

**CORPORATE INFRASTRUCTURE AND REGULATORY SERVICES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

22 June 2023

Present:-

Councillors A Dewhirst (Chair), P Bullivant (Vice-Chair), M Asvachin, J Brook, R Chesterton, P Crabb, J Hodgson, C Slade, R Radford, I Roome, M Squires and J Trail BEM

Apologies:-

Councillors R Hannaford and J Wilton-Love

Members attending in accordance with Standing Order 25

Councillors Y Atkinson and R Croad

* 111 **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2023 be signed as a correct record.

* 112 **Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There was no matter raised as a matter of urgency.

* 113 **Public Participation**

There were no oral representations from Members of the Public.

* 114 **Scrutiny Work Programme**

The Head of Scrutiny updated the Committee as to the work programme and reported that following the Masterclass held on 26 May the Programme had been updated based on performance and risk data.

Members asked that the following be added for consideration:

- (a) a policy on land use, noting that land could be allocated for crop growth for 'anaerobic digestion' as a power source or for food production; and
- (b) customer service and engagement Task Group.

The work programme was available at: [Democracy websites - Scrutiny Work Programme late June 2023.pdf - All Documents \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

* 115 **Progress Update: Race Equality Action Plan**

The Committee considered the Report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services on progress of the Race Equality Action Plan, following on from the first progress report presented in November 2022.

The report outlined the progress of the plan and referred to completed action in regard to strengthening resources, governance and accountability, creating a safe and inclusive working environment shaping organisational change, building better understanding through data and insight, and the proposed next steps.

Members' discussion points with the Chief Executive, Director of Legal and Democratic Services; and the Director of People Director of People & Culture included:

- the Senior Leadership Team's commitment to an inclusive and diverse culture to increase motivation, trust and confidence, improved recruitment and retention, and to help all staff feel valued and respected, increasing innovation and creativity, and to service improvements and better community outcomes;
- staff communication and initiatives to improve engagement through staff briefings for example as well as surveys and to encourage open feedback, for effective challenge with appropriate actions;
- the need for clear metrics and benchmarking including meaningful qualitative as well as quantitative data and information (with case studies as appropriate) and to include recruitment and retention data, grievance and disciplinary matters/outcomes and Occupational Therapy referrals for example; and the need for current budget information on costs and future revenue implications;
- the development of a dashboard to measure impact and outcomes as part of the next steps;
- confirmation of additional recruitment within the Equalities Team reporting to the Director of Legal and Democratic Services;
- the wider equality agenda across the organisation;
- a Member's concern about a national independent provider of children's care and education services with which the Council might have contractual relations in regard to their alleged recruitment practices and working/living conditions for its ethnic minority employees;
- the work of the County Council's cross party Equality Commission (on which further information would be provided in future reports) to promote the advancement of equality and challenge discrimination in all its forms in the organisation (their role and membership details etc were available at [Equality Commission - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(devon.gov.uk\)](#);

- the development of the prayer and contemplation facilities including Wudu (*or Wudhu, cleansing ritual or ablution that was an important part of purity and cleanliness in Islam before performing worship*) arrangements; and disability access facilities at County hall (including the Committee rooms);
- the overall objective and commitment to the organisational culture change that was intolerant to racism and discrimination against all people with protected characteristics.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor J Brook; **SECONDED** by Councillor A Dewhirst and

RESOLVED

(a) that the achievements and support and the planned next steps to further advance race equality and commitment to a 'zero tolerance' approach to racism be acknowledged and supported;

(b) that the achievements and the next steps in relation to wider Equality Agenda and the Equality Commission work be acknowledged and supported;

(c) that updates in relation to the work of the Equality Commission be received on a six monthly basis; and

(d) that Officers be requested to provide tangible demonstration of change resulting from the equality action plan for the November committee to include emergent understanding on cultural support for kindness and care.

* 116

Treasury Management Stewardship Annual Report 2022/23

The Committee considered the Report of the Director of Finance and Public Value (DF/23/68) on the outturn position, performance and key matters arising from the Council's Treasury and Debt Management activities during the 2022/23 financial year.

The Report outlined the Minimum Revenue Positions, the borrowing at outturn, analysis of long term debt, investments at outturn, prudential indicators and a 2023/24 update.

Members discussion points with the Investment Manager and the Chief Executive included:

- Plymouth and South Devon Freeport: proposed review by South Hams District Council on the project which may have implications for the County Council; and to date no call on external borrowing had been made;
- continuous review by the Treasury Team of interest rates in regard to future borrowing limits;

- the level of PWLB, LOBO and market debt regarding the £3m difference between Council's borrowing level and the figure in the accounts (on which more information would be provided to Members);
- the growing deficit on Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) and the continued actions/outcomes locally which would be evidenced to assist discussion at national level to mitigate the potential impacts on borrowing levels with additional Government support; and
- the commendable and prudential work of the Treasury Management Team in optimising borrowing and investment and maintaining cash-flow requirements.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor J Brook and **SECONDED** by Councillor A Dewhirst and

RESOLVED that the Report and the overall 2022/23 Treasury Management outturn position be commended to the Cabinet.

* 117 **Locality Budget Annual Report 2022/23**

(Councillor R Croad and Y Atkinson attended (remotely) in accordance with Standing Order 25 and spoke with the consent of the Committee).

The Committee considered the Joint Report of the Director of Finance and Public Value, and Head of Communities (SC/23/3) on a summary of locality budget allocations approved by Members for audit and monitoring purposes.

Each Member of the County Council was allocated a Locality Budget of £8,000 for 2022/23. The Locality Budget was used by Members to respond to local needs, within electoral divisions, by supporting projects or activities that benefited the people and communities they represented. These grants must be used in accordance with operating principles in Part 3 of Section 5 of the Council's Constitution. This statement (Appendix 1 to the Report) summarised expenditure in 2022/23 by each of the 60 Councillors.

Members' discussion points with the Head of Communities included:

- opportunity for local Members to pool budgets for projects across a locality (for example, in Exmouth);
- the commendable advice and support from the Member Support Officer and the Communities Team for any proposed project to accord with the constitutional rules and regulations which included the requirement for in-year spend;
- the current allocation of £5,000 a significant reduction from £8,000 in 2022/23;
- the level of underspend in 2022/23 and desire by Members to include up to date online information of each Member's current expenditure; and
- confirmation that Cabinet had determined that the underspend from 2022/23 would be carried forward.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor J Brook, **SECONDED** by Councillor C Slade and

(a) that the Report be commended to Cabinet and Councillor colleagues be urged to spend their locality budgets in full to support their communities; and

(b) that an online spreadsheet on individual Member expenditure be published on the public County Council website.

* 118 **Domestic Violence Champion**

(Councillor Y Atkinson attended (remotely) and spoke in accordance with Standing Order 25).

Councillor Atkinson as the former Committee Champion on Domestic Violence reported on her role and work as the Champion and referred to:

- the current County Council strategy following the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and establishment of a Local Partnership Board and the programme of work mapped against the strategic framework objectives;
- the statutory duties of the County Council to assess the need and create a strategy for domestic abuse support for all victims (and their children) who reside in relevant safe accommodation, including those who come from outside of the area;
- the establishment of Domestic Sexual Violence Abuse (DSVA) Champions DSVA champions meetings and action plan;
- work with the Police and Criminal Justice system vital in helping tackle DSVA and the Peninsula Crime Plan;
- the Domestic Abuse Commissioner Report which highlighted the lack of safe accommodation and sanctuary provision to enable people to remain safe in their own home for domestic abuse victims and their families
- a webinar by the Fawcett Society around parenting against online misogyny, an issue which many individuals working with young people are facing and a basic County Council resource for teachers and other professionals to help them engage with young people in conversations about online misogyny; and that Safer Devon Partnership was in the process of developing a Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme to roll-out across Devon schools; and
- on ongoing work: support given to staff who are the victims of Domestic Abuse and the work of the [Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse](#): (EIDA) which shared best practice reports and information; and reports from The Domestic Abuse Conference 2023 on Thursday 29th June and Women's Aid Conference on 12th and 13th July 2023 and to continue scrutinising the implementation of the Strategy.

The Chair thanked Councillor Atkinson for her detailed report.

The Chair asked that a Masterclass be arranged (to include view of the video 'Voice of the Child').

The Head of Scrutiny would canvass Members about the Champion role.

* **119** **Commissioning Liaison Member**

The Committee was requested to select a Commissioning Liaison Member, whose role will be to work closely with the relevant Cabinet Members and Director/Heads of Service, developing a fuller understanding of commissioning processes, and provide a link between Cabinet and Scrutiny on commissioning and commissioned services.

Councillor Crabb referred to the need for additional support and agreed to continue in this role.

* **120** **Items Previously Circulated**

The Committee noted information previously circulated for Members, since the last meeting, relating to topical developments which have been or are currently being considered by this Scrutiny Committee:

(a) RISK Register with key risks for this Committee available at: [Risk Registers - Democracy in Devon](#); and

(b) Highways Performance Dashboard – as received before each Committee

***DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT**

The Meeting started at 10.40 am and finished at 12.45 pm