

WEST DEVON HUB COMMITTEE



West Devon
Borough
Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **West Devon Hub Committee** held
on
Tuesday, 8th June, 2021 at 2.00 pm at the **Chamber -
Kilworthy Park**

Present: **Councillors:**

Chairman Cllr Jory
Vice Chairman Cllr Cheadle

Cllr Crozier
Cllr Edmonds
Cllr Mott

Cllr Daniel
Cllr Leech
Cllr Pearce

In attendance:

Councillors:

Cllr Ewings

Cllr Hipsey

Officers:

Chief Executive
Director- Place & Enterprise
Director – Governance & Assurance
Democratic Services Manager
Head of Housing, Revenue & Benefits
Senior Specialist – Engineering
Senior Specialist – Climate Change
Senior Specialists - Housing

1. **Apologies for absence**

*HC 1/21

An apology for absence was received from Cllr B Ratcliffe.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

*HC 2/21

Members were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be discussed.

For clarity, a Member sought advice on behalf of those Committee Members who were also Development Management and Licensing (DM&L) Committee Members in respect of the 1-2 Spring Hill Update report (Minute HC.7/20 below refers). In reply, the Leader advised that he had discussed this matter with the Monitoring Officer. In so doing, the Monitoring Officer had informed that he saw no potential conflict of interest between one Committee of the Council recommending that a planning application be submitted on a particular site and Members of that Committee also sitting on the DM&L Committee. The Monitoring Officer had also stated that there was case law that supported this viewpoint.

In light of this guidance, there were no interests declared.

3. **Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

*HC 3/21

The Chairman advised that he had agreed for one item of Urgent Business to be raised at this meeting. The item was titled: 'West Devon Transport Hub in Okehampton, Levelling Up Fund Bid' and was considered urgent in light of the associated time constraints.

(a) West Devon Transport Hub in Okehampton, Levelling Up Fund Bid

The Committee proceeded to consider a report that sought approval to the submission of the 'Levelling Up Fund' Bid, such that the rail infrastructure in West Devon could be improved immeasurably, for the benefit of all residents.

In discussion, reference was made to:-

- the resource implications. Whilst an obvious challenge, officers confirmed that the organisation was prepared to flex its resources in order to provide the appropriate level of support for the Bid. Furthermore, the importance of appropriate support being provided by Devon County Council, Network Rail and Great Western Rail was also recognised;
- the need to support this Bid. Some Members reiterated the point that, if the Bid was successful, the benefits to the Borough would be immense;
- the views of a local Ward Member for Okehampton. Whilst not in attendance, a statement was read on behalf of a local Ward Member that set out her full support for the proposals and made specific reference to:
 - o her wish to record her thanks to those officers who had been working on the submission;
 - o the importance to the local and wider community of the Transport Hub being built out as soon as was practically possible. In addition, the Member emphasised the importance of external funding being sourced to assure that this could happen;
 - o once built, the Hub serving to both alleviate the pressures on Station Road in terms of traffic congestion and parking and ensure that those who had expressly stated their desire to use the service from North Cornwall and further afield would be able to do so easily and efficiently. Moreover, by having the new Transport Hub very close to the junction with the A30 would protect the Town Centre, minimise localised congestion and enable wider connectivity.

It was then **RESOLVED** that approval be given to the submission by the Director for Place and Enterprise of an application to the 'Levelling Up Fund' for Capital Funding for a West Devon Transport Hub in Okehampton (as outlined in Section 2 of the presented agenda report).

4. **Confirmation of Minutes**

*HC 4/21

The Minutes of the Hub Committee meeting held on 27 April 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

5. **Public Questions -**

*HC 5/21

It was noted that no Questions had been received in accordance with the Hub Committee Procedure Rules.

6. **Hub Committee Forward Plan**

*HC 6/21

Members were presented with the Hub Committee Forward Plan that set out items on the agenda for Hub Committee meetings for the next four months.

In introducing the Plan, the Leader advised that the next published Plan would take into account the updated lead portfolio areas following the Committee appointments that had been made at the Annual Council meeting on 25 May 2021.

7. **Project Update: 1-2 Spring Hill, Tavistock, Redevelopment of homeless provision**

*HC 7/21

The Committee was presented with a report that set out a project update on the 1-2 Spring Hill, Tavistock: Redevelopment of Homeless Provision initiative.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- (a) A number of Members recognised the importance of the heritage aspects that were associated with the project and that these had to be considered alongside the need for the scheme to be practical, affordable and fit for purpose;
- (b) Members noted that the budget implications of the project were to be presented to a future Hub Committee and Full Council meeting;
- (c) The desperate need for this facility was recognised by a number of Members;
- (d) With regard to the public consultation exercise on the project, it was confirmed that this would be undertaken as part of the normal planning process. In response to a specific request, it was agreed that consideration

would be given to the merits of a press release accompanying the launch of the public consultation exercise.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. the Planning Pre-Application advice (ref. 2570/19/PRM) (as set out in Appendix D of the presented agenda report) be noted;
2. the project finances be noted (as set out in Section 6 of the presented agenda report) and the Business Case (as presented to the Hub Committee at its meeting held on 20 October 2020 (Minute HC 29 refers) will be presented to both the Hub Committee and the Council for financial approval at an appropriate time; and
3. the Head of Assets be authorised to submit a full planning application for the preferred design as follows:
 - demolition of existing building and rebuild on larger footprint;
 - creation of 11 self-contained apartments with a mix of range of 1 and 2 bedroom units to maximise flexibility for users;
 - inclusion of a ground floor staff office and bin store to provide more effective management options; and
 - generation of a rear courtyard to provide safe outdoor space for residents.

8. **Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan Update**

*HC 8/21

A report was considered that presented the six-monthly update on the Council's adopted Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan.

In discussion, reference was made to:-

- (a) action 1.6: 'Promote and administer grants for home insulation, efficient heating systems and sustainable energy sources for owner-occupied and tenanted properties'. A Member questioned how residents could be assured that such grant schemes were indeed genuine. In recognising the point, officers advised that they would liaise with the Communications Team to ensure that a publicity campaign would underpin these grants;
- (b) action 2.13: 'Maximise local and closed-loop recycling to minimise transport impact and valorise waste materials'. Members expressed some concerns that promotion of such initiatives was likely to result in increased pollution. Officers highlighted that they were due to meet with Environment Agency representatives in the upcoming weeks and they would ensure that this point was included as part of their discussions;
- (c) action 3.5: 'Ring-fencing and promoting a percentage of Members grants schemes (Sustainable Localities Fund) towards tree planting schemes for Community Groups, Town and Parish Councils or money towards a 'Tree Planting Grant Scheme'. Whilst noting that this idea had been generated from the Climate Change & Biodiversity Working Group, it was confirmed that any proposal to implement this action would ultimately require Member approval;
- (d) proposals for wind and solar energy sites. Having been informed that such proposals were to be considered as part of the Joint Local Plan review,

some concerns were raised that this had not been discussed in any meetings to date of the Joint Local Plan Partnership Board. As a way forward, officers committed to raising this matter with the Strategic Planning Manager for the Joint Local Plan outside of this meeting;

- (e) the current carbon footprint of the Council. Officers advised that the current carbon footprint was 5,199 tonnes per annum;
- (f) the close linkages of the Plan with the Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA). In light of 40% of the Borough being located within the Dartmoor National Park, the importance of close working between the Council and DNPA to develop the evolving Action Plan was recognised;
- (g) the presentation format of the Action Plan. Members felt that, when the Plan was next presented in six months' time, it would be beneficial for the format to be revised to separate those Actions that were within the control of the Council and those that were not. In addition, another Member highlighted the importance of the Plan being realistic and deliverable with tangible outcomes included.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the progress against delivery of the adopted Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan be noted.

9. **Devon Home Choice Policy Changes**

*HC 9/21

Members considered a report that sought approval of a series of proposed changes to the Devon Home Choice Policy.

In discussion, support was expressed for adoption of the proposed Policy changes.

It was then **RESOLVED** that, with effect from 1 July 2021, the policy changes to Devon Home Choice be agreed.

10. **Homeless Strategy Action 21/22**

*HC 10/21

Consideration was given to a report that sought approval to the adoption of the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan for 2021/22.

In discussion, reference was made to:

- (a) the proposal to establish a Housing Company in the form of a Community Benefit Society to enable and increase provision of affordable housing across the Borough. With regard to timescales, officers confirmed that it was intended for this proposal to be formally presented to Members within the next twelve months;
- (b) the number of in-house letting agency properties in the Borough. Officers committed to inform Members outside of this meeting as to how many in-house letting agency properties were currently held in the West Devon Borough area;

- (c) the challenges associated with the delivery of affordable housing provision. In response to a number of specific points that were raised, the Committee requested that officers convene an all Member Affordable Housing Workshop in the upcoming months.

It was then **RESOLVED** that, with effect from 1 April 2021, the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2021/22 be adopted.

(NOTE: THESE DECISIONS WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE FROM THURSDAY, 17 JUNE 2021 UNLESS CALLED IN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULE 18

The Meeting concluded at 3.40 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
