

# WEST DEVON OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE



## Minutes of a meeting of the **West Devon Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Tuesday, 4th August, 2020 at 2.00 pm** at the **Remote Meeting -Skype**

Present: **Councillors:**

**Chairman** Cllr Ewings  
**Vice Chairman** Cllr Kimber

Cllr Coulson  
Cllr Daniel  
Cllr Hipsey  
Cllr Musgrave  
Cllr Southcott  
Cllr Wood

Cllr Crozier  
Cllr Heyworth  
Cllr Moyse  
Cllr Ratcliffe  
Cllr Spettigue

### **In attendance:**

Councillors:

Cllr Cheadle  
Cllr Jory  
Cllr Moody  
Cllr Pearce

Cllr Edmonds  
Cllr Leech  
Cllr Mott

Officers:

Strategic Leadership Team  
Head of Strategy & Projects  
Democratic Services Manager  
Connecting Devon & Somerset Representatives  
AirBand Representative  
Cllr R Gilbert – Devon County Council lead Cabinet  
Member for Economy & Skills

### 1. **Apologies for Absence**

\*O&S 1

Apologies for absence for this meeting were received from Cllrs T Bolton and C Kemp.

2. **Confirmation of Minutes**

\*O&S 2

The minutes of the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 23 June 2020 were confirmed by the Meeting as a true and correct record, subject to:

Reference page 3 Minute O&S 95 '*Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response and Draft Renewal and Recovery Plan*' discussion point (a) (i) deletion of the following sentence:

*'Whilst some town and parish councils had been heavily engaged with the Borough Council, other councils had unfortunately been very passive and this had been to the detriment of their local communities.'*

3. **Declarations of Interest**

\*O&S 3

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 4

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

5. **Hub Committee Forward Plan**

\*O&S 5

It was noted that no prior requests had been received for updates on any future Hub Committee agenda items at this meeting.

6. **A386 Transport Infrastructure - Verbal Update**

\*O&S 6

The Chairman advised the meeting that she had been in contact with the Devon County Council lead Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, Development and Waste. In their discussions, the lead Member had confirmed that a Bid had now been submitted to the Beeching Reversal Fund and she would provide a further update when she was in a position to do so.

To ensure that the matter was kept as a high profile agenda item on the Committee Work Programme, it was agreed that the next update should be scheduled for the Committee meeting to be held on 6 October 2020.

7. **Rural Broadband Provision - Verbal Update**

\*O&S 7

The Chairman introduced representatives from Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) and Airband to the meeting. In addition, the Chairman also welcomed the lead Devon County Council lead Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills to the meeting.

In their respective presentations, the representatives made particular reference to:-

- the main achievements of the Programme. The representatives highlighted that the deployment of Phase 1 of the Programme was now completed and had exceeded targets. For example, this Phase had seen over 300,000 Superfast Connections to homes and businesses;
- a summary of the West Devon Borough area. Of the 27,924 homes or businesses in the area, there remained 2,378 that had still not had delivered (or planned to be delivered) Superfast Connectivity;
- take up in Phase 1 being at around 70% in the Borough area, which was higher than the national rural programme average;
- the number of Community Engagement events that had been attended by CDS representatives;
- additional coverage and funding opportunities via:
  - o the rural Gigabit Voucher Scheme / Community Challenge Programme;
  - o Gainshare;
  - o National Fibre Programme; and
  - o Commercial Operator plans;
- the Airband Programme running to December 2021 and currently remaining on schedule; and
- Airband being in receipt of nearly 25% of the total nationwide Gigabit Voucher Scheme.

During the subsequent debate, the following points were raised:

- (a) Whilst welcoming the progress that was being made in respect of Superfast provision, the meeting acknowledged that this was of scant consolation to those 2,378 homes or businesses in the area that were currently not planned to be in receipt of such Connectivity. In reply, the representatives informed that they were committed to doing all that they could for these homes and businesses;
- (b) When questioned, Members were informed that there were different means of measuring performance. However, it was widely acknowledged that the West Devon Borough area was in the bottom quartile in respect of Superfast provision. This point was widely recognised and local MPs had sent a joint letter to the Minister for Digital and Broadband provision to highlight this matter;
- (c) Representatives were keen to work alongside the Council's Rural Broadband Working Group and it was agreed that they would be invited to attend future Group meetings. The Committee felt it important to also receive regular updates and it was agreed that the best means of achieving this objectives would be discussed when considering the latest version of its draft Annual Work Programme (Minute O&S 11 below refers);

- (d) Members commented that it had become particularly apparent during the recent lockdown that Superfast provision was not only critical to homes and businesses but also for education purposes;
- (e) With regard to the voucher scheme, whilst economies of scale were an important factor, examples were cited of instances where twelve isolated properties had been able to gain connectivity. In such instances, the importance of willing landowners was often crucial;
- (f) Members noted that neither CDS or Airband had any control over the existing infrastructure provided by Openreach;
- (g) The representatives confirmed that they remained committed to Community Engagement and were more than willing to be invited to attend local town and parish council meetings.

In conclusion, the Chairman thanked the representatives for their attendance and informative presentations and Members looked forward to working closely with them in the upcoming months.

## 8. **Member Locality Fund Review**

O&S 8

The Committee was presented with a report that considered the progress of the Council's three main Community Funding Schemes: the Member Locality Fund; the Seamoor Lotto; and Crowdfunding and sought the views of Members on the effectiveness of them to date.

During the ensuing debate, reference was made to:-

- (a) the effectiveness of the Member Locality Fund. Some Members were of the view that the Fund was a very effective scheme that was straightforward to apply and not unduly bureaucratic;
- (b) a user guide to support and promote the benefits of the Schemes. In reply to a request, officers committed to producing a user guide in the upcoming weeks. It was agreed that the guide should include the ability for Members to combine their Locality Funds in order to support local community projects and useful links to other Community Grant schemes;
- (c) the Community and Partnership Funding model. Officers confirmed that the current model of Community and Partnership Funding would be further reviewed as part of the draft Recovery Plan and Budget Setting processes;
- (d) raising awareness of these Schemes. The Committee recognised the need for Members to promote the existence of each of these Schemes amongst their local Community Groups and town and parish councils;

It was then:

## **RESOLVED**

That the Committee:

1. note the success of the Community Funding Schemes during 2019/20; and
2. recommend to officers that a user guide be produced that supports and promotes the benefits of the Schemes; and
3. encourage all Members to promote the existence of these Schemes amongst their local Community Groups and town and parish councils.

### 9. **Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/20**

O&S 9

Members were presented with a report that sought approval of its Annual Report for 2019/20.

In discussion, the Committee welcomed the Report and recognised the progress and achievements that it had made during 2019/20.

It was then:

## **RECOMMENDED**

That the Committee **RECOMMEND** to the Council that the Annual Report for 2019/20 (as outlined at Appendix A of the presented agenda report) be approved.

### 10. **Task and Finish Group Updates (if any)**

O&S 10

The Chairman reminded the Committee that they were currently no Task and Finish Group reviews being carried out.

### 11. **Draft Annual Work Programme 2020/21**

\*O&S 11

The Committee considered the latest version of its draft Annual Work Programme for 2020/21 and, in discussion, the following updates were made:

- It was agreed that the next update on the A386/Rail projects should be scheduled for consideration at the Committee meeting to be held on 6 October 2020; and
- The Committee requested that, with effect from 6 October 2020 meeting updates from the Rural Broadband Working Group should become a standing agenda item.

### 12. **Member Learning and Development Opportunities Arising from this Meeting**

\*O&S 12

The Chairman reminded the Meeting that a 2020/21 Revised Draft Budget Setting Workshop had been arranged to be held at 1.30pm on Tuesday, 25 August and all Members were encouraged to attend this important session.

The Meeting concluded at 3.55 pm

**Signed by:**

**Chairman**

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