

At a Meeting of the **HUB COMMITTEE** held at the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Kilworthy Park, Drake Road, **TAVISTOCK** on **TUESDAY** the **10th** day of **SEPTEMBER 2019** at **2.00 pm**

Present: Cllr N Jory – Chairman
Cllr L Samuel – Vice Chairman

Cllr R Cheadle	Cllr C Edmonds
Cllr A F Leech	Cllr J B Moody
Cllr C Mott	Cllr T G Pearce
Cllr D K A Sellis	

In attendance: Chief Executive
Deputy Chief Executive
Section 151 Officer
Strategic Planning Manager (Joint Local Plan)
Housing Specialist
Commissioning Manager
Head of Environment Services Practice
Assets Senior Specialist
Senior Specialist Democratic Services

Other Members in attendance:

Cllrs P Crozier; L Daniel; M Ewings; N Heyworth; S Hipsey; R Musgrave; B Ratcliffe; M Renders; T Southcott; and J Yelland

***HC 24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

Cllr D K A Sellis declared a personal interest in Item 20: 'Grounds Maintenance Review' (Minute HC 40 below refers) by virtue of being the local Devon County Councillor and a Tavistock resident and remained in the meeting and took part in the debate and vote on this item.

***HC 25 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Hub Committee meeting held on 16 July 2019 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to inclusion of the following amendment under Minute *HC 17:

'The Lead Member for *Communities* introduced the report.'

***HC 26 HUB COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN**

Members were presented with the Hub Committee Forward Plan setting out items on the agenda for Hub Committee meetings for the next four months.

The contents of the Forward Plan was agreed subject to the Coastal Concordat item being removed from the Forward Plan until the DEFRA guidance had been published.

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2020/21 TO 2024/25

A report was considered that set out the Budget Strategy for the Council for the next five years and was the starting point for developing a meaningful strategy setting out the intention for all of the different strands of funding available to the Council. The report stated that the Council would then be able to rely on the Strategy to inform future decisions.

The Leader introduced the report and invited the Section 151 Officer to provide an update to Members in light of the Chancellor having now announced the Spending Review for 2019. In so doing, the Section 151 Officer advised that this update information had been included in full in the published agenda report that was to be considered by the Council at its meeting on 17 September 2019.

In the ensuing debate, reference was made to:-

- (a) the Medium Term Financial Strategy training session that had been held earlier in the day. A number of Members thanked officers for delivering what had been a very informative session;
- (b) the work of the Financial Stability Review Group. A Member expressed his surprise that a recommendation had not been included with regard to the Review Group being tasked with investigating options to close the forecasted £0.38 million budget gap for 2020/21. In response, the Section 151 Officer informed that this task was included as part of the Group's terms of reference and these would again be revisited by Members at the first Group meeting of this Municipal Year.

It was then **RESOLVED** that Hub Committee had considered the Medium Term Financial Strategy and **RECOMMENDED** to Council:

1. that the strategic intention be set to raise Council Tax by the maximum allowed in any given year, without triggering a council tax referendum, to endeavour to continue to deliver services. (NOTE. the actual council tax for any given year will be decided by Council in the preceding February);
2. to respond to any Government announcement/consultation in September 2019 on Business Rates Reform;
3. to continue to actively lobby and engage with the Government, Devon MPs and other sector bodies such as the District Councils Network and the Rural Services Network, for a realistic business rates baseline to be set for the Council for 2020 onwards, if business rates reform is introduced for 2020-21 or a later timescale (NOTE. it is widely thought that it will be delayed until 2021-22);
4. that the Council continues to lobby in support of the Government eliminating Negative Revenue Support Grant in 2020/21 (and thereafter) and continues to lobby for Rural Services Delivery Grant allocations which adequately reflect the cost of rural service provision;
5. to use £200,000 of New Homes Bonus funding for 2020-21 (or any alternative scheme) to fund the revenue base budget and then reduce to £100,000 by 2021-22 and £50,000 by 2022-23 for modelling purposes;

6. that the minimum level of Unearmarked Reserves to be retained is increased from £750,000 (2019/20 level) to £900,000 for 2020/21, to reflect the increase in financial risks which the Council faces;
7. to transfer £200,000 of Unearmarked Reserves into the Financial Stability Earmarked Reserve;
8. that the Council continues dialogue with the actuaries of the Devon Pension Fund and DCC on the options for the Council's Pension position, with the aim of reducing the current contributions, increasing affordability, whilst best managing the pension deficit. (NOTE: a report will be presented to Members by January 2020 of options, once the results of the Triennial Pension Revaluation are known);
9. that the Council maintains an Upper Limit on External Borrowing (for all Council services) as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy of £50 million;
10. the forecast budget gap for 2020/21 of £0.38 million and the position for future years be noted; and
11. the current options identified and timescales for closing the budget gap in 2020/21 and future years, to achieve long term financial sustainability be noted.

HC 28

QUARTER 1 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2019/20

Members were presented with a report that enabled them to monitor income and expenditure variations against the approved budget for 2019/20 and provided a forecast for the year end position.

The Lead Member for Performance and Resources presented the report.

During the subsequent debate, the recommendation to recruit two additional planning enforcement case managers was welcomed. Members acknowledged the difficult circumstances within which the Enforcement Team was working and wished to formally record their appreciation for the work that they were carrying out.

The Committee noted that the recommendation had already been unanimously supported by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 3 September 2019 (Minute O&S 30 refers). In light of the reputational importance of the service to the Council, Members requested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive a verbal report in a further three months' time that reviewed the recruitment process; the effectiveness of the revised Enforcement Plan; and the number of live cases.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. the forecast income and expenditure variations for the 2019/20 financial year and the overall projected underspend of £16,000 be noted;

2. the Council be **RECOMMENDED** to approve the proposal for two additional planning enforcement level 6 case managers to be recruited which will cost an additional £21,460 per annum (WDBC share). (NOTE: the two posts are recommended to be funded from the Planning Earmarked Reserve in 2019/20 at a maximum cost of £17,200 (WDBC share)); and
3. the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be requested to receive a verbal report in a further three months' time that reviewed the recruitment process; the effectiveness of the revised Enforcement Plan; and the number of live cases.

***HC 29**

CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING 2019/20

Members were presented with a report that advised them of the financial position as at 30 June 2019 for the purposes of budget monitoring. All capital projects were within the individual capital budgets approved by Members.

The Lead Member for Performance and Resources introduced the report.

With no questions or debate being raised, it was then **RESOLVED** that the contents of the report be noted.

***HC 30**

APPROVAL OF THE PLYMOUTH AND SOUTH WEST DEVON LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

Members were presented with a report that sought approval of the Plymouth and South West Devon Local Development Scheme (LDS) which was a three year project plan for preparing documents, rather than a policy document itself. The LDS was intended to provide a starting point for the local community and stakeholders to find out what planning documents were being prepared by the Council and the timetable for their production.

The Lead Member for Environment introduced the report.

In discussion, reference was made to:-

- (a) the proposed timetable for the 'Managing Rural Development' Development Planning Document (DPD). Such was the significance of this DPD that Members questioned whether the timetable could be progressed to ensure that it was adopted before spring 2021. In response, officers advised that this timetable was considered to be a realistic timetable when considering the number of key milestones that were to be followed. By way of comfort, officers did confirm that local Neighbourhood Plans could be progressed irrespective of this DPD being adopted;
- (b) adequate car parking standards and provision. Some Members expressed their concerns that it had recently come to light that the Council no longer had any requirement to be made for minimum car parking provision per dwelling. In response, it was requested that any Members who had such concerns should make representations during the current consultation that was taking place into the Joint Local Plan Supplementary Planning Document.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the Plymouth and South West Devon Local Development Scheme be approved for adoption and publication.

***HC 31 HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2019/20**

Members were presented with a report that sought approval of the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan for 2019/20 and the South Hams and West Devon Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019/22.

The Lead Member for Homes introduced the report and emphasised the importance of Members who had any concerns about any of their constituents being potentially homeless to make contact with Council officers as soon as was practically possible.

A number of Members paid tribute to the work that was being undertaken by housing officers and felt that the Council should be very proud of the homelessness prevention work that was carried out by the team.

Furthermore, the lead Member highlighted the success of the recent Affordable Housing Drop-in Event that had been held in Tavistock and thanked the affordable housing officers for highlighting the available housing opportunities within the West Devon Borough to residents who had attended this Event.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the Homelessness Action Plan 2019/20 and the South Hams and West Devon Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019/22 be approved.

***HC 32 WRITE OFF REPORT**

Members were presented with a report that informed them of the debt written off for revenue streams within the Revenue and Benefits service. Debts up to the value of £5,000 were written off by the s151 officer under delegated authority. Permission was sought to write off individual debts with a value of more than £5,000.

The Section 151 Officer was invited to detail the bad debt provision table that was illustrated in the published agenda papers.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. it be noted that, in accordance with Financial Regulations, the s151 Officer has authorised the write off of individual West Devon Borough Council debts totaling £40,704.62 as detailed in the appendices to the presented agenda report at tables 1 and 2; and
2. the write off of individual debts in excess of £5,000 (totalling £24,689.39) be approved.

HC 33 CORPORATE STRATEGY

Members were presented with a report that detailed findings from recent Member led consultation with local communities. The purpose of the consultation was to engage with local residents to find out what mattered most to them under each of the Council's six strategic themes.

The Leader introduced the report and had sympathy with the expressed view that the recommendation should refer to 'objectives' instead of 'targets'.

A detailed discussion ensued over the proposed next steps and the majority of Members welcomed the suggestion that each lead Hub Committee Member would be tasked with establishing practical ways of achieving the adopted desired outcomes within their portfolio areas.

It was then **RESOLVED** that Council be **RECOMMENDED** that the Corporate Strategy desired outcomes (objectives) up until 2023 be adopted as follows:

Homes

- Enable the delivery of at least 150 affordable homes.

Communities

- Actively support communities to develop and introduce their Neighbourhood Plans; and
- Fund grass roots initiatives that unite communities.

Environment

- Increase the percentage of waste that we recycle;
- Meet our climate change pledge and help to reduce carbon emissions; and
- Work with partners to encourage high quality, environmentally sound new homes.

Enterprise

- Provide professional and impartial business advice; and
- Lobby strategic partners to provide affordable premises, improve broadband, develop road and rail links.

Wellbeing

- Working with the NHS and local charities to enhance access to health and wellbeing services; and
- Provide affordable and well maintained leisure centres offering a range of activities for all.

Efficient and Effective Council

- Ensure value for money without compromising customer service; and
- Improve our customer satisfaction ratings.

***HC 34**

PARTNERSHIP FUNDING

Members were presented with a report that sought approval to adopt a commissioning based model to awarding funds thus allowing the Council to clearly articulate the services it required and to draw up legally binding agreements to make sure services were delivered efficiently and effectively.

The Lead Members for Communities and Wellbeing introduced the report and highlighted the intention for the process to be more transparent and accountable whilst providing greater long term clarity for partners.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- (a) It was confirmed that the content of the Service Level Agreements would be proportionate to the size of the Partnership organisation and the amount of funding being allocated. Furthermore, Members supported the proposal that this approach would be implemented for all Partnerships irrespective of whether or not they were defined as being a 'key' partnership;

- (b) With regard to the draft Industrial Strategy that had been produced by the Local Enterprise Partnership, the Chief Executive informed that it had been submitted to Central Government during August 2019. Whilst it was still being treated as a confidential document, the Chief Executive assured Members that its content was very relevant to the Borough and she would ensure that a copy was circulated to all Members as soon as she was permitted to do so. In addition, it was agreed that the Strategy would be included on the agenda of a future Informal Council session;
- (c) It was agreed that Cllr Musgrave would provide a lead role in collating the information for the Junior Life Skills partnership.

It was then **RESOLVED** that a commissioning model be adopted to award partnership funding from 2020-23, based on one or all of the following:

- i. Local need;
- ii. Alignment to the Council's Corporate Strategy; and
- iii. Statutory Duty.

***HC 35**

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION ENFORCEMENT POLICY

Members were presented with a report that sought approval of an Environmental Protection Policy to support the enforcement work carried out by officers, and to enable the Council to continue to manage environmental protection enforcement in an efficient and effective manner, in line with the Council's Environment theme and priorities.

The Lead Member for Environment introduced the report.

During debate, Members welcomed the assurances that they were given that adoption of the Policy would help to lead to more effective monitoring of fly tipping and dog controls. In particular, the Committee welcomed the installation of CCTV provision at those identified fly tipping hotspots within the Borough.

It was then **RESOLVED** that, with immediate effect, the Environmental Protection Enforcement Policy be adopted.

***HC 36**

LEAD MEMBER UPDATE

Cllr Cheadle (lead Hub Committee Member for Enterprise) had circulated a paper to all Members in advance of the meeting that set out his vision for delivering on this Corporate Strategy theme.

Cllr Cheadle introduced his paper and advised that he had identified six elements of work that would each be led by one of the six appointed Members of the Economy Working Group. These leads were as follows:

- Planning (lead Cllr Pearce);
- Infrastructure: A386/Rail (lead Cllr Coulson) and Broadband (lead Cllr Crozier);
- Business Enabling (lead Cllr Southcott);
- Town Centre Regeneration (lead Cllr Kimber); and
- Understanding Business Needs and Success Criteria (lead Cllr Cheadle).

In his concluding comments, Cllr Cheadle advised that work in each of these areas would evolve and he was committed to providing regular progress reports to the wider membership.

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

- (a) For absolute clarity, the lead Member emphasised that there was absolutely no intention for this work to interfere with the Development Management function. To reinforce the point, Cllr Pearce (who was also the Vice-Chairman of the Development Management and Licensing Committee) had been deliberately nominated to this role to ensure that there was no conflict;
- (b) On those occasions when business visits were to be undertaken, the Leader stressed the importance of local ward Members being made aware;
- (c) In her capacity as a dual-hatted Member, the lead Member for Homes confirmed that she would be happy to facilitate any meeting with Devon County Council representatives.

HC 37

REPORTS OF OTHER BODIES

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 3 September 2019

A: O&S 30 Planning Enforcement Plan Review

As a result of some Members having difficulties accessing the appendices, it was agreed that the recommendation to approve the updated Enforcement Plan; the Harm Assessment Matrix; and the proposed Enforcement Action Plan would be referenced up to the Council meeting to be held on 17 September 2019 for a decision.

In addition, it was then agreed that these three documents would be appended to the published Hub Committee minutes that would be presented to the next Council meeting.

With regard to the Council recommendation to recruit two additional Planning Enforcement Case Managers, it was noted that this had already been considered earlier at this meeting (Minute HC 28 part 2 above refers).

It was then **RECOMMENDED** that the Council be asked to approve the:

1. updated Enforcement Plan (as detailed in Appendix A to these minutes);
2. Harm Assessment Matrix (as detailed in Appendix B to these minutes); and
3. proposed Enforcement Action Plan (as detailed in Appendix C to these minutes).

***HC 38 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

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 items of business as the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Act is involved.

***HC 39 IT PROCUREMENT**

The Committee considered an exempt report that outlined the proposed approach to the IT Procurement project.

The lead Member for Performance and Resources introduced the report and Members expressed their support for the proposals.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. the approach for the IT Procurement project (as detailed in the presented agenda report) be noted and the proposed way forward (as outlined in Paragraph 3 of the presented agenda report) be supported; and
2. authority be delegated to the Head of IT Practice to commence with the development of a detailed implementation plan in accordance with Option 2 (as set out in the presented agenda report).

HC 40 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE REVIEW

The Committee considered an exempt report that made recommendations in respect of the Grounds Maintenance service.

The lead Member for Environment introduced the report and there was widespread support expressed for the recommendation.

It was then **RECOMMENDED** that the Council approve the proposal for the Grounds Maintenance service that is outlined in paragraph 5.1 of the presented agenda report.

HC 41 LAND AT OKEHAMPTON

An exempt report was considered that advised of an opportunity for the Council to acquire a parcel of land in Okehampton.

The Leader introduced the report and the Committee wished to thank the lead officers for reaching this outcome.

It was then **RECOMMENDED** that the Council:

1. approve the acquisition of a parcel of land to support the Strategic Development Plan, with the purchase being funded from the Capital Receipts Reserve and the Financial Stability Reserve; and

2. delegate authority to the Director of Place and Enterprise, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and the Leader of the Council to conclude negotiations in accordance with paragraph 1.3 of the presented agenda report.

(The meeting terminated at 5.20 pm)

Chairman

(NOTE: THESE DECISIONS, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF MINUTES HC 27, HC 28 PART 2, HC 33, HC 37, HC 40 AND HC 41, WHICH ARE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING ON 17 SEPTEMBER 2019, WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE FROM WEDNESDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 2019 UNLESS CALLED IN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULE 18).