

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Policy Development Committee held at Barum Room - Brynsworthy on Thursday, 6th January, 2022 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: Members:

Councillor D. Spear (Chair)

Councillors Bulled, Hunt, Jenkins, Mackie, Walker and York

Officers:

Chief Executive, Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive, Service Manager (Development Management), Head of Customer Focus, Head of Programme Management and Performance, Head of Environmental Enhancement, Head of Place, Property and Regeneration, Head of Planning, Housing and Health and Head of Governance

Also Present:

Councillor Pearson

38. APOLOGIES

No apologies for absence were received.

39. TO APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9TH DECEMBER 2021 (ATTACHED).

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 9th December 2021 (circulated previously) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

40. ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE MEETING AS A MATTER OF URGENCY.

There were no items brought forward by the Chair.

41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

There were no declarations of interest announced.

42. SERVICE PLANS - ANNUAL REPORTING

The Committee discussed the Service Plans (as previously circulated).

The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive addressed the Committee and advised that the members of the Senior Management Team were available to discuss their Service Plans via the virtual link.

(a) **Customer Focus**

The Committee discussed the Service Plan for Customer Focus (as previously circulated).

The Head of Customer Focus addressed the Committee and advised of the following:

- There were three new actions for 2022-23.
- CF 2022/23 01 concerned the hosting of the NDC website being moved to an external service. This would secure the site during a cyber-attack.
- CF 2022/23 02 Development of a self-service portal: to improve customer services by increasing self-service facilities to Revenues and Benefits customers.
- CF 2022/23 03 Transfer of images to a cloud server.
- A few of the existing actions were to be cancelled as they were either no longer applicable or were now included within the Customer Focus programme.
- Some new dates were requested for existing actions.

(b) **Environmental Enhancement**

The Committee discussed the Service Plan for Environmental Enhancement (as previously circulated).

The Head of Environmental Enhancement addressed the Committee and advised of the following:

- There were four new actions, the first of which (EE01 Produce and Adopt a Carbon and Environment Bio-Diversity Plan) would set out the outline of how the Authority would align with this work.
- EE 02 Update the existing Tree Strategy. This work would need a proactive, rather than reactive approach. It was hoped to get involved with national schemes.
- EE03 Replace Waste and Re-cycling building. The current building was nearing end of life and needed re-configuration.
- EE04 Infrastructure changes included improvements to the Weigh-bridge to improve safety, replace the bailer, and to assess the drainage system.
- Existing actions, such as the Leisure Centre

construction, were near to completion.

- Some, such as the litter strategy, needed small time extensions.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Head of Environmental Enhancement advised that:

- There was a hope to resume school visits to the W&R centre once Covid-restrictions allowed. There would be increased public engagement and education. This was included in the overarching strategy but not as a separate action.
- Land at Yeo Valley had to be reclassified from agricultural in order to allow it to be planted as a community woodland. It was also registered for carbon credits.
- Community planting was being considered and an assessment of the sites held by the Authority which could be suitable for planting was ongoing.
- Other potential sites were being considered for tree planting, wild flower planting etc. Grasslands and Meadows were valuable for biodiversity.
- The Authority was working with the North Devon Biosphere on a nature recovery plan.

In response to a question from the Committee, the Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive advised that the assessment of the Authority-owned public conveniences was in its early stages. Works would be required in conjunction with the property team and potentially also Town and Parish councils. This action had a request for a time extension due to the complexity of the work and the current workloads on the departments involved.

(c) **Governance**

The Committee discussed the Service Plan for Governance (as previously circulated).

The Head of Governance addressed the Committee and advised of the following:

- Six new actions had been added. The first two system upgrades had been purchased and were waiting on dates for the works to be scheduled.
- A review of procurement policies would be undertaken by an officer worker group.
- The options available for hybrid meetings was being considered.

- The team were awaiting guidance from the Government on G05 which involved the requirement for ID to be presented when voting at polling stations.
- The delegated power nominations required updating due to the changes in the management structure.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Chief Executive confirmed that:

- The new staff structure diagram would be made available to the Members via their iPads, with a new staff directory to follow once all the updates had been added.
- A Parish review process had been halted during Covid but would be resumed started soon. This would give any small parishes struggling to fill Councillor and Committee roles to consider merging with other neighbouring parishes.

(d) **Place, Property and Regeneration**

The Committee discussed the Service Plan for Place, Property and Regeneration (as previously circulated).

The Head of Place, Property and Regeneration addressed the Committee and advised of the following:

- There were 11 new actions.
- The first three (Culture 01 to 03) were involved in Culture, and involved an increased role of the Museum Manager which recognised the role of culture in the regeneration of place.
- The others included PP04 Local Plan Review, PP05 Planning Policy – which had been amended to refer to ‘positive interventions to improve’ 5 year land supply rather than achieve changes.
- ED&R 06 The Economic Recovery Prospectus had been led by the Economic Development team. Works had been undertaken in partnership with Torridge District Council (TDC). The policy had now been ‘signed off’. This new Service Plan action would see work commence on the Economic Strategy following from the Recovery prospectus.
- ED&R 07 This action would involve objectives for both the Economic Development and Property teams.
- ED08 was for the commercialisation of the CCTV service.
- Harbours 09 involved Ilfracombe, Fremington Quay and Rolle Quay.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Head of Place, Property and Regeneration confirmed that:

- Ilfracombe had been particularly identified as an action as it was the second largest town in the District, had a high level of deprivation and had been identified by Devon County Council (DCC) who were providing funding to assist on the project.
- In relation to the 5 year land supply the challenge for the Authority was to get the builders to build-out within a shorter timescale. The authority could work proactively with developers although the issue was not within their powers to solve. Hence the re-wording of the action to emphasise the issues. The Authority was looking at other pro-active measures like bringing forward land into their ownership.
- The Local Plan review would re-examine the allocation requirements for residential dwellings across the District.

In response to a question from the Committee, the Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that the original planned sale of the Bicclescombe Nursery site had fallen through and the land would now be retained. External funding of £500,000 had been received to contribute towards the required infrastructure in order to help bring the project forward.

The Service Manager (Development Manager) confirmed that any planning applications received were considered against the five year land supply, and whether the sites would count towards it. Properties which had a 'change of use' to residential would also count towards this.

In response to a question from the Committee the Chief Executive confirmed that the Park and Change site at Chivenor had not yet progressed as it had been delayed due to issues over the condition of the land. It was not yet at the standard at which the Authority could adopt it. Head of Place, Property and Regeneration advised that she would provide a further update following a discussion with the Car Parks Manager.

(e) **Planning, Housing and Health**

The Committee discussed the Service Plan for Planning, Housing and Health (as previously circulated).

The Head of Planning, Housing and Health addressed the

Committee and advised of the following:

- The new actions were created to cope with legislative changes.
- Two actions were for Community Safety. These needed to be adopted in 2022-23. They covered domestic violence, domestic homicides etc.
- There was a need to review safeguarding policy arrangements.

(f) **Planning, Housing and Health - Building Control**

The Committee discussed the Service Plan for Planning, Housing and Health – Building Control (as previously circulated).

The Head of Planning, Housing and Health addressed the Committee and advised of the following:

- The actions included:
 - Re-accreditation process for officers
 - New Government legislation following the Grenfell disaster.
 - Increased complexity of the Building Control service.
 - Extended enforcement responsibility, with a greater scope for regulatory intervention by the officers.
 - Renewing the relationship with Mid Devon District Council to improve efficiency of the current arrangement.

(g) **Planning, Housing and Health - Crematorium**

The Committee discussed the Service Plan for Planning, Housing and Health – Crematorium (as previously circulated).

The Head of Planning, Housing and Health addressed the Committee and advised of the following:

- There was an increase in environmental aspects.
- There was a significant usage of energy at the facility- for which alternative energy sources would need to be considered.
- Industry 'Best Practice' suggests that low-cost funerals were offered as a more affordable option.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Head of Planning, Housing and Health confirmed that:

- Environmentally sustainable energy options would be considered, such as gas powered options and renewable electric facilities.
- 'Green' funerals and woodland burials could also be future options.

(h) **Organisational Development**

The Committee discussed the Service Plan for Organisational Development (as previously circulated).

The Head of Organisational Development addressed the Committee and advised of the following:

- There were four new actions:
 - OD1 covered the Service area restructures. This was ongoing.
 - OD2 the revision and update to the appraisal process, to include the behaviour framework.
 - OD03 developing networks with Petroc
 - OD04 Creating an empowering organisation and incorporating the behaviour framework within the NDC processes.

RESOLVED that the Service plans be noted

43. WORK PROGRAMME 2021-22.

The Work Programme 2021-22 was noted.

Chair

The meeting ended at 11.21 am

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