

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Strategy and Resources Committee held at Barum Room - Brynsworthy on Monday, 8th April, 2024 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: Members:

Councillor Roome (Chair)

Councillors Bell, Clayton, Crabb, D Knight, R Knight, Lane, C Leaver, Maskell, Prowse, Wilkinson and Worden

Officers:

Chief Executive and Service Lead -Private Sector Housing

Also Present in person:

Councillors

Also Present virtually:

Councillors

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received by Councillor Milton.

The Corporate and Community Admin Assistant advised the Committee that Councillor Hunt was attending the meeting virtually

2. TO APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4 MARCH 2024 (ATTACHED).

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2024 (circulated previously), be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

In response to a question, the Chief Executive advised the Committee that the minutes of Committee meetings were a record of discussion and decisions taken and not verbatim.

3. 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, which in the opinion of the Chair, should be considered as a matter of urgency.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS.

There were no declarations of interest received.

5. NOTICE OF MOTION FROM COUNCIL

The Committee considered the Notice of Motion referred by Full Council on the 17 January 2024 regarding joining the City of Sanctuary initiative (circulated previously).

The Chief Executive highlighted the following:

- 60 Local Authorities had already joined the initiative, which was designed to act as a network to share resources and ideas around refugee resettlement. It was noted that North Devon Council (NDC) already engaged with a number of similar organisations and initiatives.
- The City of Sanctuary (COS) required partners to work towards and aim to complete a series of pledges and that in the Chief Executive's opinion there was nothing in these pledges or the COS charter that NDC should be concerned about agreeing to should Members wish to go forward with the scheme.
- That only 12 of the 60 Local Authorities who have signed up with COS have achieved the Full Award Status, which required a minimum criteria outlined in the COS pledges. These requirements included dedicated staff, sharing website spaces, and committing to learning/education schemes. It was noted that the resource implications of achieving the Full Award Status were not yet known but could be investigated if Members wished to register interest in the COS scheme, and that agreeing to be part of the COS scheme did not mean having to aim or achieve the COS Full Award Status.

In response to a question as to whether or not NDC was already doing most of the work outlined in the COS pledges and whether or not NDC required the validation of COS to continue the work they already do, the Chief Executive advised that NDC already does good work around refugee resettlement thanks to already established connections, but that the matter of whether or not partnership with COS was desirable was up to Members.

In response to a question regarding resource implications, the Chief Executive advised that the recommendations within the Notice of Motion were to consider working towards the pledges, and once the first steps have been taken a full report would come back to a future meeting of the Committee detailing the resource implications, as only then would they be known.

RESOLVED that the Council:

- A) Join the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network;
- B) Work to implement the City of Sanctuary pledges through its actions and policies, and with its partners in the statutory and voluntary sectors;
- C) The contribution of refugees and people seeking sanctuary in North Devon be acknowledged,

6. 361 ENERGY CIC CONTRACT

The Committee considered a report by the Private Sector Service Lead (circulated previously) regarding the renewal of the 361 Energy CIC contract.

The Private Sector Service Lead highlighted the following:

- The contract started in October 2021 and was due for renewal in October 2024.
- A total of 272 houses have been assisted (as outlined on Page 19 of the report) throughout the term of the contract since October 2021.
- Recommendation 4.5 outlined how the Council could increase customer participation as well as improve community engagement around the initiative.
- The scheme was free for the customer, but the current contract cost NDC £60,000.

In response to a question as to whether or not the Council should be going through the procurement process to find potential alternatives to 361 Energy, the Chief Executive advised that whilst it was an option, 361 Energy were an integral part of the framework of energy providers and were already working in partnership with the other groups that would likely be identified via the procurement process. The Council could still go through the procurement process but if another provider was selected then they would have to start from scratch when it came to integrating themselves with other groups and Council services.

In response to a question as to whether or not the dedicated Energy Efficiency Officer was employed by the Council specifically for the purpose of furthering the scheme, the Private Sector Service Lead advised that the Officer was employed by the Council but had a wider job role than just furthering the scheme but was confident the engagement and scope of the service would improve by having them in role.

Councillor Bell declared that he had an other registerable interest as he knew a fellow Member of Braunton Parish Council who was a Director of 361 Energy.

RESOLVED, that:

- A) the Council enter into a revised contract with 361 Energy CIC from October 2024, for a further 3 year period (£24k per year: total £72k);
- B) The setting aside of Constitutional requirements to seek at least 3 quotes be approved; and
- C) An update report on the 361 Energy scheme and further information about the wider energy efficient grants (Energy Company Obligation) will be prepared by the Private Sector Service Lead and emailed to the Committee for information..

Chair

The meeting ended at 11.03 am

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