

**NORTH DEVON COUNCIL**

Minutes of an Extraordinary meeting of NORTH DEVON COUNCIL held at Brynsworthy Environment Centre, Barnstaple on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2018 at 6.15 p.m.

PRESENT: Members:

Councillor Croft (Chair)

Councillors Barker, Brailey, J. Cann, R. Cann, Chesters, Edgell, Edmunds, Greenslade, Gubb, Jones, Lane, Leaver, Lovering, Luggar, Moore, Moores, Prowse, Spear, Tucker, Webber, Wilkinson, Wood, Worden and Yabsley.

Officers:

Chief Executive, Head of Corporate and Community, Economic Growth Manager, Regeneration Manager, Senior Economic Development Officer (DD), Economic Development Officer (SJ MS), Customer and Corporate Communications Manager, and Senior Corporate and Community Services Officer (BT).

**94 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bonds, Campbell, Chugg, Ley, Manuel, Mathews, Moore, Patrinos, Roome and White.

**95 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest announced.

**96 A STRATEGY FOR TOURISM**

**(a) North Devon Marketing Bureau Update**

Council received a presentation by Nick White, Chair of the North Devon Marketing Bureau. He outlined his background and experience; the outcome of Visit Britain's Economic impact study undertaken in 2016 which identified that English tourism was worth £91.7bn to the economy and the economic impact, tourism volumes and spending and accommodation provided across England; the number of visits to Devon in 2016-17 compared to last year which identified that the number of visits had decreased by 6.29%, the total nights spent had decreased by 9.66%, average length of stay had decreased by 3.56%, average spend per night had increased by 30.14% and the total expenditure had increased by 22.07%; the number of visits to Cornwall in 2016-17 compared to last year which identified that the number of visits had increased by 9.94%; the number of visits to Somerset and Dorset in 2016-17 compared to last year which identified the number of visits had increased by 4.62%, number of nights spent increased by 10.68% and average spend per

visit had increased by 35.63% which had been due to £800,000 being put into business tourism by Bristol; a strong tourism industry makes for a strong economy as tourism effects all businesses; North Devon was made up of from 95% small independent single unit businesses; the internal investment in the product was good and overall quality above average; no tourism businesses had a strong National or international brand; the North Devon Marketing Bureau marketed the destination with a budget of £70,00 per annum and had 168 members representing 248 businesses; £45,000 of this budget paid for administration, social media, web maintenance and development and £33,000 was spent on direct marketing; it was almost impossible for the Marketing Bureau to obtain grants due to match funding issues; the work planned to be undertaken by the Marketing Bureau during 2017-18; opportunities in sustainable tourism; there was no other industry that had to sell the destination before being able to sell its product; a tourism strategy had been drafted by the Marketing Bureau with North Devon and Torridge Councils; rural tourism had to be driven by local businesses not national brands as their re-investment into the region was far less; there was currently no formal marketing plan as the plan was dependant on membership payments; the challenge for the Council in its role in promoting North Devon as a tourism destination; and moving forward.

A question and answer session then followed.

The Leader suggested that a cross party working group be established to work with the Chair of the North Devon Marketing Bureau to discuss the way forward in promoting North Devon as a tourism destination.

### **(b) A Strategic Approach**

Council received a presentation by the Senior Economic Development Officer regarding the strategic approach for the delivery of a northern Devon Strategy for Tourism, jointly with Torridge District Council. She outlined the work that had been undertaken to date which included a business and visitor survey, desk research, tourism workshop and the development of a strategic framework. She advised that a draft strategy was currently being prepared and advised of the mission statement and inter-linked priorities that would be included within the strategy. The next steps would be to consider the feedback from the tourism sector, finalise the draft Tourism Strategy and undertake further consultation and engagement with the tourism sector and prepare action plans.

## **97 TRANSFORMATIVE GROWTH**

### **(a) An update from the two Growth Workshops**

Council received a presentation by the Economic Growth Manager regarding the outcomes from the two Growth Member workshops held in October 2017 and January 2018. She reminded Council of the Council's vision statement, mission statement and the two corporate priorities which included "Growing North Devon". The Member workshop in October 2017 considered the future

demographic profile that forecast a shrinking working age population which would impact negatively on future economic prosperity. Members wanted involvement in work around the growth agenda to address the demographic imbalance and support future economic growth. The January 2018 Member workshop received presentations from external speakers regarding case studies that had attracted inward investment such as the Met Office in Exeter. It was concluded from this workshop that there was the need to attract investment and the need to pursue continued incremental growth of existing communities. There was a need to start the planning process now for beyond 2031. The Council had received a small grant from the Local Government Association and had appointed Hyas Associates Ltd to provide support to produce a vision and a plan of approach. Hyas had been involved in Garden Towns and Villages Government programme.

**(b) The approach towards Garden Towns and Villages**

Council received a presentation by Paul Brockway, Director of Hyas Associates Ltd regarding establishing a plan for growth. He outlined his background and the experience of Hyas. He advised that Hyas prime focus was on providing direct support to local government to deliver on local ambitions; had strong relationships with Government and expert knowledge and involvement in the Garden Towns and Village programme. He outlined work that had been undertaken with Carlisle City Council in relation to growth which had similarities to North Devon. He explained that a Visioning and Concept framework had been produced which identified the broad location for potential growth and the location of a garden village. The Department for Community and Local Government had launched a prospectus in March 2016 seeking expressions of interest for Garden Towns and Villages programme. This contained criteria for eligibility and prioritisation and information on Government support and the application process. In January 2017, the Government had announced its decision to award 14 Garden Villages and three Garden Towns status, only three were located within the South West. It was anticipated that the programme would continue, however awaiting confirmation and further details on the process from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. He recommended that the Council should be in place of readiness should opportunities for future growth arise.

A question and answer session then followed.

Paul Brockway confirmed that a definition for a Garden Village or Town had not been set by the Government.

**(c) Planning for Transformative Growth**

Council considered a report by the Economic Growth Manager (circulated previously) regarding Planning for Transformative Growth.

The Economic Growth Manager advised that in order to secure growth opportunities, the Council needed to develop a vision and broad proposition. She outlined the processes and timescales to achieve this as detailed in

paragraph 4.7 of the report. Initial positive discussions had taken place with Torridge District Council. Discussions would also need to take place with Devon County Council and the South West Local Enterprise Partnership. Currently all Members have been involved in discussions around future growth. The Government and Delivery Mechanisms workshop would explore exactly how the Council will take work further through to delivery and it was suggested that this should be a workshop for all Members. There were opportunities for Members to be involved in working groups set up for the preparatory work as well as the Visioning Workshop. There was a need for Members to decide upon how they wished to be engaged in the process.

Council considered that there needed to be cross party commitment to work together to deliver transformative growth for North Devon and it was important that all Members were engaged in the process. Group Leaders would approach members of their groups to nominate Members to the themed working groups.

It was moved by Councillor Barker and seconded by Councillor Brailey “that a vision be developed for transformative growth as per the approach set out in paragraph 4.7 of the report with regards to the period beyond the emerging Local Plan (2031) onwards and that the Council engage with Homes England, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and local Government, NHS and Devon County Council on the topic of future growth”.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that a vision be developed for transformative growth as per the approach set out in paragraph 4.7 of the report with regards to the period beyond the emerging Local Plan (2031) onwards; and
- (b) that the Council engage with Homes England, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and local Government, NHS and Devon County Council on the topic of future growth.

Chairman

The meeting ended at 7.49 p.m.

NOTE: These minutes will be confirmed as a correct record at the next meeting of Council.