

SOUTH HAMS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL



Minutes of a meeting of the **South Hams Overview and Scrutiny Panel** held on **Thursday, 16th July, 2020 at 10.00 am** at the **via Skype**

Present: **Councillors:**

Chairman Cllr Birch
Vice Chairman Cllr Smerdon

Cllr Pennington
Cllr Chown
Cllr McKay
Cllr Reeve
Cllr Spencer
Cllr Thomas

Cllr Austen
Cllr Jackson
Cllr O'Callaghan
Cllr Rose
Cllr Sweett

In attendance:

Councillors:

Cllr Abbott
Cllr Bastone
Cllr Brown
Cllr Hodgson
Cllr Hopwood
Cllr Pearce
Cllr Taylor

Cllr Baldry
Cllr Brazil
Cllr Hawkins
Cllr Holway
Cllr Pannell
Cllr Rowe

Officers:

Deputy Chief Executive
Head Of Housing Revenues & Benefits
Head of Commissioning & Contracts
Head of IT
Senior Housing Specialist
Housing Specialist
Senior Specialist – Waste Strategy & Commissioning

1. **Minutes**
O&S.1/20

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 27 February 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

O&S.2/20

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

3. **Public Forum**

O&S.3/20

In accordance with the Public Forum Procedure Rules, the Chairman informed that no questions had been received for consideration but there were none received.

4. **Executive Forward Plan**

O&S.4/20

The Panel was presented with the most recently published Executive Forward Plan.

In response to a request for an update on the 'Formation of a Wholly Owned Company' proposal, officers advised that legal advice had been sought on the most appropriate means of structuring such a Company and it was agreed that a more detailed update would be presented to the Panel meeting to be held on 8 October 2020.

(a) Homelessness Strategy Action Plan

The Panel considered a report that sought to recommend to the Executive that the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan for 2020-21 be adopted.

In the ensuing debate, particular reference was made to:-

- (i) The Young Devon project begin particularly well received in local schools;
- (ii) the work of lead officers. A number of Members in attendance paid tribute to the excellent work undertaken by those lead officers working on the homelessness prevention agenda. As a consequence, an additional recommendation (as below) was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** and, when put to the vote, was declared **CARRIED**:

'That the Panel thank the Housing Team for the production of an excellent report and for all of their hard work.'

- (iii) the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. When questioned, officers confirmed that, whilst the service had not seen a significant spike in instances of Domestic Violence, it was already becoming apparent that the impacts on both mental health and financial hardship were proving to be very significant;
- (iv) the Action Plan providing focus towards moving rough sleepers into temporary accommodation. Officers proceeded to assure the Committee that they monitored the rough sleeper situation particularly closely;

(v) widespread support being expressed for the adoption of the Action Plan.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That, with effect from 1 April 2020, the Executive be **RECOMMENDED** to adopt the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2020/21 (as attached at Appendix 3 of the presented agenda report); and
2. That the Panel thank the Housing Team for the production of an excellent report and for all of their hard work.

5. **Waste Service Update - Presentation and Briefing Note**

O&S.5/20

The Head of Commissioning and Contracts conducted a presentation that provided an update on the proposed revisions to the Waste and Recycling Service.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- (a) The importance, as the project evolved, of both regular Member involvement and awareness and a clear Communications Strategy were stressed by a number of Members;
- (b) It was confirmed that the new Service was being developed to reflect the public wish to increase recycling provision. For example, officers advised that the new Service would include the provision for kerbside collection of glass materials;
- (c) With regard to the disposal of single use gloves and face masks, it was confirmed that Government guidance was that these could not be recycled at this present time. In recognising that there was an organisation that was offering to recycle these products, it was requested that officers look to signpost residents to the availability of this service;
- (d) In response to a specific staffing matter raised, officers advised that they would report the issue to the contractor and ask that all of their staff be reminded of their Code of Conduct;
- (e) The lead Executive Member encouraged his fellow Members to refrain from raising day-to-day operational issues with the lead officers. Instead, the Member requested that such matters be raised either via the Localities Service or the 'report online' functionality on the Council website;
- (f) The Committee was assured that all Members would have advanced sight of the proposed round reviews prior to them being implemented. This assurance was welcomed by a number of Members;
- (g) It was hoped that the public confusion over what currently could (and could not) be recycled would be overcome through the new Service;

- (h) A Member felt that the cost implications arising from the new Service should be considered at a future meeting of the Audit Committee. Since the Member was a serving Audit Committee Member, the Chairman encouraged him to raise it a future meeting of that Committee at the time when the future Work Programme was being discussed.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the Panel thank lead officers for their presentation and supporting Briefing Note that outlines the delay to the Waste and Recycling Service.

6. ICT Update

O&S.6/20

A report was considered that provided an overview of work that had been completed in the IT service area during the previous twelve months as part of a continuous programme of work designed to further improve its security, resilience, availability and capability. In addition, the report also highlighted proposed improvements to be implemented over the year ahead.

In discussion, the following points were raised:

- (a) Officers confirmed that a detailed training programme would be made available to Members during the proposed roll-out of Microsoft Teams and Office365;
- (b) Members were advised that, whilst the service had been required to work from home during the Pandemic, this had not resulted in any impact on service delivery or the progress of the Future IT project;
- (c) With regard to the constraints arising from regular software and security updates, all Members were encouraged to shut down their IT devices at the end of each day to minimise the impact of any disruption.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the Panel note the continuous improvement and evolution of the Council's IT platform to meet the needs of its ambitious and successful service delivery model.

7. Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

O&S.7/20

The Panel considered a report that presented its Annual Report for 2019/20.

In debate, Members recognised the impressive amount of work that had been undertaken by the Panel during 2019/20 and the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and lead officers were subsequently thanked for their work in supporting the effectiveness of the Overview and Scrutiny function.

It was then:

RECOMMENDED

That Council be **RECOMMENDED** that the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2019/20 be approved.

8. **Task & Finish Group Updates**

O&S.8/20

(a) Locality Service

The Panel recognised that the Locality Service would be central to the Council's Recovery Plan to the COVID-19 Pandemic. As a result, Members noted that the draft Plan was next to be considered at a joint meeting of the Panel and Development Management Committee that was to be held on 3 September 2020.

It was therefore considered appropriate for a further update from the Group to be presented to the Panel meeting to be held on 8 October 2020.

Finally, the Panel agreed a proposal whereby Cllr Jackson replaced Cllr Birch as a serving Member of the Task and Finish Group.

9. **Annual O+S Work Programme**

O&S.9/20

During consideration of the latest version of the Panel's Annual Work Programme, the following additions, amendments and deletions were made to the Programme:

- The Chairman put forward a proposal to establish a Task and Finish Group to develop a Consultation and Engagement Strategy. In discussion, Members were supportive of this suggestion and it was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** and when put to vote was declared **CARRIED** that:

'1. A Consultation and Engagement Strategy Task and Finish Group (comprising of Cllrs Birch, Chown (subject to his availability to partake), Reeve, Rose (Group Chairman), Spencer and Thomas) be established; and

2. The Group be tasked with presenting its concluding report to the Panel meeting to be held on 19 November 2020.'

- The Panel was reminded of its earlier request (Minute O&S.4/20 above refers) to receive an update on the proposed formation of a Wholly Owned Company at its meeting to be held on 8 October 2020.

The Meeting concluded at 11.50 am

Signed by:

Chairman
