

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, 15th February, 2022 at 12.30 pm** at the **Chamber - Kilworthy Park**

Present: **Councillors:**

Chairman Cllr Ewings
Vice Chairman Cllr Kimber

Cllr Blackman
Cllr Heyworth
Cllr Moyse
Cllr Southcott
Cllr Vachon

Cllr Coulson
Cllr Kemp
Cllr Samuel
Cllr Spettigue
Cllr Wood

In attendance:

Councillors:

Cllr Crozier
Cllr Edmonds
Cllr Leech
Cllr Mott

Cllr Daniel
Cllr Jory
Cllr Moody
Cllr Yelland

Officers:

Deputy Chief Executive
Director of Strategy & Governance
Democratic Services Manager
Head of Environmental Health and Licensing
Senior Specialist – Climate Change
Democratic Services Specialist (via Teams)

44. **Apologies for Absence**

*O&S 44

Apologies for absence for this meeting were received from Cllr D Sellis

45. **Confirmation of Minutes**

*O&S 45

The minutes of the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 January 2022 were confirmed by the Meeting as a true and correct record.

46. **Declarations of Interest**

*O&S 46

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.

47. **Public Forum**

*O&S 47

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

48. **Climate Change and Bio-diversity Action Plan :Six-Monthly update**

*O&S 48

The Hub Lead Member with responsibility for Natural Environment introduced the six monthly update on the Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan (CCBDAP).

In response to Member questions, the following were confirmed:-

- Applications to the Green Homes Grant would only be available to those on low income.
- Following a Borough wide survey with CoCars and CoBikes, test sites were being set up, with a need to investigate cost and duration before then being discussed at the community forum.
- Local markets were being promoted, and the Council would have a presence at community events whenever resources permitted.
- Following a specific enquiry regarding Tavistock, it was confirmed that the lead officers were currently talking to the Town Council about tree planting and would enquire about a particular site.
- Hybrid meetings would significantly reduce travel, however, it was confirmed that formal Member meetings were still not permitted by Central Government to be held remotely and decision making Committees were therefore required to be held in person. Technology was being updated in the Council Chamber to improve hybrid meetings for non-voting Members, officers, and members of the public. It was confirmed that staff had been advised to come into the office for the purpose of attending meetings and/or specific interaction only. It was also noted that attendance from Members and public had increased when meetings had been held virtually rather than in person. It was agreed that it was far too early to come to a decision about how Council meetings were working.
- Carbon savings of 12 tonnes had been realised during 2020 which supported the ethos of hybrid meetings and working remotely. It

was confirmed that staff members were able to attend the office to work if it was a help to their mental health and well-being, but it was not compulsory.

- The Joint Local Plan Partnership Board was holding its Annual General Meeting on 21 February 2022 and Members were advised to ask questions at that Meeting regarding renewable energy and increasing employment options in new developments. It was confirmed questions could be submitted in writing in advance if Members were not able to attend the meeting.
- The officer gave an update on the electric vehicle charging points project, which was run in partnership with Devon County Council. It was noted that all five identified sites were being worked on, with the power provider working on the next stage of the leases.
- One Member queried the current provision in the Scheme of Members' Allowance of 5 pence per mile for extra passengers and felt that this should be increased to encourage more shared car travel. The Officer confirmed that this provision would be reviewed as part of the pending review by the Independent Panel into the Members' Allowance Scheme.

An additional recommendation was then **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** which, when put to the vote was **CARRIED**:

It was then **RESOLVED**:

1. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee **NOTE** the update on the Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan (as set out at Appendix A of the presented agenda report);
2. That the Natural Environment Hub Advisory Group prioritise a detailed review of the Action Plan and the points arising from the meeting.
3. That future reviews by the Committee of the Action Plan be included as part of the wider Council Delivery against the Natural Environment Corporate Theme reviews to ensure greater oversight.

49. **Council Delivery against Corporate Theme: Natural Environment**

*O&S 49

The Hub Lead Member with responsibility for Natural Environment updated the Committee on progress against the Growing our Natural Environment Corporate Theme.

In the subsequent debate, the following points were raised:-

1. The Plan was now colour coded using the traffic light system. Some red coded actions may be removed if it was decided that the Council could no longer make progress on them. The Plan was now a combination of work completed both by the previous Climate Change & Biodiversity Working Group and the Climate Forum. The Action Plan was now in a more accessible format, and allowed for changes in response to live time events; these changes would be made through the delegated authority that had been granted to

the Head of Strategy and Governance, in consultation with the lead Member for Natural Environment.

2. Themes would be aligned to Devon County Council's Carbon and Biodiversity Plan, strengthening the ability for joint grant applications and joint projects to be progressed in partnership.
3. The phased conversion of the environmental management fleet project was noted as being on track. An officer would be seconded to the project to ensure its progression.
4. The project to increase Electric Charging Points across the Borough was progressing, and the Council had joined the Devon and Torbay Residential Charge Point Scheme.
5. A feasibility study of renewable energy generation on Council owned land had been commissioned, looking into the capacity to utilise solar power within Council car parks.
6. Council communications would continue regarding "reuse, reduce, repurpose, and recycle". It was highlighted that the Borough had the second highest percentage of recycling rates in Devon.
7. The Council would promote shopping locally as this was vital for both the local economy and the declared Climate Change and Biodiversity Emergency.
8. It was noted that there had been a 10% increase in biodiversity on Council land, with two areas, covering 8.2 hectares, having been identified for natural regeneration projects. These areas could show an 80% increase in biodiversity following regeneration. A grant of £7,000 would be applied for, from the English Woodland Creation Offer, to enable for ongoing maintenance of the land whilst regeneration was underway.
9. It was highlighted that only three Members had attended the last Natural Environment Hub Advisory Group meeting and it was recognised that increased attendance was important to ensure a greater consensus and input into Council policy. To this end, it was agreed that all Advisory Group meeting invitations would be extended to all Members.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. the progress against delivery of the Natural Environment Delivery Plan be noted; and
2. the Committee had made a series of recommendations (as set out in the detailed minutes above) to the Natural Environment Advisory Group on areas for further exploration.

50. **Council Delivery against Corporate Theme: Community Wellbeing**

*O&S 50

The Lead Hub Member for Community Well-being introduced the report that provided the Committee with an explanation of how the Performance Management Framework would show progress on delivery of the Plan. It was outlined that progress had already been made. Community and voluntary sectors were already working with the Council and enhancing the good work that was already taking place.

The Council was also working well with Devon County Council and putting together a joint plan.

Following questions from Members, the following was clarified:-

- Although disabled facilities grants could be awarded to put in stair lifts, there was no ability to help with annual maintenance grants, which were reportedly high. However, if the lift were to breakdown in the following years, then an additional grant could be awarded to help with the repair costs.
- Devon County Council colleagues were keen to be involved in the Rural Poverty Project pilot scheme, including use of their Outreach Teams. It was noted that the project would be more successful if the community were involved at the earliest stage possible.
- Grants were available to help residents facing cost of living increases, but the challenge was in identifying and reaching those in the greatest need.
- Following the adoption of the Council's new strategy, 'A Plan for West Devon', resources were being realigned against the Plan to ensure services were delivered well and to the Plan.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. the progress against the delivery of the Community Well-Being Delivery Plan be noted; and
2. the Committee had made a series of recommendations (as set out in the detailed minutes above) to the Community Well-Being Hub Advisory Group on areas for further exploration.

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

*O&S 51

There were no updates.

52. **O&S Annual Work Programme inv. prep for next meeting**

*O&S 52

The third sector partner representative from the Council for Voluntary Service had now confirmed their attendance for the 26 April 2022 meeting, with the Chief Executive of Citizens Advice having confirmed their attendance at the next Committee meeting to be held on 22 March 2022.. The work programme would be subject to further review at the next Committee meeting. It was also confirmed that The South West Mutual Bank would be contacted to ask for a written update to be provided to Members or for a representative to attend a future Committee Meeting to respond to Member questions.

53. **Member Learning and Development Opportunities Arising from the Meeting**

*O&S 53

The Meeting was reminded that all Members would be invited to attend all Hub Advisory Group meetings.

The Meeting concluded at 2.06 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
