

# WEST DEVON HUB COMMITTEE



West Devon  
Borough  
Council

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **West Devon Hub Committee** held  
on  
**Tuesday, 1st February, 2022 at 2.00 pm** at the **Chamber -  
Kilworthy Park**

Present: **Councillors:**

**Chairman** Cllr Jory  
**Vice Chairman** Cllr Cheadle

Cllr Edmonds  
Cllr Leech  
Cllr Crozier  
Cllr Ratcliffe

Cllr Mott  
Cllr Pearce  
Cllr Daniel

**In attendance:**

Councillors:

Cllr Ewings  
Cllr Wood

Cllr Heyworth  
Cllr Yelland

Officers:

Chief Executive  
Deputy Chief Executive  
Monitoring Officer  
Section 151 Officer  
Director – Place & Enterprise  
Democratic Services Manager  
Deputy 151 Officer  
Head of Strategy & Projects  
Senior Specialist – Housing  
Senior Specialist – Place Making  
Senior Specialist – Legal  
Fusion Representative

55. **Apologies for absence**

\*HC 55/21

There were no apologies for absence forwarded to this Meeting.

56. **Declarations of Interest**  
\*HC 56/21  
Members were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be discussed and there were none made.
57. **Confirmation of Minutes**  
\*HC 57/21  
The Minutes of the Hub Committee meeting held on 7 December 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.
58. **Public Questions - a period of up to 15 minutes is available to deal with issues raised by the public**  
\*HC 58/21  
It was noted that no Public Questions had been received in accordance with the Hub Committee Procedure Rules.
59. **Hub Committee Forward Plan**  
\*HC 59/21  
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 discussion, it was noted that the published Plan incorrectly stated that the 'Request for Statutory Designation of land and a new long lease – Milton Abbot Allotments' (Minute \*HC 65/21 below refers) agenda item was within the 'Climate Change & Biodiversity' portfolio area when in fact it should have been listed as being within the 'Community' portfolio area.
60. **Draft Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals 2022/23 to 2024/25**  
HC 60/21  
Consideration was given to a report that set out proposals for the Council to achieve a balanced Revenue and Capital Budget for 2022/23.  
  
In discussion, reference was made to:-  
  
(a) the annual staff pay award. Officers confirmed that, whilst the final settlement was still subject to negotiations, they were content that the budget allocation that was proposed to be set aside was sufficient. Whilst acknowledging that there would be additional cost pressures in relation to rising energy and travel costs, officers were similarly content that adequate provisions had been included within the draft budget proposals. The Section 151 Officer confirmed that there was a budget provision of £70,000 for inflation on goods and services;

- (b) the proportion of total Council Tax that was actually the Borough Council precept (11% of the overall bill). A Member felt that, as the collecting authority, there were a number of public misconceptions over the Borough Council precept. As a result, it was felt that there was a need for the Communications Team to produce and publish messaging at the time of annual billing in an attempt to counter these misconceptions.

It was then **RECOMMENDED** that Council:

1. increase Council Tax for 2022/23 by £5 (Band D of £246.63 for 2022/23 – an increase of 10 pence per week or £5 per year – equating to a 2.07% increase);
2. approve the financial pressures (as shown in Appendix A of the presented agenda report) amounting to £689,000;
3. approve the net contributions to Earmarked Reserves of £209,350 (as shown in Appendix A of the presented agenda report), including the proposed use of £75,000 from the Business Rates Retention Earmarked Reserve (as set out in section 3.21 of the presented agenda report);
4. transfer £162,850 into a Financial Stability Earmarked Reserve in 2022/23, to be available for any future financial pressures from future local government funding reforms and any other budget pressures;
5. use £150,000 of New Homes Bonus funding in 2022/23 to fund the Revenue Base Budget (as set out in section 3.30 of the presented agenda report);
6. allocate £172,084 of the New Homes Bonus grant allocation for 2022/23 to an Affordable Housing Earmarked Reserve as a one-of contribution for 2022/23 as set out in sections 3.30 to 3.31 of the presented agenda report;
7. approve the savings of £221,000 (as set out in Appendix A of the published agenda report);
8. set its Total Net Expenditure for 2022/23 at £7,769,695 (as set out in Appendix B of the presented agenda report);
9. approve the proposed Capital Programme Proposals for 2022/23 of £835,000 and the proposed financing of the Capital Programme (as set out at Appendix D of the presented agenda report);
10. continue to have a minimum level of £900,000 within Unearmarked Reserves (as set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy in September 2021), but an operating level of a minimum of £1.25 million;

11. note the level of reserves (as detailed within the published agenda report) and the assessment of their adequacy and the robustness of budget estimates. (NB, this is a requirement of Part 2 of the Local Government Act 2003); and
12. note that the Council will continue to be part of the Business Rates Pool for 2022/23 (as outlined at Section 3.23 of the presented agenda report).

61. **Public Consultation Homelessness Strategy 2022/27**

\*HC 61/21

A report was considered that sought the agreement of the Committee to commence a public consultation exercise on the draft Homeless Strategy 2022-2027.

In discussion, officers expressed their confidence that there were currently no outdoor sleepers residing within the Borough area. This statement was welcomed by the Committee.

The importance of this public consultation exercise was recognised and the importance of a robust publicity campaign was stated

It was then **RESOLVED** that a public consultation exercise be commenced on the draft Homeless Strategy 2022-2027.

62. **Quarter 3 Integrated Performance Management Report**

\*HC 62/21

Members considered a report that set out the first Integrated Performance Management report since the Council had adopted its Corporate Strategy ('A Plan for West Devon') that covered the Quarter 3 period (from 1 October 2021 to 31 December 2021).

In future versions of the performance reports, it was requested that greater use of plain English be applied. However, Members also wished to put on record their thanks for the work of the Head of Strategy and Policy in creating such a reader friendly performance reporting template.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the progress that the Council has made in delivering against the Year 1 Plan for West Devon Thematic Delivery Plan; the programmes financial performance and the current strategic risk profile of the Council be noted.

63. **Fusion Lifestyle -Leisure Contract Support Update**

HC 63/21

Consideration was given to a report that provided an update on current performance levels; the recovery and business impact within the Leisure Contract; and proposed contract variations so as to mitigate those impacts.

At the discretion of the Chairman, the Fusion representative was invited to address the meeting. In so doing, the representative emphasised the challenges that had been faced by the leisure industry since the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Whilst participation and income figures remained below 2019 figures, the representative was pleased to inform that the early signs for 2022 were promising and there appeared to be greater consumer confidence in the leisure market.

In discussion, reference was made to:-

- (a) the address from the Fusion representative. Members welcomed the positive tone of the address and confirmed that they had also been in receipt of fewer complaints from their constituents in relation to matters such as cleanliness and staff customer service;
- (b) the rising energy prices. Whilst the representative informed that they were taking steps to mitigate the impact of rising prices, it was acknowledged that, as a large consumer of gas, electricity and water, the increases were a cause of concern for Fusion.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. The performance of the Fusion contract to date; wider market trends; and the financial information on Fusion's performance in 2021 (as first reported at its 2 November 2021 meeting) be noted;
2. Council be **RECOMMENDED** to approve the contract variation and changes to the management fee profile (as set out in Appendix A (Table 1) of the presented agenda report); and
3. Council be **RECOMMENDED** to fund the £58,639 shortfall in income of the Management Fee in 2021-22 from the COVID Losses Earmarked Reserve in 2021/22.

#### 64. **Natural Woodland Regeneration at Council Sites**

\*HC 64/21

The Committee considered a report that provided an update on a key action in the Climate Change and Biodiversity Plan and Plan for West Devon that sought to deliver new woodland at two Council-owned sites.

In discussion, reference was made to:

- (a) the proposed natural regeneration approach for these sites. A Member questioned the appropriateness of this approach and felt that a conservation grazing approach may be more suitable. In reply, officers advised that they had taken external advice from a number of agencies and the general consensus was that the natural regeneration approach would be most appropriate for these sites. Nonetheless, this would be kept under regular review by

officers and regular progress reports would be presented to Members;

- (b) the value for money associated with these proposals. The lead Member for Resources asked that the Committee balance the identified benefits of this project against the ability to generate a capital receipt for these sites;
- (c) the declared Climate Change and Biodiversity Emergency. Some Members felt that the proposals would go a long way to demonstrate that the Council was committed to and serious about the Emergency that it had declared;
- (d) the proposal for the Woodland Trust to effectively obtain the carbon credits for these sites. As a principle, a Member expressed her concerns over this approach and would much prefer the carbon credits to be used to offset the Council's own carbon deficit.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the proposed way forward to deliver natural woodland regeneration at Council owned sites at Harrowbeer Lane, Yelverton and Bedford Bridge near Horrabridge be noted.

(NOTE: Cllr C Mott asked for it to be noted that, whilst she had voted against the proposal, she fully supported the scheme but did not agree with the proposal in relation to the carbon credits and felt that these should instead be claimed to offset the Council's own carbon deficit.)

65. **Request for Statutory Designation of land and a new Long Lease - Milton Abbot Allotments**

\*HC 65/21

Following a formal request from the Milton Abbot Allotment Association, the Council considered a report that requested that a long lease of 25 years be granted for an area of underused Council owned land in Milton Abbot for the purpose of establishing an allotment site.

In discussion, the following points were raised:

- (a) When questioned, it was confirmed that there was significant local interest in obtaining an allotment;
- (b) Officers stated that there was no appetite within the local parish council to take on the responsibility for the establishment of an allotment site;
- (c) The associated benefits of allotments (including: mental health; community cohesion and wellbeing; and producing your own food) were highlighted.

It was then **RESOLVED** that delegated authority be granted to the Head of Assets, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and the Leader of Council to:

1. formally designate the land as statutory allotments; and
2. progress and conclude detailed negotiations for a new lease to the Milton Abbot Allotments Association for a term in excess of 15 years.

66. **Local Government Act 1972 section 109 - Kelly Parish Meeting**

HC 66/21

The Committee considered a report that sought to recommend to Council that the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make an Order under Section 109 of the Local Government Act 1972 granting Kelly Parish Meeting the power to consent under Section 61F of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to the whole of its parish being included in the Milton Abbot, Chillaton and Kelly Neighbourhood Plan.

In discussion, support was expressed for the recommendation.

It was then **RESOLVED** that Council be **RECOMMENDED** that the Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer be given Delegated Authority to make an order under section 109 of the Local Government Act 1972 granting Kelly Parish Meeting, the power to consent under section 61F of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to the whole of its parish being included in the Milton Abbot, Chillaton and Kelly Neighbourhood Plan.

**(NOTE: THESE DECISIONS WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE FROM THURSDAY, 10 FEBRUARY 2022, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF MINUTES HC 60/21, HC 63/21 PARTS 2 AND 3 AND HC 66/21 WHICH ARE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COUNCIL MEETING TO BE HELD ON 15 FEBRUARY 2022, UNLESS CALLED IN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULE 18)**

The Meeting concluded at 3.30 pm

**Signed by:**

**Chairman**

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