

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held at the Brynsworthy Environment Centre, Barnstaple on Thursday 19th October 2017 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Members

Councillor Greenslade (in the Chair)

Councillors Chesters, Ley (present for items 63 to 70), Meadlarkin, Webber, White and Worden.

Also present:

Councillors Brailey, R. Cann and Moore.

Officers:

Head of Corporate and Community Services (KM), Head of Operational Services (RM), Head of Environmental Health and Housing (JM), Service Lead Environmental Protection (AC), Service Improvement Officer (JT) and Corporate and Community Services Officer (KJ).

59 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Crabb, Mathews and Patrinos.

60 MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the meetings held on 21st September 2017 (circulated previously) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

61 CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

The Chairman expressed his thanks to Councillor Roy Lucas (who has now resigned his post as Councillor) for his work on this Committee.

62 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declaration of interest was announced:

Councillor Greenslade Item 12: Personal interest as a Councillor of Devon County Council.

63 WASTE AND RECYCLING UPDATE

The Chairman addressed the Head of Operational Services and Portfolio Holder in relation to recent press and an email of complaint about the waste and recycling service.

Councillor R. Cann (the Portfolio Holder) addressed the Committee and stated that the service had been unfairly reported as it had always been known that there would be approximately 5000 households who could not use the service due to the type of property, or area in which they live (i.e. access problems). The press had not presented any opinions from those happy with the service. Councillor Cann confirmed that he had visited the Forches area (which was a trial area) to see how the 3 weekly collection service had been working out. He confirmed he found the area to look visually better than he had anticipated.

Both the Chairman and Councillor Cann agreed that they felt that the winter garden waste service may have been implemented too early (November is still autumn, so December, winter, would be a preferable start date).

The Head of Operational Services addressed the Committee. He confirmed that the levels of missed collections were now at a comparable level to those prior to the service changes. He confirmed that the Service Improvement Officer had been seconded to the team and had helped them to reduce the missed collections and streamline procedures.

The Service Improvement Officer confirmed that reports of missed collections were now made direct to the Customer Service Team. Their staff would then check the crews' notes. This had improved efficiency and the time taken to resolve problems. The targets for missed collections were improved on times taken prior to the service change. She noted some addresses had originally been missed off of the redesigned routes at the development stage.

The Head of Operational Services confirmed that a missed collection was not recorded as such if it was reported on the same day that the collection was due, as we sometimes had teams out until late afternoon / early evening. In response to a complaint email which was tabled at the Committee (from an ex-member of staff, Mr P.) he confirmed that on the date in question an alert had been placed on the Council's website advising customers of the problems with collections in the general area. The customer would then have been required to input his postcode for specific details regarding his property. It is thought Mr P. had either not input his details, or had done so on the same day as his 'missed' collection. The Service Improvement Officer confirmed that Mr P. would have had to look online on the following day as it was not actually 'missed' until one day had passed.

The Head of Operational Services confirmed that information alerts in relation to the Waste and Recycling Service were placed online on the Council's website, and via Twitter and Facebook as soon as we know we cannot make them, as scheduled.

The Committee discussed the levels of complaints they had personally received about the new service. It was noted that many of the staff had gone

over and above the level of service required in order to help the public and the public were generally satisfied with the Green Waste Service. The Councillors stated they had received less complaints now, although they wanted clarification if the five day's service level agreement (to collect any missed collections within five working days) included Saturdays as one Councillor had brought his own bin in from the roadside over the weekend and it was then missed by the staff working on the Saturday.

The Committee acknowledged the problems of badly-parked vehicles which prevented access to the waste and recycling crews.

The Leader of the Council, the Head of Operational Services and Portfolio holder all echoed their hope to reduce the five day SLA to three days. The Service Improvement Officer confirmed that at present the team were not able to reduce the SLA, as they could not currently guarantee a three day collection (although often met this). She advised it was better to under promise and over achieve rather than the opposite. She also confirmed that the Council now held tangible data of the number of collections missed due to parked cars and roadworks. This can be provided to any interested parties. She explained that the crews had been told to call 101 to report any badly-parked cars, as this also affected emergency vehicle access, if needed.

The Committee discussed the problems of litter, especially concerning mess caused by gulls (for example in Ilfracombe).

The Head of Operational Services confirmed that gull-guards were available in Ilfracombe and that various solutions had been trialled.

Following a question from the Committee he confirmed that the customers in the trial areas would receive surveys at Christmas and that the results were hoped to be available for the Committee in the new year.

RESOLVED that the survey results would be brought to the Committee in the new year.

64 AIR POLLUTION UPDATE

The Specialist Lead Environmental Protection presented the Committee with an update on air pollution. A power-point presentation in respect of "Local Air Quality Management" was given which explained the need for the LAQM, the results of the assessment of the air quality in Braunton, the Council's future plans and the measures in place by both the District and County Councils.

He confirmed that the results for the Braunton readings (at sites 12 and 13: The Square and The London Inn) were annual average figures up to (and including 2015). The 2016 figures were currently being analysed and would be submitted to the Department of the Environment, Fisheries and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). An Air Quality Strategy would be developed in future.

The presentation provided details of the planned measures by the Council which would be included in Devon County Council's 14 step plan.

Councillor Chesters stated that Braunton had not been involved in the development of the measures by the Council to reduce air pollution in Braunton and that the Parish Council were not aware of the measures in place. She emphasised the problem of pollution around the schools and the affect of redirected traffic on the readings.

In response, the Head of Environmental Health and Housing and the Specialist Lead Environmental Protection both confirmed that Braunton Parish Council had been involved and that the Council received detailed responses from the Parish Council in relation to the plans. The Specialist Lead Environmental Protection confirmed that he had attended meetings with the Parish Council regarding the matter.

The Head of Environmental Health and Housing reported that there were three broad strategies to address air quality and these would be discussed further with Braunton Parish Council. The deliverability of each would be considered.

In response the Committee discussed the possibility of a bypass around Braunton, the cueing of traffic and use of electric vehicles.

In response to a question from the Chairman the Specialist Lead Environmental Protection confirmed that Rolle Bridge was under ongoing review and that it was currently under the limits allowed. It was monitored monthly.

RESOLVED that

(a) the Specialist Lead Environmental Protection would provide an update from DCC in relation to their progress with the 14 step plan at a future Committee.

(b) the presentation be noted.

65 NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE SUCCESS REGIME

The Chairman presented an update to the Committee relation to the National Health Service Success Regime.

He confirmed that he had attended a meeting in September where the levels of spending had been questioned. The attendees of that meeting were advised that "Other services at the hospital (NDDH) may need looking at". A representative of the Clinical Commissioning Groups would be attending a future Full Council Committee and the Chairman suggested that the Committee create a checklist of any questions they wish to put forward.

Councillor Worden confirmed that he would be attending a meeting in March to discuss the future of the South Molton Cottage Hospital.

Councillor Meadlarkin stated that the services had already been affected in Ilfracombe and Bideford and felt that South Molton's closure was inevitable.

The Committee expressed their concerns over the closure of local hospitals in conjunction with the increased average age of residents in the region.

The Head of Environmental Health and Housing advised the Committee that they would need to make representations about what the needs of the North Devon area, and that these must be evidence-based. He emphasised that the Health and Social Care requirements would be considered based on cost-effectiveness and the availability of a suitable workforce.

66 COMPENSATION PAYMENTS 2016/17

The Service Improvement Officer presented the Committee with a report "Compensation Payment 2016/17" (circulated previously). The figures for April 2017 onwards would be available at a later Committee and had been delayed due to the implementation of a new Customer Management System (CRM) which made the collection of the data more time-consuming.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Service Improvement Officer confirmed that compensation payments are made only when absolutely necessary, where someone has suffered an injustice, in order to prevent matters being taken to the Ombudsman and to improve customer relations. The additional costs in staffing hours and possible increased compensation settlements following involvement by the ombudsman can often be avoided by resolving problems at the earlier stage.

She confirmed the figures provided on the report were divided into stage 1 and stage 2 complaints. During 2016/17 there had been no compensation payments made as a result of an ombudsman complaint.

The Service Improvement Officer advised the Committee that the use of a resolution was often just a way of a 'thank you' to a customer as a financial payment was not always necessary and a complaint could have given the Council an opportunity to learn from mistakes. The customers often don't want compensation but purely to receive a 'sorry' and acknowledgement that a mistake was made and recognised.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

67 DEVON AND CORNWALL POLICE AND CRIME PANEL UPDATE.

The Chairman presented an update to the Committee in relation to the "Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Panel" he had recently attended.

He reported that much of the meeting had been concerned with the potential merger between Devon and Cornwall and the Dorset Police forces. He had noted that the Chief Constable of Dorset Police was nearing retirement age and thought this may have contributed towards the merger plans.

68 RMB CHIVENOR

The Committee discussed information currently in the press concerning the future of the base at Devonport. It had been reported that 1000 marines would be lost which could threaten the Devonport base with closure. The Committee acknowledged that if that was to happen this could weaken the case for keeping RMB Chivenor in use.

69 GATEWAY TO NORTHERN DEVON – STRATEGY FOR NORTH DEVON LINK ROAD (A361/A39)

The Committee discussed the “Gateway to Northern Devon – Strategy for North Devon Link Road (A361/A39)” previously circulated to all Councillors.

The Chairman confirmed that the strategy had been presented to the Cabinet and funds were currently being sought by Devon County Council from the Government. He stated that a large percentage of the funding was being sought from the Government. He stated that, if successful, the scheme would start in 2020, and the area’s economy would benefit from the improvements in addition to the improvement in road safety. He stated that he felt the bid would be stronger if backed by both North Devon Council (NDC) and Torridge District (TDC) Councils.

The Leader of the Council advised the Committee that NDC would help but that contributing financially to Highways projects was not part of the Council’s statutory requirement. He stated that he had discussed the issues with the Member of Parliament and had offered assistance to the Housing Infrastructure which was allowable under the statutory requirements.

The Chairman requested that NDC go through the democratic process regardless of it’s statutory duty and that it was considered as an agenda item for the next Executive Committee.

The Head of Corporate and Community Services confirmed, that, as per the Leader of the Council’s statement, the highways were not part of the Local Authority’s statutory requirement and therefore it could not borrow funds towards it. He also confirmed that the item could not be brought before the Executive Agenda as that was outside of the remit of the Committee.

The Chairman confirmed that the project would require £88million, of which £11m is being put forward. This appeared to make it a weak bid.

The Committee discussed the project, and it’s implications for the area and agreed that they would like to have further information.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) a report of “Current decisions taken by the County Council (in relation to the Strategy for the North Devon Link

Road A361/A39” be presented to a future Executive Committee.

(b) the strategy be noted.

70 WORK PROGRAMME/FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the Work Programme / Forward Plan (circulated previously).

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the following items be added to the work programme:
- NHS Success Regime (to include the future of community hospitals).
 - School Funding (to be added for 18.01.18)
 - Affordable Housing Update (to be added for 14.12.17 and 6-monthly thereafter).
- (b) the work programme be noted.

Chairman

The meeting ended at 16:08 p.m.

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