

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Council held at G107, 1st Floor, South West Institute Development Building, Petroc, Barnstaple - Petroc College on Wednesday, 20th November, 2024 at 6.30 pm

PRESENT: Members:

Councillor Walker (Chair)

Councillors Bell, Biederman, Bulled, Bushell, Cann, Clayton, Crabb, Davies, Haworth-Booth, Hunt, Jones, Jusef, D Knight, R Knight, Lane, P Leaver, Lethaby, Maskell, Milton, Norman, Patrinos, Prowse, Quinn, Turton, Wilkinson, Williams, Wilson and Worden.

Officers:

Chief Executive, Head of Governance, Senior Solicitor and Monitoring Officer and Finance Manager

Also Present virtually:

Councillor Orange

48. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bishop, Denton, C. Leaver, Lovering, Maddocks, Roome, Spear, Stevenson, Whitehead and York.

Councillor Orange joined the meeting virtually.

49. TO APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 SEPTEMBER 2024 (ATTACHED)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 25th September 2024 (circulated previously) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

50. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Boxphish Training for Councillors

The Chair reminded all Councillors to complete the Boxphish training modules on their iPads. Due to an increase in cyber-crime and online scams, it was important that all Councillors completed the training modules as soon as possible.

She added that if Councillors hadn't yet completed any to-date, there were now four modules to complete and that each module would only take around five minutes to complete.

51. BUSINESS BROUGHT FORWARD BY OR WITH THE CONSENT OF THE CHAIR

There was no business to be brought forward by the Chair.

52. REPLIES TO ANY QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE PUBLIC AND/OR TO RECEIVE PETITIONS UNDER PART 4, COUNCIL PROCEDURES RULES, PARAGRAPHS 8 AND 9 OF THE CONSTITUTION

There were no questions submitted by the Public and/or Petitions received under Part 4, Council Procedure Rules, Paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Constitution.

53. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest announced.

54. TO CONSIDER MOTIONS OF WHICH NOTICE HAS BEEN SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 4, COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES, PARAGRAPH 11 OF THE CONSTITUTION

(a) To consider the following notice of motion from Councillor Bell

"Bideford/Barnstaple Rail Connection

The Strategy and Resources Committee meeting on 4th April 2022 considered a Motion, referred from Full Council on 23rd February 2022, "to support the reinstatement of Bideford to Barnstaple rail link for passenger and other services, as proposed by ACE Rail" proposed by Councillor Lofthouse.

The Motion was supported by the Committee, and it was agreed:

- (a) That the inclusion of this policy aim within the revised joint local plan be referred to the Joint Planning Policy Committee for consideration; and
- (b) To work with partners and organisations to explore this idea and where necessary to lobby those who may contribute to making this happen including Great British Railways, Devon County Council, Peninsula Transport, and the Government.

The Joint Planning Policy Committee on 15th July 2022 RESOLVED that the Bideford to Barnstaple rail link is considered as part of the People and Place project.

The Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance had this opening declaration of purpose: "To secure a new rail link between Bideford and Barnstaple and upgrade of the North Devon (Tarka) Line between Exeter

and Barnstaple, championing their transformational benefits for communities and businesses and advocating to decision-makers the economic, social and environmental case for developing and investing in the project.”

Councillor Bell addressed Council advised that since the Motion was originally put forward its desired outcomes had changed significantly.

He added that whilst he was fully in support of the idea of improving the existing Tarka Line between Barnstaple and Exeter he requested that his notice of motion be withdrawn with a view to an amended version being presented to Council in January 2025.

Council noted the request to delay the notice of motion until January 2025.

(b) To consider the following notice of motion from Councillor Bulled

Councillor Bulled clarified her position in that whilst she had a lifetime’s experience of farming she was now retired and therefore had no interest nor would she benefit from any inheritance.

She explained that the Motion was being presented subsequent to the work regarding North Devon farming that the Council had already delivered through the Policy Development Committee in 2024.

She presented her notice of motion to Council:

She highlighted her concern with regards to the proposed changes to inheritance tax that had been announced by the Labour Government in the recent Autumn budget, which would scrap Agricultural Property Relief (APR).

She explained that APR had been instrumental in allowing British family farms to remain intact across generations, supporting food security, sustaining rural communities, and aiding environmental stewardship.

The tax was estimated to impact over 70,000(1) family farms, leaving the average farming family with a tax bill of at least £240,000(2), which would force many to sell portions of their land or close entirely, paving the way for corporate ownership and lifestyle buyers over family ownership.

She requested that an amendment be added to the recommendation that if the Government wish to continue to make changes to inheritance tax that full consultation should take place with the farming sector prior to any decisions being taken.

Councillor R. Knight addressed Council and spoke against the motion as it stood because he disagreed with the proposed resolutions.

- He addressed Council and spoke of the impact on a lot of professions as a result of the recent budget. He referenced the demonstration in London, which was held on 19th November 2024 against planned proposals for the government's changes to inheritance tax and its impact upon family farms.
- He highlighted the future risk of potential trade tariffs with America.
- He highlighted that the proposals were seen to be taxing land owners who were asset rich and that there might be a more appropriate way forward if the government were to look at the proposals in greater detail.

Councillor Milton spoke in support of Councillor Bulled's motion.

He highlighted the following points:

- The government would not address the problem of corporate inflation in land.
- In reality there was a problem that the government needed to address appropriately and carefully.
- There was a requirement for the Council to take a more realistic, appropriate and proportionate approach towards the financial deficit.

It was moved by Councillor Bulled and seconded by Councillor Crabb "that the notice of motion be approved".

An amendment was moved by Councillor P. Leaver and seconded by Councillor Hunt subject to the inclusion of an additional point being added to the letter "That the work that North Devon Council and its officers were already doing to support the local farming community in North Devon and to continue to explore opportunities to help maintain a viable sustainable farming community in North Devon be commended".

Council Bulled advised that she was happy to take on board the amended motion with the suggested inclusion by Councillor P. Leaver as detailed above.

The motion was carried with one Councillor voting against the motion.

RESOLVED that:

(a) This Council resolves to:

- a. Write a letter to the Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer, the Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves and the Secretary of State for DEFRA Steve Reed to include the following:
 - i. To commend the work that North Devon Council and its officers were already doing to support the local farming community in North Devon and to continue to explore opportunities to help maintain a viable sustainable farming community in North Devon.
 - ii. To oppose the Labour Government's changes to inheritance tax affecting family farms.

- iii. To advocate for the exemption of family farms to preserve the UK's food security, rural communities, and environmental initiatives.
- iv. That all North Devon Council Group Leaders be requested to sign the letter to show their support for local farmers.
- v. To state that the Council stood with North Devon and all Britain's family farms, to support their rural communities, and to protect the environment by formally rejecting the proposed "family farm tax."
- vi. If the Government wish to continue to make changes to inheritance tax that full consultation should take place with the farming sector prior to any decisions being taken.

55. CHAIR'S REPLIES TO ANY QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL BY MEMBERS SUBMITTED UNDER PART 4, COUNCIL PROCEDURES RULES, PARAGRAPH 10 OF THE CONSTITUTION

There were no questions submitted by Members under Part 4, Council Procedure Rules, Paragraph 10 of the Constitution.

56. REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Council considered and noted a report by the Leader of the Council (circulated previously) regarding work that had been undertaken since the last Council meeting.

Councillor Worden thanked both the Leader and his deputy for their attendance at a recent meeting of the South Molton Town Council, which was very well received. He added that he would like the process to continue as it was a valuable way of communicating directly with the Town and Parish Councils and requested that other Town and Parish Councils be given the same opportunity.

The Leader of Council advised that both himself and the Deputy Leader would be attending a meeting of Landkey Parish Council on 4th December 2024 and that an invitation had also been extended to Swimbridge Parish Council to attend the meeting.

57. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

Council noted that no questions had been submitted to the Leader or the Chair of a Committee under Part 4, Council Procedure Rules, paragraph 10.4 of the Constitution.

58. LEAD MEMBERS REPORTS

(a) **Lead Member for Housing report**

Council considered and noted a report by the Lead Member for Housing (circulated previously).

The Lead Member for Housing addressed Council and requested that he be allowed to respond in writing to any questions from Members in relation to his report.

Councillors agreed to support the request.

Councillor Prowse addressed Council and requested an update from the Leader in relation to the Local Plan working groups that were held at Caddsdow Business Support Centre, Bideford on 8th November 2024. He thanked those members who had attended the working groups and requested that any Members who were unable to attend any future working groups send a substitute in their place. He acknowledged that whilst Caddsdow was a good facility, accessing it for Councillors from rural parts of the North Devon area often involved long journeys. He therefore suggested that organisers perhaps look at alternative locations such as Node for future workshops to ensure maximum attendance.

He also wished to record his thanks to Councillor Wilkinson for his involvement with the arrangements.

The Lead Member for Housing added that Councillors representing North Devon Council considerably outnumbered by those Councillors representing Torrington District Council.

The Leader explained that he would be unable to attend the next workshop and had sought to find a substitute from within his group without success. He added that he would extend the offer to the rest of the Members and if anyone wished to attend in his place they were welcome to contact him.

He wished to pass on his thanks to the Lead Member for Housing for his thorough and in depth report, which reflected the hard work of the officers involved.

(b) **Lead Member for Climate and Biodiversity Report**

Council considered and noted a report by the Lead Member for Climate and Biodiversity (circulated previously).

The Lead Member for Climate and Biodiversity invited questions from Council in relation to his report.

In response to questions, he advised the following:

- He acknowledged that the Council would not be able to achieve in-house Net Zero by 2030, due to reasons 'beyond our control'. This was unfortunate but due to an impossible target with the Council's Scope 3 emissions beyond our control as the Council still do not produce its own electricity, despite so many roofs crying out for solar panels. The sale of red diesel to the fishing boats in Ilfracombe contributed significantly to the Council's

footprint together with the fuel that the Council required Refuse and Recycling fleet, which produced the Council highest emissions. He added that there were aspirations to introduce a fully electric recycling fleet. However, he acknowledged that this would take time and funding to come to fruition.

- He openly supported agriculture and acknowledged that at times planning legislation with regards to agricultural buildings and applications did seem irrational.

The Chair of Council emphasised the importance of Members attending the visioning workshops to ensure that they had full ownership with the decisions that were taken at Planning Committee.

The Leader that the Lead Member for Climate and Biodiversity for his report stating that it was not an easy portfolio to hold. However, it was one of the most important portfolios within the Council. He acknowledged and agreed that the Council was not going to hit its target of net zero by 2030 and that it was very much an aspirational target for the Council moving forwards.

59. PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT QUARTER 2 OF 2024/25

(a) **Report of the Policy Development Committee**

Councillor Patrinos, Vice Chair of the Policy Development Committee presented the Committee's report on the Performance and Financial Management Quarter 2 of 2024/25 report to the Policy Development Committee on 7th November 2024 (circulated previously).

(b) **Report of meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee**

Councillor Clayton, Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee reported the recommendations of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 4th November 2024 on the Performance and Financial Management Quarter 2 of 2024/25 report.

It was moved by Councillor Lane and seconded by Councillor Norman "that minute 71 (a-f) of the report of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 4th November 2024 regarding the Performance and Financial Management Quarter 2 of 2024/25 report be adopted".

RESOLVED that minute 71 (a-f) of the report of the Strategy

and Resources Committee held on 4th November 2024 regarding the Performance and Financial Management Quarter 2 of 2024/25 report be adopted.

60. MID YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT 2024/25

Council considered the Mid-year Treasury Management Report 2024/25 to the Strategy and Resources Committee on 4th November 2024 (circulated previously).

(a) **Report of the Policy Development Committee**

Councillor Patrinos, Vice Chair of the Policy Development Committee presented the Committee's report on the Treasury Management mid-year Report 2024/25 to the Policy Development Committee on 7th November 2024 (circulated previously).

(b) **Report of Strategy and Resources Committee**

Councillor Clayton, Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee reported the recommendations of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 4th November 2024 on the Mid-Year Treasury Management report for 2024-2025 (circulated previously).

It was moved by Councillor P. Leaver and seconded by Councillor Bell "that recommendation 72 of the report of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 4th November 2024 regarding the Mid-Year Treasury Management report for 2024- 2025 be adopted."

RESOLVED that recommendation 72 of the report of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 4th November 2024 regarding the Mid-Year Treasury Management report for 2024- 2025 be adopted.

61. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2023/24

(a) **Report by Chief Financial Officer (attached)**

Council considered a report by the Chief Financial Officer (circulated previously) regarding the Statement of Accounts for 2023/24.

The Finance Manager advised that:

- The target date for published audited accounts was by the first working day in June 2024. As at 3rd June 2024 only 65/164 (40%) of District Councils had had published their draft accounts with North Devon being one of those

Councils.

- The external audit was undertaken by Bishop Fleming who were the Council's appointed external auditors.
- The audit of the Council's financial statements took place from August to September 2024 and was concluded in October 2024.
- The Audit Findings report was considered by the Governance Committee at its meeting held on 12th November 2024.
- The External Auditors reported an unqualified opinion on the Council's financial statements.
- There were four recommendations made, which were detailed within the key findings and these were accepted by management and a response had been built into the Action Plan.
- The narrative report, which was detailed on pages 124 to 134 of the report identified the challenges that the Council was facing and how it aimed to address those challenges together with the review of the previous financial year 2023-24.
- There were challenges facing the country, which included the cost of living pressures together with previous high inflation rates, which had risen from 2.9% at the beginning of the 2021/22 financial year to 11.1% by April 2022. Double digit inflation continued for the whole of 2022/23 peaking at 14.2% in October 2022; 2023/24 had seen a gradual easing, finishing the year at 4.3%.
- However, inflationary impacts continued to be incurred within the Council's current base budget and a number of those had been built into the 2024/25 budget and the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Council would continue to capture the additional costs and ensure that they were fed into the quarterly performance reports.
- Page 127 of the report detailed the quarter three position for 2023/24, which reported a net surplus of £73,000 with the additional income for Business Rates achieving a final outturn position with a net budget surplus of £630,000. The main variances of which were detailed on pages 128 and 129 of the report.
- The movement of from quarter three of £557,000 was mainly attributed to the £760,000 additional Business Rates income.
- The options for the management of the £630,000 surplus was to commit the following amounts to earmarked reserves as follows:

Corporate property income volatility £150,000.
reserve

Insurance reserve	£280,000
Digital transformation financial system reserve	£200,000

- Members approved in June 2021 to proceed with the acquisition of Green Lanes Shopping Centre.
- The purchase complimented other significant regeneration improvements, which were being delivered were being delivered within Barnstaple town centre through the Future High Streets project.
- The financial outturn for the centre produced a net return (income less costs) of:
 - 2021/22 (£243,600).
 - 2022/23 (£291,000).
 - 2023/24 (£237,000), although this figure included £150,000 from the income volatility reserve due to the financial impact of losing Wilko in August 2023.
- This was a positive return for the Council and was in line with its original forecasting.
- The Councils earmarked reserves as at 31st March 2024 were as follows:
 - The General Fund Reserve had a balance of £1.238m.
 - Earmarked reserves of £10.560m were detailed in note 11 on pages 181 and 182 of the report.
 - The balances left the Council in a stronger position to deal with the risks and challenges it faced moving into 2024/25.
 - The result was positive for the Council to ensure that it could place balances into reserves at year end, especially after such a challenging financial year.
- The figures for the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2024-2030, which was on pages 125 to 126 of the report were refreshed annually and would be presented to Full Council in February 2025 as part of the Council's budget and Council Tax setting process for 2025/26.
- There was continued pressure and uncertainty on the Council's funding sources and as the Government's Fair Funding Review and Business Rate Retention changes, which were originally scheduled for 2024/25 had once again been delayed by a further two years until at least 2026.
- The MTFS 2024-2030 showed a balanced budget for 2024/25, with a £487,000 gap for 2025/26 increasing to a

gap of £3.263m by 2029/30; details of which could be found in the table on page 126 of the report.

- The Main Statements which could be found on pages 143 to 148 of the report were detailed as follows:
 - The Comprehensive I&E Statement on page 43 of the report included a number of “non-cash” accounting entries that were reversed out through the Movement in Reserves Statement (MiRS), which was detailed on pages 144-145 of the report with a total reversal of £18.216m. The end result of which was no movement in the General Fund balance at £1.238m, as a result there was no impact upon the Council Tax payer.
 - Full details could be seen in the Movement Reserves Statement on page 145 of the report.
 - The Balance Sheet on page 146 of the report gave an overview of the net assets total, which was £125m and an increase of £18m from the 2022/23 financial year. The main movements were detailed as follows:
 - Long term assets - £14m increase to £143m, note 15 on page 184 referred to the main movements, which included revaluation increases of £8m, additions (TA, finance lease vehicles together with asset enhancements of £9m and a depreciation of £4m).
 - Long term liabilities – A decrease of £4m, with the main movements being:
 - Finance lease liability – Increased by £1.3m.
 - Pension fund liability – Net liability decreased by £5m mainly as a result in changes to financial assumptions, including changes to the discount rate.
 - Further details could be found in pension note 42 of pages 206-211 of the report.
 - Fund history for the last six years could be found in the table on page 209 of the report, which showed the net liability moving from £62m through to £8.5m for 2023/24.
 - The pension deficit was offset by the same balance in unusable reserves, which could be found in note 27 on page 193 of the report.
 - The pension deficit would be addressed through increased contributions over the remaining working life of employees, which was assessed by the actuary every three years.
 - The cash flow statement on page 147 of the report detailed how the Council generated and used its

- cash and cash equivalents.
- Collection Fund details, which were detailed on pages 148 and 149 of the report. The Council as the billing authority collected all monies, which also accounted for Council Tax together with Business Rates income and how it was distributed between major precepting authorities and central government.
- Accounting policies, which were detailed on pages 150-169 of the report showed no material changes.
- The draft auditor's report was presented to Governance Committee on 12th November 2024, with the auditor's opinion that the accounts gave a true a fair view of the Councils financial position.

The Chair of the Governance Committee presented the recommendations of the Governance Committee held on 12th November 2024 (circulated previously) and commended the Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive and his team for their work.

It was moved by Councillor Norman and seconded by Councillor Biederman that the recommendation in the report be adopted.

RESOLVED that the Statement of Accounts 2023-24 be approved, and that the Chairman of the Council sign and date the Statement of Accounts as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

(b) **Annual Governance Statement 2023/24**

Council considered a report by the Head of Governance (circulated previously) regarding the Annual Governance Statement 2023/24.

The Head of Governance advised the following:

- The Annual Governance Statement formally recorded and published the arrangements that the Council had in place to ensure that its functions were carried out effectively based on the core principles of the governance framework.
- The framework included the work of both the Strategy and Resources Committee and Full Council in setting budgets, strategies and corporate objectives together with the work of the Governance Committee on risk management and reviewing audit reports alongside Senior Management Team and the Corporate Risk Group.
- The Councils internal auditors, Devon Assurance

Partnership carried out 16 audits during the years 2023/24 and their overall assessment was that the Council had a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place.

- The external auditors had recently completed their value for money review and again concluded that the Council had proper arrangements to secure economic, efficient and effective use of its resources. Their review of the Council's governance arrangements also found no significant weaknesses in its arrangements.
- There were some areas of improvement identified during their assessment and they were set out in appendix C on page 275 of the report.
- The draft annual governance statement was agreed by the Governance Committee in June 2024, therefore the recommendation within the report was to approve the Annual Governance Statement 2023/23 as part of the signing off of the Statement of Accounts 2023/24.

In response to a request that for clarity for all Members, that all recommendations that had been previously agreed by the Governance Committee be presented at future meetings as part of the report, the Head of Governance agreed to include the details in all future reports to Full Council.

It was moved by Councillor Norman and seconded by Councillor Clayton that the recommendation be adopted.

RESOLVED that the Annual Governance Statement for 2023/24 (as detailed in Appendix A) be approved.

(c) **Letter of Representation on behalf of the Council**

Council considered the Letter of Representation on behalf of the Council (circulated previously).

The Finance Manager explained that the Letter of Representation formally outlined to the External Auditors the governance arrangements in place and the Authority's responsibilities on the financial statements presented. This letter was a standard letter and letter was required as part of the final process for the approval of the Statement of Accounts for 2023/24 and would enable the Auditors to issue their final opinion.

It was proposed by Councillor Crabb and seconded by Councillor Norman that the recommendation be adopted.

RESOLVED that the letter of representation on behalf of the Council be approved and signed by the Chief Financial Officer.

62. HALF YEARLY REPORT OF CHAIR OF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Council considered and noted the half yearly report from the Chair of the Governance Committee (circulated previously).

63. REQUESTS FOR WAIVER OF 6 MONTH COUNCILLOR ATTENDANCE RULE

Council considered a report by the Chief Executive (circulated previously) regarding a request for Waiver of the six month Councillor Attendance Rule.

The Chief Executive advised that Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 stated that: 'if a member of a local authority fails throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of his last attendance to attend any meeting of the authority, he shall, unless the failure was due to some reason approved by the authority before the expiry of that period, cease to be a member of the authority'.

He explained that both Councillors Neil Denton and Liz Spear had been unable to attend meetings recently and the purpose of this report was to seek approval from Council to approve their continuing absence, which might exceed six consecutive months, due to ill health.

He drew the Member's attention to the following points within the report:

- Councillor Neil Denton had been unable to attend Council meetings recently on ill health grounds. The last meeting that Councillor Denton attended was Licensing and Community Safety Committee on 10th September 2024. The six consecutive months were due to expire on 10th March 2025.
- A formal request had been made for an extension to the six month rule by a further three months i.e. until 10 June 2025 to be approved to enable Councillor Denton to remain in office until he is able to resume normal duties.
- Councillor Liz Spear had been unable to attend Council meetings recently on ill health grounds. The last meeting that Councillor Spear attended was Policy Development Committee on 18 July 2024. The six consecutive months were due to expire on 18th January 2025.
- A formal request had been made for an extension to the six month rule by a further three months i.e. until 18th April 2025 to be approved to enable Councillor Spear to remain in office until she is able to resume normal duties.
- Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act enabled a Local Authority to approve the reason(s) for non-attendance of a Member at any meeting of the Authority throughout a period of six consecutive months, provided that approval was given by the Authority before the expiry of the six month period.

- The extension would give flexibility and would not prevent Councillors Neil Denton and Liz Spear from returning and attending meetings at any time before the end of the further three month extension to the six month rule.
- Once a councillor loses office, through failure to attend for the six month period, the disqualification cannot be overcome by the councillor subsequently resuming attendance nor can retrospective approval of the Council be sought for an extension in time.

It was moved by Councillor Prowse and seconded by Councillor Biedrman that the recommendations be approved.

RESOLVED:

- a) That Councillor Neil Denton's non-attendance at meetings of the authority due to ill health be extended for a further three month period up to 10 June 2025 pursuant to Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 be approved; and
- b) That Councillor Liz Spear's non-attendance at meetings of the authority due to ill health be extended for a further three month period up to 18 April 2025 pursuant to Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 be approved.

Council wished both Members well during their respective recoveries.

Councillor Prowse thanked both Members and officers on behalf of Councillors Spear and Denton for all of their kind messages.

64. ILFRACOMBE HEALTHY HOMES AND COMMUNITY LAND TRUST, COMBINED COUNTY AUTHORITY BIDS

Council considered a report by the Head of Programme Management and Performance (circulated previously) regarding Ilfracombe Healthy Homes and Community Land Trust, Combined County Authority BIDs.

The Chief Executive drew the Member's attention to the following points:

- North Devon Council submitted two business cases to Government (Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities that changed to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government after the last general election) for a total funding amount of £2,790,000:
 - Project 1 entitled Healthy Homes Pilot with a financial ask of £1,980,000; and
 - Project 2 named Additional Low Carbon Community Land Trust Affordable Housing in Isolated Areas with an ask of £810,000.

- Both those Bids were successful and the report sought to vary the capital programme to incorporate the total allocation.
- The 2 projects had been tested through a rigorous process where the strategic, economic, commercial, financial management cases had been scrutinised by independent parties to test the robustness of the proposals.
- **Project 1:** A pilot project to assess if intervening in the Ilfracombe local housing market would help to improve the housing standards of existing low quality homes in terms of cost and quality plus the overall living conditions and wider health determinates of the residents.
- These funds would enable the Council to purchase two empty properties, refurbish them by introducing sustainable elements and measure the impacts, which were noted in paragraph 1.3 of the report. This would then set a blueprint for standards.
- If the pilot delivered the desired outcomes outside of the scope of the project, the next phase would be to identify additional low quality, poorly converted properties, move those tenants to healthy empty homes within the Council's control while improvement renovations took place within their original properties. This would need to be subject to a separate business case. In line with the business case, the project objectives were then to utilise the next revenue from the first properties to be ring-fenced and recycled towards financing capital borrowing costs for the next property acquisition(s). Improving the environmental performance of the properties would create sustainable accommodation for residents and improve their own disposable income.
- The level of deprivation was significant and accepted by Devon County Council and MHCLG colleagues. To date, funding requests/business cases had not been successful and therefore the Council had been unable to pursue opportunities to intervene in the private rented sector, which this funding would enable us to do; bringing empty and poor quality homes back into use.
- **Project 2:** To replace the Council's committed funds to complete the build of 27 units of Community Land Trust (CLT) low carbon affordable housing for social rent in Woolacombe and Parracombe.
- This would enable the Council to recirculate those funds originally allocated to these schemes and reallocate them more flexibly to support the build out of another 19 Passivhaus CLT affordable homes in Georgeham and support a further 28 homes through the planning systems at Lynton, West Down and Braunton to take them to delivery stage.
- In total this would progress 84 low carbon CLT affordable homes for social rent in isolated areas.

- The BID had gone through the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority to attract this government funding.

Councillor Crabb thanked the Chief Executive and the team involved in the bidding process for their hard work in securing the funding to deliver better homes for two local communities.

Councillor Wilkinson reiterated the comments made by Councillor Crabb and welcomed the development of the 21 dwellings in Woolacombe.

It was moved by Councillor Crabb and seconded by Councillor Wilkinson that the recommendations within 2.1 and 2.2 of the report be agreed.

RESOLVED:

- a) That Members the use of the allocated Government Fund for the 2 projects set out in Section 4 of the report be approved; and
- b) That, Council vary the Capital programme by £2,790,000 and that funds be released, subject to the signing of the Final Grant Funding Agreement, upon such terms and conditions as may be agreed by the Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive and the Senior Solicitor and Monitoring Officer.

65. NORTH DEVON HIGHWAYS AND TRAFFIC ORDERS COMMITTEE - OUTSIDE BODY APPOINTMENT

Council considered the appointments of two Councillors to replace Councillor(s) on the North Devon Highways and Traffic Orders Committee.

Councillor Clayton advised that the North Devon Highways and Traffic Orders Committee did not allow the appointment of substitutes at its meetings and therefore proposed that the following appointments be made to the Council representatives of North Devon Highways and Traffic Orders Committee:

- a) That Councillor Bell be appointed to replace Councillor D. Knight; and
- b) That Councillor Williams be appointed to replace Councillor Spear.

It was moved by Councillor Clayton and seconded by Councillor Norman that that Councillors Bell and Williams be appointed as the Council representatives to the North Devon Highways and Traffic Orders Committee. That those appointments be made for the life of Council and that attendance at meetings be an approved duty.

RESOLVED, that the above appointments be made to the North Devon Highways and Traffic Orders Committee.

Councillors Maskell and Patrinos abstained from the vote.

66. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

(a) **Governance Committee**

RESOLVED that the following minutes of the Governance Committee (circulated previously) be noted and adopted as follows:

(i) 23rd September 2024:

- a. Minute 113: Update to Constitution – Delegated Powers to Harbour Board (NOTE: This recommendation was adopted 7 by Council at its meeting on 25 September 2024).

(b) **Joint Planning Policy Committee**

RESOLVED that the following minutes of the Joint Planning Policy Committee (circulated previously) be noted and adopted as follows:

i. 20 September 2024.

(c) **Licensing and Community Safety Committee**

RESOLVED that the following minutes of the Licensing and Community Safety Committee (circulated previously) be noted and adopted as follows:

i. 10th September 2024.

(d) **Planning Committee**

RESOLVED that the following minutes of the Planning Committee (circulated previously) be noted and adopted as follows:

- i. 4th September 2024.
- ii. 13th September 2024.
- iii. 9th October 2024.

(e) **Policy Development Committee**

RESOLVED that the following minutes of the Policy Development Committee (circulated previously) be noted and adopted as follows:

i. 7th November 2024.

(f) **Strategy and Resources Committee**

RESOLVED that the following minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee (circulated previously) be noted and adopted as follows:

i. 7th October 2024:

- a. Minute 60 (c): Pest Control Service.
- ii. 4th November 2024:
 - b. Minute 73 (e): Approval and Release of S106 Public Open Space Funds – Burrington, Heasley Mill and Lovacott.
 - c. Minute 75: Gambling Act Statement of Licensing Principles.
 - d. Minute 79: NDC Corporate Strategies.

Chair

The meeting ended at 7.40 pm

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

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