

PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14 March 2017

Present:-

Councillors R Radford (Chairman), G Hook, K Ball, C Clarence, T Dempster, A Eastman, R Edgell, O Foggin, J Hawkins, R Hill, B Hughes, N Way and J Yabsley

Members attending in accordance with Standing Order 25

Councillor R Croad

Apologies:-

Councillors P Bowden

* 41

Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 20 January 2017 and 30 January 2017 be signed as correct records.

* 42

Items Requiring Urgent Attention

There was no matter raised as a matter of urgency.

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Public Participation

There were no representations made from members of the public.

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Libraries Unlimited update

(Councillor Croad, Cabinet Member for Community and Environmental Services, attended in accordance with Standing Order 25(1) and 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 Chairman offered his congratulations to Ms C Eastell on being awarded an OBE in the New Year's Honours list for services to public libraries in Exeter and Devon.

The Cabinet Member for Community and Environmental Services and the Chief Executive of Libraries Unlimited updated Members on Libraries Unlimited's first year of operation. In discussion with Members, the Chief Executive of Libraries Unlimited highlighted in particular:

- new libraries opening in Ottery St Mary and shortly in Bampton and Chagford, with plans progressing for others in Topsham, Kingsteignton, Northam and Cranbrook;
- in light of the need to make savings of £1.500,000 by the end of 2017/18 enhancements for weekend working had been withdrawn and as part of a 2 year plan savings had been secured to date of £1,156,000;
- new sources of income included room hire, a research grant of £200,000 from the Arts Council, and Department for Culture, Media and Sport consultancy to complement a new fundraising strategy to be put in place shortly;

- plans for 2017/18 included a focus on areas of need especially in North Devon and Torridge; delivery of a new Library Management System; a programme of staff training and development, and the development of an Apprenticeship Programme.

The Committee were pleased to note the successful first year of Libraries Unlimited and the opportunities it had and would continue to provide for the workforce and local communities to become further involved in shaping the service for the future.

* **45** **Mobile Phone Coverage in Devon**

The Committee received the Report of the Head of Economy, Enterprise and Skills (EES/17/3) summarising options, recent market developments and next steps. A business case for investing £2.5m in supporting coverage of the not-spots had been submitted to the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and a decision was expected shortly.

The business case outlined the three options, namely Femtocell Investment; Small Cell Investment and Marco Cell Investment. If the business case was approved, procurement for suppliers to pilot the three technologies was proposed to start in June 2017 and conclude in October 2017.

Members noted the findings of the business case outlined in the Report and favoured its submission to the LEP to provide 4G coverage across Devon's 'not-spots'. It was acknowledged that Local Member engagement would be very useful for dissemination of information if funding was confirmed.

* **46** **Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) Programme**

The Committee received the Report of the Head of Economy, Enterprise and Skills (EES/17/4) on progress made on the Connecting Devon and Somerset Programme (CDS).

The Head of Service provided updated figures as at 8 March 2017 as follows:

- the number of superfast homes and businesses BT had connected stood at 277,893;
- take up of fibre service was now just over 33.5%, compared to 30% at the start of the year;
- Airband had made services available to over 3,855 properties across the National Parks.

* **47** **Scrutiny Work Programme and Upcoming Commissioning Activity**

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 Forward Plan. The Work Programme was endorsed subject to the addition of the following for the September meeting: Highways Maintenance Contracts – lessons learnt from the old and a review of the new.

A schedule of upcoming Commissioning Activity was circulated which contained details of commissioning activity taking place within the Committee's remit over the next 6 months.

[NB: The Scrutiny Work Programme and Cabinet Forward Plan is available on the Council's website at <http://democracy.devon.gov.uk/mgPlansHome.aspx?bcr=1>]

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

The Meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 3.40 pm