

WEST DEVON HUB COMMITTEE



West Devon
Borough
Council

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

Present: **Councillors:**

Chairman Cllr Jory
Vice Chairman Cllr Edmonds

Cllr Cheadle
Cllr Leech
Cllr Vachon

Cllr Crozier
Cllr Mott
Cllr Wood

In attendance:

Councillors:

Cllr Daniel (via Teams)
Cllr Pearce
Cllr Southcott (via Teams)

Cllr Ewings (via Teams)
Cllr Sellis (via Teams)
Cllr Yelland (via Teams)

Officers:

Chief Executive
Deputy Chief Executive
Section 151 Officer
Director of Place & Enterprise
Director of Strategy & Governance (via Teams)
Monitoring Officer
Democratic Services Manager
Head of Environmental Health
Head of Strategy, Corporate Projects and Partnerships
Head of Housing
Head of Assets
Deputy Section 151 Officer
Senior Specialist – Place Making
Head of Revenues and Benefits
Senior Specialist – Climate Change

42. **Moment's Reflection**

*HC 42/22

Since this was the first formal Member meeting since former Mayor and West Devon Borough Councillor, Robin Musgrave, had sadly passed away, the Leader paid tribute to him and his dedicated service to the Council.

During his terms of office, Robin had proven to be a competent and hardworking colleague, who had served his constituents well and was a much valued, respected and appreciated Member of the Council and the thoughts of the Council were with Robin's family.

Members then proceeded, as a mark of respect, to observe a moment's reflection in his memory.

43. **Apologies for absence**

*HC 43/22

Apologies for this meeting were received from Cllr Ratcliffe.

44. **Declarations of Interest**

*HC 44/22

Members were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be discussed and the following were made:

Cllr A F Leech declared a personal interest in Item 8: 'Key Partnership Agreements' (Minute *HC 49/22 below refers) by virtue of being a Trustee and the Chairman of the Okehampton Community Transport Group. He remained in the meeting and took part in the debate and vote thereon;

45. **Confirmation of Minutes**

*HC 45/22

The Minutes of the Hub Committee meeting held on 27 September 2022 were confirmed as a correct record.

46. **Public Questions- a period of up to 15 Minutes is available to deal with issues raised by the public**

*HC 46/22

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

47. **Hub Committee Forward Plan**

*HC 47/22

Members were presented with the latest version of the Hub Committee Forward Plan that set out items on the agenda for Hub Committee meetings for the next four months and duly noted its content.

48. **Cost of Living Response Plan**

*HC 48/22

Members considered a report that set out the Council's draft plan to respond to the Cost of Living crisis.

In discussion, the following points were raised:

- a) When questioned, officers confirmed that the Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) was involved in the administration of the £25,000 Grant Funding for Community Groups;
- b) Assurances were given to the meeting that the ideas and conclusions that were generated by the Community Forum could be woven into the evolving Cost-of-Living Response Plan. In emphasising the importance of listening to our local communities, all Members were reminded of their Community Leadership roles in this regard;
- c) It was noted that Members were already receiving feedback from their residents that the single most important action that the Borough Council could undertake was to continue to distribute grant funding as quickly as was practically possible.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. the Committee has considered and endorsed the contents of the Cost-of-Living Response Plan (as set out in Appendix 1 of the presented agenda report);
2. minor amendments to the Cost-of-Living Response Plan be delegated to the lead officer (the Head of Environmental Health), in consultation with the lead Hub Committee Member; and
3. officers be instructed to take immediate steps to progress support payments to families in receipt of Council Tax reduction (as set out in section 2.12 of the presented agenda report).

49. **Key Partnerships Agreements**

HC 49/22

Members were presented with a report that provided an update on the Partnerships that were currently receiving funding from the Council and were asked to consider the merits of extending funding for a further two years.

Notwithstanding the fact that a decision had already been taken in regard to the continuation of funding support for the Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership, it was felt pertinent to include this matter in the resolution. As a result, it was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** and when put to the vote declared **CARRIED** that:

'The Council notes the decision taken at its last meeting held on 27 September 2022 to continue to financially contribute £8,835 to the Tamar Valley AONB Partnership.'

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. the positive contribution of our key funded partners in supporting our ambitions (as set out in our Corporate Strategy, A Plan for West Devon) be noted;
2. Council be **RECOMMENDED** to **AGREE** to extend the funding for the following key partners for a further two years as follows:
 - West Devon CVS £5,100
 - OCRA Sport £1,333
 - Okehampton Community Transport £ 6,533
 - Tavistock Community Transport £6,533
 - Young Devon £2,500
 - World Heritage Site £4,000
3. Council be **RECOMMENDED** to **AGREE** an increase in funding for each of the next two years' in recognition of the additional support required by Citizens Advice;
4. Council be **RECOMMENDED** to **NOTE** the decision taken at its last meeting held on 27 September 2022 to continue to financially contribute £8,835 to the Tamar Valley AONB Partnership.

50. **Proposed Changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2023/24**

*HC 50/22

Members were presented with a report that set out the annual requirement for Councils to revisit their existing council tax support scheme and decide whether to replace or revisit their scheme, the requirements for changing the scheme and the associated time constraints.

It was then **RESOLVED**:

1. That the proposed public consultation on a Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2023/24 (as detailed in section 3 of the presented agenda report) be approved; and
2. That the results of the public consultation be presented to the Hub Committee prior to a Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2023/24 being considered for approval by the Council.

51. **COVID 19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF)**

*HC 51/22

The Hub Committee was presented with a report that provided an update on the Council's Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF) following the closure of the Scheme on 30 September 2022. The report acknowledged that the Council had delegated the approval of the CARF Policy and its administration to the Members of the Council's Rate Relief Panel.

In discussion, the Committee wished to record its thanks to the team who were responsible for administering the Fund.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the content of the presented agenda report be noted.

52. **A Plan for West Devon - Quarter 2 Integrated Performance Management Report**

*HC 52/22

Members were presented with a report that set out an overview of the progress made against year 2 of the Delivery Plan that underpinned 'A Plan for West Devon'.

In discussion, the following points were raised:

- a) A Member queried whether or not the work being undertaken on the Cost of Living Crisis could be factored into the performance of the Council as it contributed across numerous themes of 'A Plan for West Devon'. In reply, it was confirmed that the quarterly performance reports evolved and the work aligned to the Cost of Living Crisis would be reflected in future iterations of the report presented to the Hub Committee;
- b) In respect of the latest position on the installation of Electric Vehicle Charging Points, officers committed to providing a response to Members outside of this Committee Meeting.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

- 1 the Quarter 2 Integrated Performance Management Report (as set out at Appendix A of the presented agenda report) had been considered; and
2. a meeting of the relevant Hub Advisory Group be held before the end of the Calendar Year in order to inform the Year 3 Delivery Plans for the Strategy and that the updated Plans be considered by the Hub Committee at its meeting to be held on 31 January 2023.

53. **Month 5 Revenue Budget Monitoring 2022/23**

*HC 53/22

A report was considered that enabled Members to monitor income and expenditure variations against the approved Budget for 2022/23 and that also provided a forecast for the year end position.

In the ensuing discussion, reference was made to the increased inflation costs of the Waste Contract. It was confirmed that the inflation cost assumptions provided for at the time the forecast was made was at a rate of 3% but the actual inflation rates were over 12%, largely due to fuel inflation.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the forecast income and expenditure variations for the 2022/23 financial year and the overall projected deficit of £70,000 (0.9% of the total Budget £7.770 million) be noted

54. **Capital Programme Monitoring 2022/23**

*HC 54/22

Members considered a report that advised of the progress made on individual schemes within the approved Capital Programme, including an assessment of their financial position.

In discussion, the importance of Section 106 monies being spent before their expiry date was recognised.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the content of the presented agenda report be endorsed.

55. **Devon Carbon Plan**

HC 55/22

Members were presented with a report which provided details of the Devon Carbon Plan and also provided an update on the progress made against the Council's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.

In discussion, reference was made to:

- a) the importance of the views of West Devon residents being adequately represented. A Member queried whether or not the views of the residents of West Devon had been adequately represented on the Devon Carbon Assembly and further questioned how the Council would deliver its revised Action Plan and, in doing so, how it would ensure that the views of West Devon residents would be correctly represented. In response, it was confirmed that the Hub Advisory Group would look very carefully at what was contained within the Plan and that consultation with relevant Community Groups would also take place, ensuring that the Plan would meet the needs of the residents and communities of West Devon;
- b) the urban focus of the Plan. In expressing concerns, some Members felt that the Plan was too 'urban centric' and it would

therefore need to be interpreted in order to be relevant and suitable to meet the needs of the largely rural West Devon Borough area;

- c) the agricultural community. Some Members were of the view that the agricultural community needed to be considered more fully as part of the Council's declared Climate Change and Biodiversity Emergency. Specifically regarding the Devon Carbon Plan, whilst it was accepted that the National Farmers Union had been a consultee, there was still the view expressed that other industries (such as the aviation industry) were not being treated as harshly as the agricultural industry. Furthermore, the sustainability benefits of locally produced food and non-intensively farmed meat and dairy products were not adequately reflected in the Devon Carbon Plan. As a consequence, these Members did not feel minded to be able to '*endorse the ambitions and objectives set out within the Devon Carbon Plan*' and an amendment was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** whereby the ambitions and objectives set out within the Devon Carbon Plan be '*noted*'. When put to the vote, this amendment was declared **CARRIED**;
- d) the financial and resource implications upon the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. In recognition of the need to be aware of the financial and resource implications, a further amendment was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** as follows:
2. That Council be **RECOMMENDED** to revise its Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan *and assess the financial and resource implications required* to show how it would contribute to delivering the Devon Carbon Plan.

When put to the vote, this amendment was also declared **CARRIED**.

It was then **RESOLVED** that Council be **RECOMMENDED** to:

1. note the ambition and objectives set out within the Devon Carbon Plan, and
2. revise its Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan and assess the financial and resource implications required to show how it would contribute to delivering the Devon Carbon Plan.

56. **Housing Crisis Update**

*HC 56/22

The Hub Committee was presented with a report that provided an update on the progress of three specific projects, namely the Springhill Temporary Accommodation Redevelopment Project; the proposed Brentor Affordable Housing Scheme and the Okehampton (Wonnacotts) Proposed Development site.

In the ensuing discussion, the following points were raised:

- a) Members requested further detail on the nature of the 'at-risk' spend concerning the Springhill project and raised concerns that the Contract to redevelop the site had still to be let. Members also commented that the site currently appeared unsightly and requested that action be taken to improve its appearance;
- b) Concerns were aired over the proposed closure of the Brentor Affordable Housing Scheme and the associated Housing Needs Survey. Having recently declared a 'Housing Crisis', some Members felt that the recommendation to simply cease work on the Scheme did not sit comfortably.

At this point, the local Ward Member was invited to address the meeting and he proceeded to set out a number of concerns over the recommendation to cease work. In particular, the Member questioned the methodology behind the Housing Needs Survey and the lack of any contact with the landowner. Given the extent of these concerns, the Committee sought reassurance that the Survey had been properly conducted and that the results were accurate. In response, it was confirmed that the Survey had been undertaken in line with normal procedures, but that in response to several specific queries raised, officers would request a copy of all responses received by the independent organisation that had conducted the Survey on its behalf and would analyse the results to ensure that account had been taken of all information received.

It was then further requested that the Council consult with Brentor Parish Council to fully explore the Housing need within the Parish, gathering definitive information on current requirements and this this information be brought to the next meeting of the Hub Committee for further consideration.

Finally, officers also gave a personal commitment that they would make contact with the landowner.

In light of the nature of the debate on the scheme, an alternative recommendation was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** as follows:

- 2. *That the decision to cease work on a directly delivered affordable led housing scheme at Brentor be deferred for further consideration at the next Hub Committee Meeting to be held on 13 December 2022.*

When put to the vote, this recommendation was declared **CARRIED**;

- c) With regard to the Okehampton Proposed Development, a Member queried why there had been such a delay in moving the project forward. In response it was confirmed that issues around partnership funding had caused initial delays and then the Covid Pandemic demanded changing priorities. However, it was

confirmed that resources had now been put in place which would mean that the project should now be progressed.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. the progress of the Springhill Temporary Accommodation Scheme, Tavistock and the possible further at-risk spend of £60k to enter a Pre-Construction Services Contract, to be spent from the Project Capital Expenditure approval of £1,200,000, as detailed within the October 2020 Hub Report, be noted;
2. the decision to cease work on a directly delivered affordable led housing scheme at Brentor be deferred for further consideration at the next Hub Committee Meeting to be held on 13 December 2022.
3. the progress of the Okehampton (Wonnacotts) Housing Scheme and support the actions taken by officers to progress the plan to bring forward the development of the site, be noted.

57. **Exclusion of Public and Press - paras 3 and 5**

*HC 57/22

It was then **RESOLVED** that in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business as the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 and 5 of Schedule 12A to the Act is involved

58. **Waste Contract**

*HC 58/22

The Hub Committee considered an Exempt report that provided an update on the Council's Waste and Recycling Services Contract.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the Committee note the update and that a further report will be presented to the next Full Council meeting to be held on 22 November 2022.

(NOTE: THESE DECISIONS WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE FROM THURSDAY 10 NOVEMBER 2022, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF MINUTES HC 49/22 PARTS 2, 3 AND 4 and HC 55 WHICH ARE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COUNCIL MEETING TO BE HELD ON 22 NOVEMBER 2022 UNLESS CALLED IN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES).

The Meeting concluded at 4.35 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
