

# SOUTH HAMS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL



## **Minutes** of a meeting of the **South Hams Overview and Scrutiny Panel** held on **Thursday, 25th February, 2021 at 10.00 am via Teams**

Present: **Councillors:**

**Chairman** Cllr Birch  
**Vice Chairman** Cllr Smerdon

Cllr Pennington  
Cllr Chown  
Cllr O'Callaghan  
Cllr Rose  
Cllr Sweett

Cllr Austen  
Cllr Jackson  
Cllr Reeve  
Cllr Spencer

**In attendance:**  
Councillors:

Cllr Abbott  
Cllr Bastone  
Cllr Hawkins  
Cllr Hopwood  
Cllr Pearce  
Cllr Rowe

Cllr Baldry  
Cllr Brazil  
Cllr Holway  
Cllr Kemp  
Cllr Pringle  
Cllr Taylor

Officers:  
Chief Executive  
Deputy Chief Executive  
Director – Place & Enterprise  
Democratic Services Manager  
Monitoring Officer  
Head of Housing, Revenues & Benefits  
Head of Strategy & Projects  
Senior Specialist – Place Making  
Specialist – Leisure  
Democratic Services Specialist

35.

### **Minutes**

O&S.35/20

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 14 January 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

36. **Declarations of Interest**

O&S.36/20

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.

37. **Public Forum**

O&S.37/20

In accordance with the Public Forum Procedure Rules, the Chairman informed that no questions had been received for consideration.

38. **Executive Forward Plan**

O&S.38/20

The Panel was presented with the most recently published Executive Forward Plan and noted its content without any further comment.

39. **Connecting Devon and Somerset Representatives to attend**

O&S.39/20

At the invitation of the Panel, Matt Barrow (Stakeholder Engagement Officer at Devon County Council (DCC)) and Cllr Rufus Gilbert (Lead Councillor DCC, for Prosperity and Broadband) were in attendance to provide a presentation that updated on the work of Connecting Devon and Somerset's broadband project. Main points outlined were:

- Aim of project was to deliver on superfast agenda from Central Government;
- South Hams District Council (SHDC) was in 'Lot F' along with Teignbridge County Council, with first premises going live in July 2021;
- 1 million premises initially identified, with 300,000 premises passed, and 270,000 superfast broadband to homes and businesses; and
- 50,165 total premises identified in SHDC area, total delivered 38,897 (77.54%). Total delivered and planned was 48,204 which left 1,961 premises, and an overview of how these would be dealt with was provided to the meeting.

The Deputy Chief Executive then updated the Panel on the imminent recruitment of a Community Broadband Support Officer. Funding for this post had been achieved through match funding bid with the Local Government Association and West Devon Borough Council, and was for a twelve month period. It was intended that, when employed, the officer would engage with communities to develop best schemes, working closely with Connecting Devon and Somerset and suppliers, to facilitate project and timescales.

It was then:

**RESOLVED**

That the Panel welcome the proposed broadband provision as set out in the report and presentation, and the appointment of a Broadband Community Support officer, who, four months after his/her appointment, will report to the

Panel on the progress in respect of the responsibilities set out at paragraph 3.2 of the presented agenda report.

40. **Leisure Contract - Fusion Annual Report 2020**

O&S.40/20

The Executive Member for Leisure introduced a report which provided the Panel with Fusion's annual report and outlined plans for 2021.

At the invitation of the Panel, Greg Holland (Fusion, Regional Manager) gave a presentation of the Annual Report, during which the following key points were highlighted:

- Lockdowns 1 and 3 had been hard closures, ie mothballing of centres, with lockdown 2 a soft closure where water temperatures were dropped rather than heating turned off. Monies received from Council had been used to support maintenance and asset protection.
- Centres would be reopened following Government guidelines, with new covid-19 procedures in place, including risk assessments, increased cleaning regimes, and training for staff, including CIMSPA (Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity) accredited course.
- Greatest lesson learnt from first lockdown was for increased communication with customers. Mitigation included introduction of dedicated customer service team that would be available seven days a week. Mr Holland also confirmed that it was intended to continue to build on communication with customers.
- Staff review had been carried out in July 2020, with redundancy of 37 positions concluded in November 2020
- Currently working on financial projections for April 2021 to March 2022 – once completed this, and review of pricing structure, would be brought to SHDC.

Further to questions from Members, Mr Holland confirmed that signs would remain in place, as would online bookings and 'Fusion on Demand'. It was also confirmed that the Council and Fusion had applied for funding to cover Lockdown 3, and this payment was expected imminently. Mr Holland confirmed that no staff positions had been lost through the introduction of cashless payment.

It was then:

**RESOLVED**

That the Overview and Scrutiny Panel note the contents of Fusion's Annual Report for 2020 and proposals for 2021.

41. **Housing Strategy 2021-2026 'Better Homes, Better Lives' - Consultation Responses**

O&S.41/20

The Panel was presented with a report that asked the Panel to consider the approach and responses to the Housing Strategy public and partner consultation. It was noted that there had been a good response to the public consultation with many suggestions being incorporated into the report. The lead officer also confirmed that any recommendations

arising from this Panel meeting would be incorporated into the Strategy prior to its consideration by the Executive on 11 March 2021.

During questions from Members, it was clarified that the Council was restricted in its ability to counter the proliferation of second homes and holiday lets, being able to only increase Council Tax Premium (which had been effected), and lobby Central Government for a change in the law. Imposition of permanent residency clauses was constrained by Neighbourhood Plans but was utilised when available. The Leader of the Council noted that previous supply of affordable housing had not provided for the greatest need, ie the need for family homes, but that this would now be addressed.

It was then:

### **RECOMMENDED**

That the Panel **RECOMMEND** to the Executive changes to the draft Housing Strategy as set out at paragraphs 1.4, 1.5, 2.12, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5 of the presented agenda report.

42.

### **Task and Finish Group Updates: Feedback from Outside Bodies Proposal**

O&S.42/20

Further to a Question on Notice that had been raised with the Chair of the Panel at the Council meeting held on 11 February 2021, the Chair proposed the Panel approve the establishment of a Task and Finish Group to review the feedback process for Members sitting on Outside Bodies and the benefit to Council of these positions.

The Chair then recommended to the Panel that:

- A Task and Finish Group be set up to scrutinise the means of reporting back to Council and to evaluate the benefit to Council of it being represented on outside bodies;
- The Group would report back with any recommendations to the meeting of the Panel on the meeting on 1st April 2021. The Chair suggested that the Task and Finish Group should consist of three Members of the Conservative Group and three Members of the Opposition Group, and the Task and Finish Group to be chaired by Cllr Barrie Spencer.

During the ensuing discussion, the following points were made:

- (a) Several Members felt that the detail of the Task and Finish Group should have been left to discussion following the Panel voting to accept the need for a Task and Finish Group. It was also felt that this was not a priority during the Covid Pandemic impacting on officer time.

- (b) Other Members outlined their support for such a task and finish group as they felt that they were unaware of the various representations on Outside Bodies, and what benefit such representation gave to the Council.
- (c) The Chair concluded that this agenda item had been in response to a Member Question on Notice and that the Task and Finish Group would be working to a very short timescale with a report coming back to the Panel for the meeting on the 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2021. This was to allow any recommendations to go to Executive, and then on to Full Council in time for the Annual Council meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2021 when the representatives of Outside Bodies were voted upon.
- (d) It was acknowledged that many of these Outside Bodies positions were a statutory requirement.

It was then:

### **RESOLVED**

That:

- A Task and Finish Group be set up to scrutinise the means of reporting back to Council and to evaluate the benefit to Council of it being represented on Outside Bodies. And,
- The Group would report back with any recommendations to the meeting of the Panel on 1 April 2021. The Panel to consist of three Members of the Conservative Group and three Members of the Opposition Group, and to be chaired by Cllr Spencer.

Further to this decision being approved, a draft set of Terms of Reference for the Task and Finish Group were then outlined. It was further agreed that there should be only one or two meetings of the Group, and the timetable of meetings should fit into the timetable of the parallel review of the Decision Making report.

It was then:

### **RESOLVED**

- That the draft Terms of Reference (as presented to the meeting) be approved.

#### **43. External Representative(s) Attendance at Panel Meetings: Lessons Learned**

O&S.43/20

The Panel was given an overview of issues and feedback received following attendance by external representatives, at previous meetings:

Main points were:

- Some external presentations had been too long

- With virtual meetings, a Panel meeting being held on the same day as the joint Overview & Scrutiny/Development Management meeting was not well received
- Some agenda reports were being published too close to meetings giving insufficient time for papers to be read, and
- Asking for Members questions in advance (that are then included within the external presentation) was well received

The Deputy Chief Executive then outlined recommended improvements:

- That a properly scheduled and structured annual work programme be approved (thereby ensuring that agendas are not unduly long)
- That advanced questions be invited from Members
- That presentations be time limited
- That any presentation slides /reports from external representatives be included with the published agenda at least five clear working days before the meeting.

During the ensuing discussion, the following points were made:

- (a) A Member stated that materials for meetings needed to be received in sufficient time to allow for reading before questions could be submitted beforehand;
- (b) It was clarified that questions could still be asked at the meeting; and
- (c) The work programme would give advance warning of planned attendance by outside bodies to enable Members to think about questions to be covered in any up-and-coming presentation.

It was then:

### **RESOLVED**

That the following improvements be made to the Panel's working practices:

- That a properly scheduled and structured annual work programme be approved (thereby ensuring that agendas are not unduly long)
- That advanced questions be invited from Members with these being dealt with during the representative(s) presentation;
- That presentations (and any further Member Questions) be time limited;
- That the calendar of meeting for 2021/22 (and thereafter) be drafted to ensure that a Panel meeting is not held on the afternoon of the annual O+S / DM Budget Meeting; and
- That any presentation slides /reports from external representatives be included with the published agenda at least five clear working days before the meeting.

#### **44. Annual O&S Work Programme**

O&S.44/20

During consideration of the latest version of the Panel's Annual Work Programme, it was agreed that the final meeting of the municipal year on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021, would include the following:

- Executive Forward Plan
- Sustainable Community Locality Fund
- Section 106 Agreement Schedule
- Report from the Task and Finish Group on Outside Body representation
- Other Task and Finish Group updates (if any)

45. **2021/22 Panel Work Programme - Initial Thoughts**

O&S.45/20

The Chair began by quoting from the Council's Constitution:

"Production of work programmes: The Scrutiny function will, early in each municipal year, produce a work programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel for that year. The Panel will keep the work programme under review during the course of the year. The work programme will be devised having regard to the resources available to the time constraints of the Members and officers, and the interests of the local community.

In light of this, the Chair proposed a meeting of the Chairs and Vice Chairs of Overview & Scrutiny Panel and the Executive, along with the Chief Executive, the Deputy Chief Executive, and the Manager of Democratic Services, to develop a work programme for the next municipal year. This work programme would then be brought back to the Panel on 1 April 2021 following the above proposed meeting.

This was agreed by the Panel.

The Meeting concluded at 12.32 pm

**Signed by:**

**Chairman**

---