

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held at the Civic Centre, Barnstaple on Thursday 13th November 2014 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Members representing North Devon Council:

Councillor Biederman (Chairman)

Councillors Brown, Chesters, Clark, Gurney, Lane, Luggar, Moores and Tucker.

Also Present:

Councillor Greenslade attended the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 9 (3).

Officers:

Chief Executive, Joint Head of Financial Services (SH), Head of Environmental Health and Housing Services (JM), Finance Manager (JT), Economic Development Manager (EV), Community Development Officer (HH) and Democratic Services Officer (JG).

37 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hockin and White.

38 MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the meetings held on 11th September 2014 and 1st October 2014 (circulated previously) be approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

39 ITEM BROUGHT FORWARD WITH THE CONSENT OF THE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman announced that Mr. S. Hearse, Joint Head of Financial Services was leaving the authority to pursue a new role at Torridge District Council. The Committee wished him well in his new appointment and thanked him for his support to the Committee which was much appreciated.

40 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs. Chesters declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in item 6 on the agenda as a stall holder within the Pannier Market.

41 ORDER OF AGENDA

RESOLVED, that item 10 be considered prior to item 6 on the agenda.

**42 PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT
QUARTER 2 OF 2014/15**

The Committee considered a report to the Executive on 4 November 2014 by the Leader and Executive Team together with a minute extract (circulated previously) regarding the Performance and Financial management Quarter 2 of 2014/15.

The Finance Manager gave a brief overview of the second quarter performance of the year and took the Committee through the headline financial figures which included external borrowing to fund treasury activities. Overall financially, the authority was in a favorable position.

The Committee asked questions and received responses in respect of the following: -

- Works and Recycling Service Sorting Machine – The sorting machine had now been upgraded and was in full working order with the ability to bale larger quantities and load trucks with more, resulting in better savings and increased rate per tonne owing to larger bales with less air space.
- PCN Income – The extra income arose from an additional Civil Parking Enforcement Officer Post and a number of TUPE arrangements. The authority was issuing £29k more penalty notices than previously.
- Housing Strategy – The Housing Strategy was in a position to be considered by the Executive in the new year. Issues surrounding the private rented sector were likely to be reported to the Committee in January 2015.
- Five Year Housing Land Supply – The authority could not oppose large scale development proposals submitted outside of the development boundary, all applications would be considered on their individual merits. A meeting was being held with the Leader and Chief Executive from both North Devon and Torridge District Council (TDC) later that afternoon to discuss assurances and intentions in respect of TDC's housing land supply.
- Planning Enforcement Action – There would be occasions when it was necessary to issue stop notices however, each case would be dealt with separately through the legal processes. The authority would act reasonably in quasi judicial matters. A monthly report was circulated to all Members in respect of enforcement action taken by the authority.
- Works to Lynton House – There was a temporary period when works halted to enable the views of the structural engineer to be considered.

Works had since recommenced and staff were likely to move in during January/February 2015.

- Museum Play Sessions – It was pleasing to note that many holiday makers took advantage of the play sessions provided by the Museum during the summer holidays.
- Homelessness Prevention – The success of preventing homelessness was noted.
- Benefits Claims – The success of the Revenues and Benefits Team in processing Benefit claims was noted.
- Format of Performance and Financial Management Report - The Committee was pleased with the additional detail provided together with the format of the report.

The Leader advised of the following: -

- The authority had gone a long way without having to borrow externally and the Joint Head of Financial Services should therefore be congratulated
- The authority was not too badly placed for the future
- There had been some speculative interest in the South Molton Centre Car Park area
- Ilfracombe Pool was likely to be operational in mid November

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the decisions and recommendations of the Executive be endorsed; and
- (b) that the Head of Works and Recycling Services be requested to circulate a briefing note to all Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the situation with the sorting machine.

43 PANNIER MARKET INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

Councillor Chesters re-declared her disclosable pecuniary interest in the above item, left the room and took no part in the consideration or voting thereon.

The Committee considered a report by the Economic Development Manager (circulated previously) in respect of variations to the Revenue Budget with regard to the pannier market, specifically employee costs and pannier market income.

The following issues were raised:-

- Reliance on agency staff
- Footfall increase
- Lack of increase in rentals for the previous four years

- Fewer vacant properties within the Town Centre
- Establishment of a business plan for the Pannier Market
- Success of Sunday Food Markets

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the report be noted; and
- (b) that a further report be presented to the Committee in March 2015 to include a Business Plan for the Pannier Market.

44 URGENT AND NECESSARY MEASURES TO ADDRESS PATIENT DEMAND

Councillor Tucker advised that he had recently attended a meeting with P.C. Daw, Tim Birtwhistle (Service Lead - Community Safety Partnership Officer/Harm Risk) and Nick Harvey MP during which the staggering cost to the North Devon District Hospital (NDDH) and the Accident and Emergency department treating patients presenting with drug (legal or otherwise) and alcohol related conditions.

The Committee considered a letter (circulated previously) from the Northern, Eastern and Western Devon Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) in respect of urgent and necessary measures to address patient demand.

The Head of Environmental Health and Housing made reference to answers provided by the CCG that were tabled at an Executive meeting on 4 November 2014 following questions raised by an Executive Task Team on 24 October 2014. He advised that a further Task Team of the Executive was due to be held on 19 November 2014 and that both the questions to and answers from the CCG could be circulated to Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for information if requested.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the letter from the Northern, Eastern and Western Devon Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) in respect of urgent and necessary measures to address patient demand be noted;
- (b) that correspondence between the Executive and the CCG that was discussed at the Executive meeting on 4 November 2014 be circulated to all Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for information;
- (c) that representations be made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as follows: -
 - that the Committee recognised the pressures that the CCG were under;

- that people should not suffer undue pain and discomfort as a result of the rationalisation programme;
- that further details on the measures being implemented be provided;
- that rationalisation be fair and equitable across the whole of the CCG's area;
- that consideration be given towards including the cost of drug and alcohol related conditions being worked into a longer term strategy; and
- that the Committee be kept informed of suggested potential solutions within the longer term strategy to reduce acute demand to patients presenting with drug and alcohol related conditions.

45 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2014-15 TO 2017-18

The Committee considered a report to the Executive on 4 November 2014 by the Leader and Executive Team together with a minute extract (circulated previously) regarding the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2014/15 to 2017/18.

The Committee discussed the effectiveness of using agency staff and ongoing costs in respect of staff relocating from the Civic Centre.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the decisions and recommendations of the Executive be endorsed.
- (b) that an item be added to the work programme for consideration in December in respect of a briefing detailing the process/review and cost breakdown of the relocation from the Civic Centre to include works carried out on various buildings owned by the authority.

46 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2013/14: TRADING OPERATIONS

The Committee considered a report by the Chief Financial Officer (circulated previously) regarding the Statement of Accounts 2013/14.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

47 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY: MID YEAR REVIEW REPORT 2014/15

The Committee considered a report to the Executive on 4 November 2014 by the Leader and Executive Team together with a minute extract (circulated

previously) regarding the Performance and Financial management Quarter 2 of 2014/15.

RESOLVED, that the decisions and recommendations of the Executive be endorsed.

48 WORK PROGRAMME/FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the work programme (circulated previously).

It was agreed that Project Management of the Civic Centre relocation be added to the work programme for the December meeting and that items in respect of the Pannier Market and work of the River Quality Task Team be reported back to the Committee in March 2015.

RESOLVED, that the work programme be noted.

Chairman

The meeting ended at 4.00 p.m.

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