

**CORPORATE INFRASTRUCTURE AND REGULATORY SERVICES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

28 November 2017

Present:-

Councillors A Dewhirst (Chair), P Colthorpe, M Asvachin, Y Atkinson, K Ball, R Bloxham, J Hook, J Brook, C Chugg, P Crabb, A Eastman, R Edgell, A Saywell, M Shaw and C Slade

Apologies:-

Councillors I Hall

* 25

Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2017 be signed as a correct record.

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Items Requiring Urgent Attention

There was no matter raised as a matter of urgency.

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Public Participation

In accordance with the Council's Public Participation Rules, the Committee received and acknowledged oral representations made by Messrs G and R Cashmore and Long on the Broadband and Mobile Phone Connectivity Task Group update at Item 7 and Mr D Daniel on the Heart of the South West Joint Committee and draft Productivity Plan at Item 8.

The Chair also read aloud the representations received from Mrs K Gilbert on the Broadband and Mobile Phone Connectivity Task Group update at Item 7 and responded, thanking Messrs G and R Cashmore, Long and Mrs Gilbert for their representations which would be taken into account by the Committee during its subsequent deliberations.

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Flood Risk Management

(Councillors Bloxham and Chugg declared personal interests in this item by virtue of being a resident of Cranbrook and an owner of land at Braunton, respectively.)

The Committee received the Report of the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment on the progress made by Devon Risk Management Authorities (RMA) in their delivery of flood risk management functions. Also in attendance were Mr B Johnstone from the Environment Agency and Mr S Densham from Mid Devon District Council.

The Report provided an update on the Council's role as Lead Local Flood Authority and the measures that it was taking to reduce the risk of flooding to properties in Devon. It also outlined the results of a recent questionnaire, circulated to all Devon RMAs, which focussed on the resources available within each RMA and how they were operating collaboratively, in accordance with the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, to make Devon more resilient to flooding.

High priority flood improvement schemes were currently being delivered in Axminster, Modbury, Braunton, Ivybridge, Stokeinteignhead, Uplyme and Bideford and, collectively,

would reduce the risk of flooding to approximately 380 properties. Smaller schemes were also being delivered through the Action Plan.

In discussion with Members and Officers, the following points, in particular, were made:-

- the need for robust maintenance plans to be in place during the planning stages of any development;
- the flooding threat to Northam Burrows;
- the amount of flood prevention work to be done on smaller waterways and the possible routine consideration of Schedule 19 flood reports following a major incident;
- the responsibility for rivers with a risk of flooding to a large number of properties rested with the Environment Agency, whereas the responsibility for watercourses lay with the District Authorities;
- section 106 agreements and levies were ways of attracting investment/funding; and
- an online Action Plan contained a list of projects which the Council was financially contributing to in 2017/18, together with background information on the main website at <https://new.devon.gov.uk/floodriskmanagement/>;

RESOLVED that:

(a) ongoing scrutiny was needed of the resources available to and performance of all RMAs in their delivery of the Devon Local Flood Risk Management Strategy;

(b) an overview of key flood risk issues/priorities across Devon be requested to be jointly prepared by RMAs, presented on a District by District basis, together with a summary of the planned or programmed measures to address these risks, such risks to be subject to scrutiny; and

(c) the Committee give more detailed consideration to the adequacy of the arrangements in place for Sustainable Drainage Systems linked to all new development in Devon.

* **29** **Budget and Delivery of Services - In-year briefing**

(a) Corporate Services

The Committee received a verbal update from the Chief Executive on the in-year position of the budget for 2017/18 and service delivery within Digital Transformation and Business Support; Legal and Communications (including Democratic Services, Coroners and Registration); Human Resources and Organisational Development; and Treasurer's Services.

Members noted that spending pressures existed affecting Legal services due to the increasing demands for legal support in respect of childcare and safeguarding adults, and financial pressures on the Coroner's Service. Notwithstanding that however, it was reported that overall the service areas were confident of meeting their target budgets.

(b) Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste

The Committee received the Report of the Chief Officer for Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste (HIW/17/91), which provided an in-year briefing on service delivery and anticipated meeting the annual budget. However, the position was dependent on some volatile areas for the budget, particularly severe weather, emergency maintenance and waste tonnage levels. The weather also had the potential to impact delivery on the capital programme.

Members noted the ongoing work with the new Highways Maintenance Contractor, Skanska, using the 'Systems Thinking' approach, to review the management of safety defects.

The Chief Officer undertook:

- to respond directly to Cllr Edgell regarding rural road repairs included in the Highways work programme for his area; and
- to circulate a briefing note to Members giving further information on the Street Lighting Carbon Savings Programme.

(c) Communities, Public Health, Environment and Prosperity

The Committee received the Report of the Chief Officer for Communities, Public Health, Environment and Prosperity which provided an in-year briefing on service delivery within Communities, Planning, Transportation, Environment and Economy, Enterprise and Skills. Public Health services were considered separately by the Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee. The core functions of the services were forecast to meet the target budget, however, ongoing financial pressures continued to require challenge to the current delivery.

In discussion with Members, the following points in particular were made:-

- that Members were welcome to attend the 'Learn to Live' initiative, aimed at improving road safety by promoting a greater recognition of the potential hazards of driving to younger drivers;
- the Head of Economy, Enterprise and Skills undertook to look into issues with the Adult and Community Services website;
- that an update on Libraries Unlimited be included on the Scrutiny Work Programme;
- concerns about traffic congestion and air quality in the Greater Exeter area affected by new development in Teignbridge; and
- that Members' briefing sessions would take place shortly regarding the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan.

* **30** **Broadband and Mobile Phone Connectivity Task Group Update**

The Committee received the Report of the Task Group (CSO/17/32) which gave an update on the work undertaken to date and a summary of the evidence received.

The following points, in particular, were raised in discussion with Members:-

- that the Task Group had requested that Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) begin holding public Stakeholder events in the new year;
- a new CDS website was currently in test and was hoped to be live at the end of this year or the beginning of next;
- the only delay known to Exmoor National Park was the delay of planning consent for the erection of masts; and
- that Members were welcome to attend the Task Group meetings.

The Head of Economy, Enterprise and Skills undertook to respond directly to the public participant, Mr R Cashmore and to also respond to Cllr J Hook regarding the financial viability of Airband.

* **31** **Heart of the South West Joint Committee and Draft Productivity Strategy (Cabinet Minute 77/8 November 2017)**

The Committee received the Joint Report of the Head of Economy, Enterprise and Skills and the Head of Organisational Development (EES/17/5) providing information on the Heart of the South West Joint Committee and the draft Productivity Strategy, which was currently being consulted on and which highlighted a number of challenges facing the Heart of the South West area.

The consultation period had been extended to 14 December 2017 and an Action Plan would be shared with the Committee at a future meeting.

RESOLVED that the Committee note the work to develop a Joint Committee and that, to enable a bid for devolved powers and funds to be successful, revisions were suggested to be made to the Heart of the South West Productivity Strategy, taking the following comments into account, namely:-

(a) the ambition to double the size of the economy in 18 years, involving an annual growth rate of 3.94%, was unrealistic given that the regional annual rate over the last 18 years had been 1.5% and the national growth rate, which had not exceeded 3% in a single year during that period, was now forecast to average less than 1.5% per annum in the next five years;

(b) the early ambitious aim of moving from less than average to above average productivity was not credible since the Strategy lacked the wide range of specific proposals needed to raise productivity across the board and contained little detail on how gaps in higher skills level would be filled;

(c) the Strategy did not adequately address the obstacles to higher than average productivity in sectors with endemic low pay and casual working, like social care and hospitality, which were disproportionately represented in the local economy, by our older than average population, and by under-employment;

(d) the Strategy said little about rural Devon and needed to include the key recommendations of the South West Rural Productivity Commission;

(e) the Strategy did not emphasise sufficiently the shortfall in broadband provision and the radical investment needed if Devon were not to fall further behind other regions;

(f) the Strategy did not provide details of the opportunities of Brexit, which it mentioned, nor did it take account of risks such as a decline in investment due to uncertainty, issues for firms exporting to Europe if the UK was not part of a customs union, and threats to the knowledge element of our economy due to universities losing EU staff and research opportunities;

(g) the Strategy needed to show how Devon would respond to automation and Artificial Intelligence;

(h) the Strategy needed to indicate clear performance indicators through which success could be measured;

(i) the Strategy needed to align more explicitly with the Government's new Industrial Strategy and 'Sector deals' which may provide funding;

(j) the Strategy needed to explain what kind of devolution would help meet aspirations and articulate clear, realistic selling points and questions of Government; and

(k) the Strategy needed to include proposals to bring forward all forms of transport, including rail, which improved accessibility to the Peninsular.

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Communities Strategy

The Committee received the Report of the Chief Officer for Communities, Public Health, Environment and Prosperity on the Communities Strategy for 2017/20 and the Strategy document attached thereto.

The Strategy was intended to help inform how the Council and its services could develop ways of working with communities to develop different approaches and services and to explore local infrastructure to deliver and resource them, as well as supporting and

strengthening other Council and partnership strategies with the aim for Devon to be a place where everyone could live their life well. Its vision was for Devon to have *'Flourishing people and communities that were strong, kind, compassionate and safe'*.

An action plan was currently being prepared, in consultation with District partners, which would contain further details of practical steps to be taken, and this would be shared at a future meeting of the Committee.

* **33** **Treasury Management - Mid Year Report**

The Committee received the Report of the County Treasurer (CT/17/103) on the Treasury Management Mid-year Stewardship 2017/18, which updated on key matters arising from the Council's Treasury and Debt Management activities during the first seven months of the 2017/18 financial year, to enable Members to satisfy themselves that agreed policy had been implemented.

The Report outlined the Borrowing Strategy and its aims for 2017/18 to 2019/20, the implementation of the Borrowing Strategy in 2017/18, analysis of long term debt, Investment Strategy in 2017/18, implementation of the Investment Strategy 2017/18, the current position with the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) (a charge to make provision for the repayment of the authority's external debt and internal borrowing), the Council's compliance with the Prudential Indicators as laid out in the CIPFA Code of Practice, and prospects for 2018/19.

In summary, the Report stated that no long term or short term borrowing had been undertaken to date in 2017/18 and that the expectation was that no new borrowing would be required during the remainder of the 2017/18 financial year; and that investment income was forecast to over-achieve against the budget target of £750,000 in 2017/18.

In response to Members' questions, the County Treasurer undertook to revert to Members to clarify paragraph 7.4 of the Report relating to Borrowing Limits.

RESOLVED that the Treasury Management Mid-Year Report be endorsed and commended to the Cabinet.

* **34** **Eclipse**

The Committee received the Joint Report of the Head of Digital Transformation and Business Support and Chief Officer for Children's Services providing details of the Eclipse case management system for Children's Social Care Services.

The Report explained that OLM, the suppliers of the current management system CareFirst 6, were replacing the system with an improved solution which included the Eclipse management system module, designed around 'model office' processes based on best practice for Children's Social Care and the processes laid out in the statutory guidance *'Working Together to Protect Children'*. The development of the project had provided a number of opportunities around the production and use of data, enabling new reporting systems to be deployed - Power BI and Data Warehousing.

There would be one-off costs of £871,000 of which £123,000 were the system costs for Eclipse and the remaining costs for staffing.

The Committee, in discussion, highlighted points in particular on:

- the new reporting system could be deployed throughout the Council and had greater capability than the CareFirst system;
- difficulty in recruiting to Power BI causing possible delay in the implementation;
- an option for 'buying off the shelf' had been considered, but cost implications were high;

- the project was in development with OLM where user testing had been carried and good feedback received from frontline staff; and
- CareFirst would be used as a back-up system and not be turned off until the new system was live in the new year and operating effectively.

* **35** **Local Policing - Spotlight Review**

The Committee received the Report of the Spotlight Review on the Impact of Changes to Local Policing. The Report considered the potential impact that changes to local policing may have and offered suggested ways forward.

The Report concluded by acknowledging that Devon and Cornwall Police were under growing pressure as a result of funding cuts, increasing crime levels and changing patterns of crime. The importance of working effectively with the public and voluntary sector partners and communities to support common objectives was emphasised.

RESOLVED that the report and recommendations of the Spotlight Review be endorsed and commended to the Cabinet, subject to an additional bullet point at Recommendation 5 to read, *"in partnership with the County Council, push for the powers of Civil Enforcement Officers to be extended, to allow them to deal with static and moving traffic offences"*.

* **36** **Clear Channel Contract Update**

Councillor Asvachin reported that further work was needed to be undertaken on the Member Investigation into the Clear Channel Contract and an update would be provided at a future meeting.

* **37** **Scrutiny Work Programme**

RESOLVED that the following topics be included in the work programme for future consideration:

Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service – performance and achievements;
Library Service – update on externalisation;
Youth Service – update on externalisation;
Community Strategy Action Plan;
Brexit preparations; and
Council's Speed Limit Policy

[NB The Scrutiny Work Programme was available on the Council's website at: <https://new.devon.gov.uk/democracy/committee-meetings/scrutiny-committees/scrutiny-workprogramme/> and the Council/Cabinet Forward Plan was available at: <http://democracy.devon.gov.uk/mgListPlans.aspx?RPId=133&RD=0&bcr=1>]

* **38** **Future Meetings**

Please use link below for County Council Calendar of Meetings:

<http://democracy.devon.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeeld=175>

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

The Meeting started at 2.15 pm and finished at 5.35 pm