

**CORPORATE INFRASTRUCTURE AND REGULATORY SERVICES SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE**

26 November 2019

Present

Councillors A Dewhirst (Chair), P Colthorpe, Y Atkinson, K Ball, J Berry, R Bloxham, J Brook, P Crabb, A Eastman, R Edgell, I Hall, J Hook, R Radford, C Slade and C Whitton

Apologies

Councillors M Shaw

Members attending in accordance with Standing Order 25

Councillor R Croad

\* **152**      **Minutes**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2019 be signed as a correct record.

\* **153**      **Matter of Urgency: Cladding on Buildings**

An item taken under Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972)

The Chair had decided that the Committee should consider, as a matter of urgency, this issue in view of the recent fire at a student accommodation block in Bolton.

The Chair reported that the investigation into the incident in Bolton was still ongoing with the cause of the fire not yet established. Also, although the Government had not required local authorities or housing providers to take any action at this time, the Council had asked its property services provider, NPS SW Ltd, to confirm the Council's understanding that there were not any Council sites with high pressure laminate cladding. Whilst not a housing authority, a fire safety audit was currently in progress on Council sites.

There was concern also for other buildings in Devon such as the University sites in Exeter and Plymouth and it was suggested that an item on Fire Protection of buildings in the whole of Devon be added to the work programme.

\* **154**      **Public Participation**

There were no oral representations from members of the public.

\* **155**      **Scrutiny Work Programme**

The Head of Scrutiny updated Members as to the Work Programme and undertook to share with Members the link to the 5G survey.

The next meeting of the Standing Overview Group would take place on 6 December 2019.

**RESOLVED** that the following be added to the Work Programme:

- Fire protection of buildings in Devon

- Transport Strategy
- Adoption of and construction materials of roads

\* **156** **In-year Services Briefings**

(Councillor Croad attended in accordance with Standing Order 25(1) and spoke to this item at the invitation of the Committee)

(a) Corporate Services

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

The Chief Executive reported in particular:

- an overspend was projected this year – major factors being £1.7 millions of savings identified not being met this year; and forecast overspend in Digital Transformation and Business Support, reflecting the management action still to be delivered; and
- that phase 1 of the new HR management system had gone 'live' yesterday.

(b) Communities, Public Health, Environment and Prosperity

The Committee received the Report of the Chief Officer for Communities, Public Health, Environment and Prosperity (SC/19/3), which provided an in-year briefing on service delivery within Communities, Public Health, Planning, Transportation and Environment and Economy, Enterprise and Skills. Significant areas of activity this year in all services included:

- the School Place planning team had delivered several expansion projects and new schools, also a programme was emerging to provide additional Special School places, building upon current investment strategy;
- formation of the Devon Climate Emergency Response Group, and development of new corporate policy to bring carbon neutral by 2030;
- two new Communities funding streams - Doing What Matters and Making the Connection alongside Crowdfund Devon;
- Active Devon's continuing work with key funder Sport England;
- publication of the new Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy which set priorities relating to health, care and wellbeing from 2020 to 2025;
- the Devon Emergency Planning Partnership now included all the District Councils, Torbay and Plymouth;
- the successful transfer of the Public Health Nursing Staff to the Council in April;
- funding of £175,000 received to expand and support the Suicide Bereavement and Support Service (Pete's Dragon);
- the success of Learn Devon, engaging with 6400 adults and young people over the year;
- successfully facilitated a new University research facility at Exeter Science Park; and
- a new procurement exercise was underway for the delivery of the new broadband services.

(c) Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste

The Committee received the Report of the Chief Officer for Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste (HIW/19/99), which provided an in-year briefing on budget and service delivery.

Particular points of highlight in discussion with Members and Officers included:

- that the service was forecasting an underspend of £402,000 at Month 6;
- the rapid escalation of Ash dieback and the campaign through Devon's Ash Dieback Resilience Forum and Devon's Communications Team to encourage landowners to check their trees;
- Marsh Barton station planning work still continuing with a hoped-for construction in 2021;
- welcome data showing that waste recycling rates had increased to 56%;
- the successful 'Keep an eye on food waste' roadshows held across Devon that provided helpful tips and advice on reducing food waste;
- that due consideration should be given to diversion routes for pedestrians and cyclists when permit works were undertaken; and
- that a summary of activity in the previous 3 months of civil parking enforcement would be added to the highways performance dashboard.

**\* 157      Treasury Management Stewardship Mid-year Report**

The Committee received the Report of the County Treasurer (CT/19/117) on the Treasury Management Mid-Year Stewardship 2019/20, which updated on key matters arising from the Council's Treasury and Debt Management activities during the first seven months of the 2019/20 financial year; to enable Members to satisfy themselves that agreed policy had been implemented.

The Report outlined the Borrowing Strategy and its aims for 2019/20 - 2021/22, the implementation of the Borrowing Strategy in 2019/20, Analysis of long term debt, Investment Strategy, Implementation of the Investment Strategy 2019/20, 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 2020/21.

In summary, the Report stated that no long term or short-term borrowing had been undertaken to date in 2019/20 and the expectation was that no new borrowing would be required during the remainder of the 2019/20 financial year; and that investment income at the end of October stood at around £1.5 million compared to the budget target for the year of £1.6 million.

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

**\* 158      Food Banks and Root Causes**

The Committee received the Report of the Chief officer for Communities, Public Health, Environment and Prosperity (SC/19/4) which gave Members a short summary of the local and national context around food banks and how they operate, together with a summary of recent academic and policy research around why people are referred to and utilise food banks today.

The report highlighted that the causes behind people accessing food banks were various and complex, as were the wider causes of hunger and poverty. The Trussell Trust were the largest food bank network both in the UK and in Devon and their research and local experiences had significantly contributed to the preparation of the Report.

It was noted that food banks had over the last 20 years become a valuable and often vital addition to the lives of people and communities across Devon and the UK. Communities and voluntary sector organisations in Devon, supported by millions of pounds of donations from individuals and thousands of hours in volunteer time, had developed a vibrant and flexible network of food banks and only time would tell how this would continue to respond to evolving

demands and how any root causes were addressed by successive societal, economic and political cycles.

Discussion points with Members and Officers included:

- the number of children in Devon living in poverty and the impact that welfare reforms has had;
- the Head of Scrutiny undertook to circulate to Members a previous scrutiny task group report which looked at the introduction of Universal Credit; and
- that access to information on poverty was needed to inform policies and the Head of Communities undertook to obtain further data from the Trussell Trust and report back to a future meeting.

\* **159      Food Waste Spotlight Review**

The Committee considered the Report of the Food Waste Spotlight Review and the recommendations contained therein. Members expressed their thanks to all those involved in the production of the report.

Members particularly highlighted the statement that 'any bag' could be used in the food waste collection bins.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Dewhirst, **SECONDED** by Councillor Hall and

**RESOLVED** that the Spotlight Review Report and recommendations be commended to the Cabinet.

\* **160      Highways Winter Service: Progress on Task Group Recommendations**

The Committee received the Report of the Chief Officer for Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste (HIW/19/100) which gave an update on the Council's work regarding the recommendations made by the Highways Winter Service Task Group, presented to the Committee on 26 March 2019. Members noted the progress against recommendations as set out in the Appendix to the Report.

The Highways Winter Service had taken on board the recommendations of the task group and had sought to progress many areas as part of their summer review and would continue to develop communications and publicity over the coming winter period.

\* **161      Highways Performance Dashboard**

The Committee received the Report of the Chief Officer for Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste (HIW/19/101) on the Highways Performance Dashboard, which provided an overview of performance on key seasonal aspects of delivery, namely winter preparations, cyclical works; carriageway safety defects; and progress on the Doing What Matters work.

The Chief Officer reported that latest figures showed there had been 167mm of rainfall in October this year, compared to just 63mm last October.

Members noted that although gully emptying was not as far advanced as was hoped, it was still anticipated to complete on programme.

\* **162      Problem Gambling - Approval of letter (Minute \*149/26 September 2019)**

The Committee considered a draft letter to be sent to central government condemning gambling and gambling associated harm as resolved at the last Committee meeting.

CORPORATE INFRASTRUCTURE AND REGULATORY SERVICES SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE  
26/11/19

Members discussed the phraseology and tone of the letter and it was agreed that the Head of Scrutiny would circulate a revised letter to Members for their consideration.

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

The Meeting started at 2.15 pm and finished at 5.37 pm