

**CORPORATE INFRASTRUCTURE AND REGULATORY SERVICES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

27 January 2022

Present

Councillors A Dewhirst (Chair), C Slade (Vice-Chair), M Asvachin, J Berry, J Brook, P Bullivant, R Chesterton, P Crabb, M Hartnell, J Hodgson, J Morrish, I Roome and J Wilton-Love

Apologies

Councillors R Radford

Members attending in accordance with Standing Order 25

Councillor S Hughes

* **28** **Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There was no matter raised as a matter of urgency.

* **29** **Public Participation**

There were no oral representations from members of the public.

* **30** **Scrutiny Work Programme**

The Head of Scrutiny updated the Committee as follows:

- The first meeting of the Loneliness Task Group would take place on 25 February and Members were still welcome to volunteer their involvement.
- The next Masterclass on Utility Companies would take place on 14 March.
- A Spotlight Review on Moving Traffic Offences would be established once Government guidance had been considered.

It was **RESOLVED** that Safety of Women at Night be added to the Work Programme, with Councillor Atkinson as project lead.

* **31** **COVID-19 update**

The Council's Chief Executive updated the Committee on the current position within Devon relating to the Covid-19 pandemic as follows:

Prevalence

- As of yesterday, Devon had 940 cases per 100,000 population in the last 7 days, compared to an English average of 995 cases, with higher cases in Torbay and Plymouth of 1266 and 1064 respectively.
- Last week cases in Devon increased by 25%, with significant cases seen in most age groups, driven primarily by unvaccinated primary age school pupils, although rates were lower in the over 60s.
- As of yesterday, the number of patients in hospital with Covid was 270 across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay.
- Of those 270 patients, only 3 were in intensive treatment units, likely due to the high vaccination rates within Devon.

Vaccination

- Over 90% of the eligible population had had their booster vaccination.
- There was still work to do in encouraging the younger age group to be vaccinated.

Impact

- The expected disruption to public services feared at the start of the year had not so far happened, but the virus was still there and caution was advised.

Care homes

- As of yesterday, there were 20 significant outbreaks in care homes, including 13 in the Devon County Council area, an increase of 5 in the last week.

Resilience

- Message to staff was to continue to be circumspect for the next few weeks to keep services resilient, with a phased return hopefully during the Spring as the incidence of the virus reduced.

Members' questions and discussion included how staff may work in the future and the Chief Executive explained that following surveys, around 80% of staff would choose to continue working in the way they currently were with increased flexible working, and only 10% wished for a return to the office. Considering that a lot of large private and public sector organisations were moving towards a hybrid model, the Council was looking at its policies to continue to be an attractive organisation to work for. There were many issues to be considered.

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive for the briefing.

* 32

Treasury Management & Investment Strategy 2022/23

The Committee received the Report of the Director of Finance (DF/22/05) on the proposed Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2022/23 financial year, prepared in accordance with the revised Treasury Management Policy Statement and revised CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management, to be submitted to the Cabinet and the County Council for ratification following consideration by this Committee.

The Strategy set out the minimum revenue policy (MRP); capital expenditure funding; prudential indicators; the current treasury position; debt and investments; prospects for interest rates; the borrowing strategy; and the investment strategy. The key issues for 2022/23 were set out in the Overview section of the Report.

Following discussion and In response to Members' questions and comments, the Director of Finance undertook to provide information on the affordable housing element included within the investment portfolio and details on the devaluation of the shares in Exeter Science Park Ltd.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Brook, **SECONDED** by Councillor Dewhurst and

RESOLVED that the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2022/23 be endorsed and commended to the Cabinet.

* 33

Rural Road Safety

(Councillor Hughes 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 Planning, Transportation and Environment (PTE/22/7) which provided a briefing to Members on rural road safety in Devon, with appendices that provided relevant data.

The Council had a large road network of almost 8000 miles, 7000 miles of which was rural. Over 6000 miles of the rural network was comprised of the more minor C-Class and Unclassified roads. Within the Council area, more road deaths, serious injuries and slight injuries occurred rurally than on urban routes.

As a local highway authority, the Council had a statutory duty under the Road Traffic Act 1998 to carry out studies into accidents arising out of the use of vehicles and, in the light of those studies, to take such measures to prevent such accidents. In performing this duty, the Council maintained records for all recorded road collisions across the authority and undertook a comprehensive annual review process.

Vision Zero South West (VZSW) was a regional road safety partnership for Devon and Cornwall, incorporating the combined local authority areas of Devon, Cornwall, Plymouth and Torbay, and regional trunk road routes managed by National Highways. Its current objective was to reduce killed and serious injuries by 50% by 2030 and to cut killed and serious injuries to zero by 2040.

Members' questions and comments included:

- Awareness of recent changes to the Highway Code – following Government approval, it was confirmed that a press release would be issued.
- VZSW were making considerable investment into the capability of road enforcement, including public awareness activities to improve road user behaviour.
- The value of Community Speed Watch.
- Officers agreed to provide Members with further information on VZSW's five year financial plan.
- That VZSW Five Pillars of action should refer not to Safer Roads, but to Safer Routes that included pedestrians and cyclists, which would encourage behaviour change.
- Accident statistics came from the Police central database and, although data could be provided from Council records on accidents involving people with disabilities, it would not be as comprehensive as that collected from the Police.
- Current in-year data was not official until published by the Department of Transport, but in-year data was used by the enforcement teams and as intelligence for the behavioural change initiative.
- Updated interactive dashboard links on the A and B road route performance analysis shown at Appendix 6 of the Report would be made available for local Members to interrogate.
- Members welcomed the offer from Officers to attend local Highways and Traffic Orders Committees to demonstrate the information available from the interactive dashboard links.

The Chair thanked Officers for the informative report.

* **34** **Highways Performance Dashboard**

(Councillor Hughes 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 Chief Officer for Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste (HIW/22/3) on the Highways Performance Dashboard, which provided an overview of the performance of Devon Highways in the following areas:

- Network condition
- Reactive works including potholes and drainage cleaning
- Winter service

In discussion, Members' questions and comments included:

- It was clarified that the graphs on page 69 of the Report provided information from area depots, rather than from the political areas.

- The Council had four Dragon Patchers that were working across the whole of County, contributing to the reduction in potholes and the improvement in the road condition indicator.
- It was explained that generally rural gullies were attended on an annual basis and urban ones every three years, as part of a cyclic programme, with known problem locations attended more frequently. In addition, a reactive service was also provided.

The Chief Officer undertook to provide Members with numbers of potholes filled and patching completed.

* 35

Standing Overview Group - Climate Change

The Committee received the report from the meeting of the Climate Change Standing Overview Group held on 17 January 2022, which highlighted key points discussed and agreed action.

Members' discussion included concern for the rurality of Devon and a desire to understand to what extent challenges in Devon had been considered. The Committee agreed with the suggestion that the Climate Assembly be approached to ascertain if a socioeconomic impact assessment had been conducted, and to explore this in a future Standing Overview Group.

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

RESOLVED that the report be accepted as an accurate record of the meeting held and that the outlined actions raised during discussion, including the addition of the highlighted issues of concern, be endorsed and added to the future work programme.

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

The Meeting started at 2.15 pm and finished at 4.38 pm