

WEST DEVON OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE



West Devon
Borough
Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **West Devon Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Tuesday, 22nd June, 2021 at 2.00 pm** at the **Chamber - Kilworthy Park**

Present: **Councillors:**

Chairman Cllr Ewings
Vice Chairman Cllr Kimber

Cllr Kemp
Cllr Musgrave
Cllr Sellis
Cllr Spettigue

Cllr Moyse
Cllr Samuel
Cllr Southcott
Cllr Vachon

In attendance:

Councillors:

Cllr Crozier
Cllr Edmonds
Cllr Pearce

Cllr Daniel
Cllr Jory

Officers:

Deputy Chief Executive
Director – Governance & Assurance
Senior Specialist – Climate Change
Specialist – IT
Specialist – Democratic Services

1. **Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

*O&S 01

The Chair welcomed the new Members to the Committee as this was the first meeting since their appointment at the recent Annual Council meeting.

Apologies for absence for this meeting were received from Cllrs A Bridgewater, A Coulson, N Heyworth, J Moody, and L Wood.

2. **Confirmation of Minutes**

*O&S 02

The minutes of the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 20 April 2021 were confirmed by the Meeting as a true and correct record.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

*O&S 03

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

4. **Public Forum**

*O&S 04

The Chairman confirmed that no formal requests had been received in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

5. **Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan: Six-monthly update**

*O&S 05

The Lead Member for Natural Environment gave the six monthly update to the Committee on the Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan.

The Chair then thanked the new Lead Member for Natural Environment for a comprehensive update.

Following questions from Members, the following points were made:

- The Joint Local Plan (JLP) was produced a few years ago and was now out of line with the Biodiversity and Climate Emergency aims. The JLP team were currently drafting a note for the JLP Partnership Board to help bring this into line. The Climate Change Officer would also alert the JLP team to the need to ensure any new development had infrastructure built at a much earlier stage in the build. The Hub Lead Member highlighted that the plan to have joined up action trails across the West Devon Borough area would help alleviate the issue of children having to walk along roads to get to school. It would also help take many cyclists away from busy roads. Scheduling of developments formed part of planning applications and this would also be looked into.
- Biodiversity was measured using a standard grounds maintenance procedure based on metrics from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). This would be done soon and would provide a baseline for future comparisons to ensure the minimum of 10% increase was achieved.
- Following disquiet from some Members over the potential use of wind turbines, officers confirmed that all options were for review

only and all would be voted on by Members, giving Members the opportunity to veto any options they did not wish to pursue.

- The capacity of Western Power Distribution to accept generated power would be reviewed as part of the Devon Carbon Plan.
- The action plan had red text to show changes that had been made since the Council meeting held on 8 December 2020 at which it had been formally approved (Minute CM 23 refers). It was noted that the action plan would shortly be put onto the Council website so that Members would be able to see the plan in real time.
- The £90,000 set aside for consultancy had not been spent and may not be used now.
- Ref action plan 1.7, it was clarified that this was a new action and was under investigation to find out what it would entail. Some discussions were underway with a few representatives who had expressed an interest in putting some areas back to nature, ie reduced cutting. Once investigations were completed, implications of this action would be brought back to Members for a decision. Under point 2, business rate reduction for farmers, a Member suggested that it might be better to give farmers an incentive to produce more food to sell into the local economy. Officers confirmed this was an option that could be added to 'local food' if Members so desired.
- Ref action plan 1.2, it was clarified that research was underway and this would be looked at with any actions brought back to Members for a decision.
- Officers reiterated that this was a scoping exercise with final decisions being made by Members in due course. The two key aims were for the Council to be energy net zero by 2030, and wider work with partners to be net zero by 2050.
- The date of adoption of the Devon Plan was expected to be around August 2021 as all responses from February 2021 were now being amalgamated.
- There was a full discussion around cycle parking in the Borough where it was confirmed that there would be a financial impact of providing this and that the final decision rested with Members of the Council.
- There would be a subsequent update on the plan in six months' time. In the meantime work would progress on the action plan and would be led by the Hub Lead and the newly proposed Natural Environment Hub Advisory Group.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the update on the Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan

6. **Rural Broadband - Verbal Update**

*O&S 06

In his update, the new Hub Committee Lead Member for Economy highlighted that:

- West Devon Borough Council (WDBC) and South Hams District Council had been awarded project funding from the LGA (Local Government Association) to monitor broadband roll out by the various companies involved, these being CBS, Connect Devon and Somerset, and Airband. WDBC would soon receive the maps identifying properties without high speed broadband. There was now an officer in place to work on the monitoring and she had been briefed by the previous Hub Lead for Economy. Some missed properties had already been identified.
- The Sydenham Damerel project was progressing, with another project at Buckland Monachorum commencing summer 2021, followed by Bere Ferrers. Subsequent projects would involve local Ward Members and Parish Councils to ensure all residents receive superfast broadband.
- Following a question from a Member, the Lead Member noted that some properties, particularly in Sydenham Damerel, received their service from Cornwall but lived on the Devon side of the Tamar. As a result, the lead Member committed to keeping a close watch on this point.
- The Lead Member confirmed that most residences would be able to access sufficient grants or schemes to cover the costs of installation. Researching the best option would form part of the role of the new officer, who would be asked to put an update into the Members' Bulletin. The lead Officer would also be asked to attend the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to give an update in person.

7. **Task and Finish Group Updates (if any)**

*O&S 07

As this was the first Committee meeting of the Municipal Year, there were no updates.

8. **O&S Annual Work Programme**

*O&S 08

It was noted that the next meeting was to review Devon Homes Choice and the Annual Overview and Scrutiny report. Key strategic partners to be invited were Dartmoor National Park, and South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

A Member had requested that Devon County Council (DCC) be invited to attend with regard to traffic congestion in towns in West Devon, particularly Tavistock. Therefore, it was decided to invite Cllr Stuart Hughes, being the relevant DCC Cabinet Member. Devon County Councillor, Andrea Davis, would be asked to update the Committee on the Okehampton Rail Line.

The Police and Crime Commissioner to be invited to a future meeting to respond to Members' concerns about traffic speed in the Borough.

9. **Member Learning and Development Opportunities Arising from this Meeting**

*O&S 09

The Chair concluded the meeting by thanking the two new Hub Committee Lead Members for their comprehensive updates, particularly as they had only recently taken on their new roles and responsibilities.

The Meeting concluded at 3.20 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
