan:

Residential housing is the main source of carbon emissions over which this Council has direct control. Local Fuel Poverty levels are high and increasing. So why has this Council chosen not to improve the construction standards in its Joint Local Plan to address this?

The Joint Local Plan has recently been adopted and contains a range of policies that will support the climate change agenda. The Council already supports improving existing housing stock through a range of initiatives including the Energy Company Obligation and through the use of its Better Care Fund. The energy efficiency of new dwellings is controlled primarily through the Building regulations that are set nationally. It is hoped that there will be changes to the Regulations and the Council will, with its partners, look to lobby Government for changes that will support energy efficiency within new developments.

Supplementary question:

Councils are encouraged to set sustainable construction standards higher than NPPF ones and are entitled to improve sections of Local Plans annually if appropriate. Until 2015 the national target was zero-carbon housing by 2016. Why has a zero-carbon target not been discussed with the other partners to the JLP?

The Council is keen to secure improved construction standards to support its declaration of a Climate Change and Biodiversity Emergency. In view of this the Council will be discussing available options with its JLP partners as part of its adopted action plan.

From Guy Chapman:

The Council has now published its draft Climate Action Plan but it was written in secret and councillors were only allowed to see it a week ago. Which parts of the report were so sensitive that this level of secrecy was felt to be necessary?

The Climate Action Plan was not written in secret and has now been published in full as part of the report to Council on 19 December 2019. The Action Plan is a live document and will

develop over time and, subject to the recommendations in the above report being adopted, be subject to wider consultation.

From David Cutting:

This Committee is today reviewing its Executive Forward Plan. As the Council has declared a Climate Emergency why does this Forward Plan not include relevant reviews of the Joint Local Plan and the 5 Year Corporate Strategy?

There is a report going to full Council setting out recommendations with regard to the Climate Change and Biodiversity Emergency. There is no recommendation to review the Corporate Strategy or the Joint Local Plan. The Corporate Strategy is a guiding document that sets the direction of the Council and Climate Change and Biodiversity considerations will naturally be applied as evidenced by the updated reporting template.

The Joint Local Plan can only be reviewed with the agreement of all three Councils. Currently they have all committed to reviewing and updating the Joint Local Plan within 5 years of adoption. The report to Council today does include a recommendation that a Strategy be presented back to full Council for approval on 21 May 2020.

Supplementary question:

As this Council describes the Climate Change and Biodiversity agenda as 'a golden thread throughout all of its work' why is there no proposal to mention it in the Corporate Strategy and why has there been no discussion with Plymouth and West Devon Councils about reviewing housing construction standards?

It is recognised that Climate Change and Biodiversity is a cross cutting issue and will form part of future decision making; this can be achieved without being explicitly mentioned in the Corporate Strategy. This does not in any way exclude its inclusion within any subsequent review of the Strategy.

The Council is keen to secure improved construction standards to support its declaration of a Climate Change and Biodiversity Emergency. In view of this the Council will be discussing available options with its JLP partners as part of its adopted action plan.

From Robert Vint:

I understand that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee of this Council was unable to scrutinise the drafting of the Climate Action Plan because it was drawn up in secret. How have local stakeholders and this Council's members, Committees and Working Groups contributed to the drafting of the Plan?

The Council set up a politically balanced Member working group to work with officers to draft the Action Plan. The Working Group report direct to Council and after a meeting on 5th December, to which all Members were invited, the Group unanimously agreed the Recommendations that are contained within the report that goes to Council on 19 December 2019. The Action Plan will, subject to approval, be open to wider consultation going forward.

Supplementary question:

What happened to the emerging draft Climate Action Plan and who was involved in reviewing it and determining its contents between the 26th July and the 5th December?

The content of the Action plan was developed by officers in advance of being taken to the Climate Change and Biodiversity Working Group on 5th December when it was unanimously approved. The Plan, which is a living document that will evolve over time, will be subject to public consultation and comment in the early part of 2020.

From Christopher Snow:

In July this Council agreed to carry out an "assessment of the viability of a 2030 target" for the South Hams to become carbon-neutral - a target adopted by many neighbouring councils. There is no viability assessment in the draft Climate Action Plan so why was this target rejected?

The Report to Council on 19 December 2019 contains two aims - 2030 for the Councils own operational carbon footprint and 2050 for the wider District – these are based on an initial assessment of their relative viability. Further work is needed with regard to both as detailed within the report and will be subject to an annual review.

From Barbara Phillips

I would like to ask the Executive committee what plans it has for working with businesses in the Retail, agricultural, manufacturing and tourism sectors within South Hams in order to educate, encourage and thereby facilitate reduction in Carbon emissions? Will they make use of local environmental experts?

Encouraging behaviour change within business and the wider community will be key to securing a reduction in carbon emissions and is included within various actions in the Action Plan. This also forms a major part of the emerging Devon Carbon Plan which will be able exert greater influence in these areas by virtue of its wide ranging membership. The Council will work with local partners and experts where it is deemed beneficial.

From Peter Scott

In July this Council agreed to consider the setting up of a Citizen's Assembly to help draft its Climate Action Plan. Why was no Citizen's Assembly set up and why is there no explanation in the Climate Action Plan as to why this option was rejected?

The setting up of a Citizens' Assembly was discussed by the Climate Change and Biodiversity Member Working Group and it was determined that it was not the most appropriate course of action at the time. The Devon Climate Emergency Response Group, through the Net-zero Task Force, are developing proposals for a Citizens' Assembly to inform the content of the Devon Carbon Plan.

58. **Executive Forward Plan**

Members were presented with an interim Executive Forward Plan setting out items on the agenda for Executive meetings for the next four months and noted its content. The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that a full version of the Executive Forward Plan would be published in early January 2020.

59. **Quarter 2 Revenue Budget Monitoring 2019/2020**

Members were presented with a report that enabled them to monitor income and expenditure variations against the approved budget for 2019/20, and provided a forecast for the year end position.

The Lead Member for Support Services introduced the report and there being no questions, it was then **RESOLVED** to:

1. Endorse the forecast income and expenditure variations for the 2019/20 financial year and the overall projected underspend of £37,000 (0.4% of the total budget £8.833 million) and
2. **RECOMMEND** to Council to transfer £40,000 from the Dartmouth Lower Ferry Earmarked Reserve in order to complete the work required to bring the existing fleet up to the required Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) standards.

60. **Capital Programme Monitoring**

The Executive was presented with a report that advised Members of the progress on individual schemes within the approved capital programme, including an assessment of the financial position. The monitoring of the capital programme at month 6 had not highlighted any significant areas of overspend to report to Members.

The Lead Member for Support Services introduced the report. The s151 Officer and Director for Place and Enterprise responded to questions of clarity.

During discussion, it was confirmed that a report would be presented to a later meeting of the Executive setting out whether the Pay on Entry initiative had been successful in terms of financial implications. A local Ward Member for Salcombe raised concerns over the issue of Salcombe being without toilet provision whilst the Whitestrand project was under construction. A number of Members gave their views, and the Director of Place and Enterprise concluded that the problem represented financial challenge versus service provision. Finally, one Member raised that affordable housing provision had not been spent, and by way of response, Members were advised that the Council was currently developing a Housing Strategy for which those funds would be needed.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. The content of the report be noted;

That Council be **RECOMMENDED**:

2. That £110,000 of the remaining capital programme contingency budget of £183,399 is approved to be allocated to the Whitestrand, Salcombe capital project set out in exempt Appendix B;
3. That the capital budget of £140,000 be retrospectively approved to be funded from the Dartmouth Ferry reserve; and
4. That the capital budgets for developing beach huts in Salcombe and Beesands are withdrawn.

61. **Draft Revenue Budget Proposals for 2020/21**

Members were presented with a report that set out the latest budget position for the Revenue Budget for 2020/21 and formally sought the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel on the presented budget proposals.

The Leader introduced the report, and set out the key points for consideration, and advised that the proposals would be passed to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel for consideration, before being presented back to Executive at the next meeting on 6 February, 2020.

The s151 Officer responded to questions of clarity.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) the forecast budget gap for 2020/21 of £33,320 and the position for future years (a projected £0.530 million budget gap in 2021/22) be noted;

- (ii) the current options identified and timescales for closing the budget gap in 2020/21 and in future years, to achieve long term financial sustainability be noted; and
- (iii) the views of the joint meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel and Development Management Committee on the Revenue Budget Proposals set out within this report for 2020/21 be requested.

62. **Capital Budget Proposals for 2020/21**

Members were presented with a report that set out the Capital Programme proposals for 2020/21 and formally sought the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel to the proposals.

The Leader introduced the report.

It was then:

RESOLVED

- 1) That the following be noted
 - a) The Capital Programme Proposals for 2020/21, which total £2,480,000 (Appendix A)
 - b) The content of the Capital Programme Proposals for 2020/21, which total £1,250,000 (Exempt Appendix B)
 - c) The proposed financing of the 2020/21 Capital Programme of £3,730,000 from the funding sources set out in Section 4.
- 2) That the views of the joint meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel and Development Management Committee on the Capital Programme proposals for 2020/21 of £3,730,000 set out in this report and the proposals for the financing of the Capital Programme be requested.

63. **Partnership Funding**

Members were presented with a report that provided feedback from each of the partners that the Council currently funded. Members were asked to consider the merits of each partner submission and decide which partners they would like to enter into a three year funding agreement with.

The Lead Members for Communities and Wellbeing introduced the report.

Members had a detailed discussion on this item, and non-Executive Members were included in the debate. Whilst acknowledging that these were to be subject of discussion during the draft 2020/21 Revenue Budget Setting process, the following recommendations reflect the decision of the Executive in respect of the partner

submissions that were submitted. The total amount of funding allocated was £89, 647. This amount was £7,000 less than the amount currently committed for partnership funding. Additional funds were recommended to support the Ivybridge Ring and Ride, and the SH CVS funding was recommended for withdrawal on the basis of a lack of clear financial information within their submission.

It was then:

RESOLVED that:

1. the feedback given by each partner as shown in presented Appendix A was considered based on
 - a. local need
 - b. alignment to the Council's Corporate Strategy
 - c. statutory duty; and
2. the following partners be awarded funding for the next three years of the following amounts per annum, subject to endorsement through the 2020/21 Revenue Budget setting process:
 - a) South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership - £20,700
 - b) South Hams Citizens Advice - £51,867
 - c) South Hams Community Volunteer Service - £0
 - d) Ivybridge Ring and Ride - £5,710
 - e) Totnes & Dartmouth Ring & Ride (Newton Abbot Community Transport Group) - £7,370
 - f) South West Youth Games - £0
 - g) South Hams Museums Group - £4,000

64. **Customer Satisfaction Action Plan Progress**

Members were presented with a report that detailed progress made since September 2019 on improving customer satisfaction.

The Lead Member for Customer First introduced the report. Members wished for thanks to be recorded to all Members of staff for their efforts to improve customer satisfaction.

It was then:

RESOLVED that:

1. the progress made to date in improving customer satisfaction in particular the increased Customer Satisfaction scores be noted
2. the following next steps be supported:
 - i. Appoint a Customer Service Improvement Manager
 - ii. Review complaint handling

- iii. Continue customer focussed staff meetings, performance monitoring and training
- iv. Replace customer handling software
- v. Achieve an uplift in customer satisfaction by 5.7 points in the next Institute of Customer Service benchmarking survey
- vi. Continue progress reporting

65. **Public Toilet Project update**

Members were presented with a report that set out the latest position, following the continued work on the public toilet project.

The Lead Member for Communities introduced the report and was thanked by other Members for his work on the project.

One Member wanted to record thanks to Salcombe Town Council for their financial support to Millbay public toilets to keep them open, particularly as the toilets were not within Salcombe. It was also noted that the terminology within the report gave the impression that the position with the toilets at Millbay had resulted in a cost pressure to the Council. A Member felt that this was not strictly the case, as the Millbay toilets had not been included in the original project. Officers agreed to clarify the position in future reports.

It was then:

RESOLVED that:

the updates to the public toilet project detailed in the body of the report be approved, but may be summarised as follows:

Totnes – Civic Hall, Coronation Road and Steamer Quay

That, should an offer be received for the Town Council to continue to pay lost Pay on Entry (PoE) income to the District Council for the financial year 2020/21, it should be accepted, pending the Town Council's consideration of a long-term solution.

Salcombe and East Portlemouth – that the facilities at Whitestrand, Batson Creek, North Sands, South Sands, Mill Bay and Ferry Steps remain open and lost PoE income is reimbursed to the Council by the Salcombe Partnership.

At Mill Bay, it is now proposed the facility remains open with a contribution from the partnership for the required renovation works.

Newton Ferrers

That the facility reopen for next season, to allow the Parish Council to explore options to reduce running costs, and with a financial contribution from the Parish Council of £1,500 towards running costs for next financial year.

Holbeton

That the facility re-opens with the Parish Council funding energy and water charges and arranging the cleaning of the toilets, pending taking on the public toilet building as an asset transfer

Thurlestone

That the District Council will continue to clean the facilities, and pay for this for the duration of the next financial year. In return, the Parish Council will take the building as an asset transfer and immediately apply for Business Rate Relief, which will be applicable as it will be the only building the Parish will own on which business rates apply. This will help to ease the financial onus for the Parish Council.

66.

Reports of Other Bodies

In relation to Recommendation O&S.51/19, it was noted that the decision had been taken under Agenda Item 12. Customer Satisfaction Action Plan Progress (Minute E.64/19 above refers).

(NOTE: THESE DECISIONS, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF E.50/19 (3) AND E.54/19 (2), WHICH WERE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COUNCIL MEETING TO BE HELD ON 19 DECEMBER 2019, WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE FROM 5.00PM ON THURSDAY 2 JANUARY, 2020 UNLESS CALLED IN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULE 18).

The Meeting concluded at 11.00 am

Signed by:

Chairman
