

PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

20 September 2016

Present:

Councillors R Radford (Chairman), G Hook, K Ball, P Bowden, T Dempster, A Eastman, R Edgell, O Foggin, J Hawkins, R Hill, R Vint, N Way and J Yabsley

Members attending in accordance with Standing Order 25:

Councillors R Croad and B Parsons

Apologies:

Councillors C Clarence and B Hughes

* **12** **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2016 be signed as a correct record subject to the amendment of the final paragraph at Minute *9 to read:

The Local Member for Okehampton Rural expressed disappointment at the wording in the report relating to the Northern Route (Exeter to Plymouth via Okehampton) where it stated, "*Within the context of the 20 year plan, these route options are therefore unlikely to be deliverable.*". Members also noted that there was no comment in the Report from Network Rail, acknowledging that the Devon and Exeter Rail Project Working Party would be better placed to address these concerns.

* **13** **Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There was no matter raised as a matter of urgency.

* **14** **Public Participation**

There were no representations from Members of the Public.

* **15** **Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Policy, Strategy and Plan**

The Committee received the Report of the Head of Highways, Capital Development and Waste (HCW/16/69) outlining the progress with and approach adopted in reviewing and updating the current Highway Asset Policy, Highway Asset Strategy and Highway Asset Plan, which was needed to enable the Council to maximise its funding grant for highway maintenance. The Report invited Members to contribute to the development of an appropriate performance management framework and following discussion of the issues raised therein:

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Eastman, **SECONDED** by Councillor Ball and

RESOLVED that an all-day Focus Group/Spotlight Review take place on Thursday 13 October 2016 to consider the Highway Asset Management Strategy and Plan in depth and make recommendations to Cabinet on the appropriate performance management framework.

* **16** **Active Devon: Governance, Funding and Performance**

The Committee received the Report of the Head of Services for Communities (SC/16/11) providing further information on the governance, performance measures and funding of Active Devon whose aim was to promote and deliver community sports and active lifestyle development initiatives throughout Devon, including Plymouth and Torbay.

Active Devon was the County Sports Partnership (CSP) in Devon and one of a network of 45 CSPs in England, funded by Sport England principally, with Lottery funding also. Annual finance and governance audits were carried out each year.

Recent examples of programme delivery included the Heavitree Park 5k Run in Exeter and the Active Mums Cycling project. Over 15,000 people had registered for these and other activities in 2015-16. The Head of Service agreed to provide Members with a list of organisations that Active Devon were working with.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, acknowledged the good work taking place by Active Devon.

* **17** **Libraries Unlimited update**

(Councillor Croad, Cabinet Member for Community and Environmental Services, attended in accordance with Standing Order 25(1), Ms C Eastell, Chief Executive of Libraries Unlimited and Ms J Dent, Chair of the Board of Trustees of Libraries Unlimited also attended and spoke to this item at the invitation of the Committee).

The Cabinet Member for Community and Environmental Services and the Chief Executive of Libraries Unlimited updated Members on developments with Libraries Unlimited. In discussion with Members, the Chief Executive of Libraries Unlimited highlighted the following in particular:

- good progress had been made since its inception on 1st April 2016; with over 350 employees; it became one of the largest employers in Devon and Cornwall;
- charitable status had been granted which now allowed opportunities for fundraising and meant that business rates were not now payable;
- an elected staff forum had been set up, together with key management roles being appointed to;
- key performance indicators would be reported at the AGM and shared with stakeholders in the annual report;
- Friends Groups had increased to 44 across Devon, which demonstrated the support from local communities;
- new libraries were planned for Ottery St Mary, Bampton and Chagford;
- a contract had been secured for the provision of library services to three prisons;
- applications for funding had been made to the Arts Council and the National Lottery;
- a service plan for 2017/18 would be launched in November focussing on the Council's priorities, ensuring that libraries were a good resource for local communities.

* **18** **Apprenticeships and Work Experience Placements**

(Councillor Parsons, Cabinet Member for Performance and Engagement, attended in accordance with Standing Order 25(1) and spoke to this item at the invitation of the Committee).

The Committee received the Report of the Head of Services for Communities (SC/16/12) updating Members on the provision of Job Centre Plus work experience placements to young people and other developments both locally and nationally impacting on work experience, apprenticeships and the wider employability of young people.

Specific issues discussed with the Head of Service and Members included:

- the Extended Work Experience scheme, further details of which the Head of Service would circulate to Members;
- the possibility of the Council assisting those in foster care with transport costs for work experience placements;
- the Government's Apprenticeship changes and in particular the introduction of an Apprenticeship Levy for large employers from April 2017;
- the longer term aim of providing broader apprenticeships up to degree level;
- the holistic approach to be taken by the Council in providing appropriate support to managers and staff and how the Council can help deliver the Council's workforce and development needs.

* **19** **Appointment of the Commissioning Liaison Member**

(Councillor Parsons, Cabinet Member for Performance and Engagement, attended in accordance with Standing Order 25(1) and spoke to this item at the invitation of the Committee).

The Cabinet Member for Performance and Engagement commented on the Corporate Service's '*Scrutiny in a Commissioning Council*' Task Group which considered how the externalisation of services was impacting the role of scrutiny, and in particular how scrutiny committees could engage with the commissioning process and hold providers to account. The Task Group had identified a number of good practices, where scrutiny had been involved with commissioning processes and where providers had been willing to engage with scrutiny, but found that there were inconsistencies across service areas.

The Cabinet Member further advised that the Cabinet, having accepted the Task Group's recommendation to 'strengthen communication and collaboration between Cabinet Members and Heads of Service and Scrutiny Committees, in relation to commissioned services', outlined a proposed protocol involving each Scrutiny Committee appointing a 'Commissioning Liaison Member', to:

- develop a fuller understanding of the Council's commissioning processes and priorities
- build good working relationships with relevant Officers and Cabinet Members responsible for Commissioning, within the Scrutiny Committee's remit
- act as an intermediary / link between Cabinet and their Scrutiny Committee and bring to the attention of the Scrutiny Chairman and Committee, any issues which could benefit from Scrutiny

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Eastman, **SECONDED** by Councillor Yabsley, and

RESOLVED that Councillor Radford be appointed as the Commissioning Liaison Member for Place Scrutiny Committee.

* **20** **Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) Programme Update**

The Committee received the report of the Head of Economy and Enterprise (EE/16/11) on progress made at the end of the April-June quarter on the Connecting Devon and Somerset Programme.

In discussion with Members, the Head of Service advised, in particular, that:

- as at 1 September 2016, BT had connected 316,264 premises, which included 263,000 having access to superfast broadband;
- BT had 14,691 superfast connections to complete before the end of December out of the contracted figure of 277,878;
- the Phase Two Airband contract on Dartmoor anticipated connecting 1,200 premises by the end of September and 4,000 by the end of the year, with the first connection on Exmoor going live at the end of September;
- the award of the Phase Two new procurement contract was expected to be announced in December;
- the Broadband Voucher Scheme was the most successful in the UK with over 2,600 applications received; 1,900 approved and over 150 installations completed; vouchers could be pooled and the deadline for applications was 30 November 2016;
- a briefing would be circulated to Parishes shortly further publicising the Voucher Scheme.

* **21** **Place Scrutiny Committee Work Programme**

The Committee reviewed the Scrutiny Work Programme and determined those items of business to be included therein for its sphere of activity, having regard also to the Cabinet/Council Forward Plan. The Work Programme was endorsed.

[NB: The Scrutiny Work Programme and the Council/Cabinet Forward Plan are available on the Council's website at <http://new.devon.gov.uk/democracy/committee-meetings/scrutiny-committees/scrutiny-work-programme/>

Devon Agriculture Industry Task Group

The Chairman updated the Committee on the progress of the Task Group and would report further to the next meeting.

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

The Meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 5.18 pm