

**CORPORATE INFRASTRUCTURE AND REGULATORY SERVICES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

30 January 2023

Present:-

Councillors A Dewhirst (Chair), C Slade (Vice-Chair), M Asvachin, Y Atkinson, J Berry, J Brook, P Bullivant, R Chesterton, M Hartnell, I Roome and J Trail BEM

Attending in Accordance with Standing Order 25

Councillor Croad (remote)

Apologies:-

Councillors P Crabb, J Hodgson, R Radford and J Wilton-Love

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Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2022 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

There were no oral representations from Members of the Public.

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Covid Update

The Director of Public Health updated the Committee on COVID -19. He referred to:

- the 3 year anniversary today since the WHO announced that C-19 was a public health emergency;
- recorded rates nationally and locally had risen prior to Christmas and had now reduced;
- the expectation that with the coming Spring, rates may reduce, but caution should continue to be exercised as it appeared that a new omicron sub variant in the USA was more transmissible. It was present in the UK but at a low level currently;

- the Vaccines continued to be a key tool in reducing severity and hospitalisations; and
- the JVCI was recommending an Autumn vaccine programme (2023) for vulnerable groups and again in the Spring (2024) for the more vulnerable.

Members noted that as there was no testing regime most would not be recorded or know that they had been infected.

Details were included on the County Council's live demonstration:

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) dashboard - Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) \(devon.gov.uk\)](https://www.devon.gov.uk/coronavirus)

The information related to all of Devon (including Torbay and Plymouth).

* **91** **Scrutiny Work Programme**

The Head of Scrutiny updated the Committee on the work programme:

- current reviews in relation to Motorhomes; Cost of Living; and replacement of the FINEST finance system were scheduled to report to the next meeting; and
- a Masterclass on the bus network was being arranged for April; and the annual refresh of the work programme would also be arranged shortly.

The Work programme was available at Scrutiny Work Programme - Democracy in Devon: [Scrutiny Work Programme - Democracy in Devon](#)

* **92** **Food Insecurity and Response to Household Support**

(Councillor R Croad attended in accordance with Standing Order 25 and spoke as the Cabinet Member for Public Health, Communities and Equality).

The Committee considered the Report of the Head of Communities (SC/23/1) Food Insecurity and Response to Household Support, a second report since the last full report on this issue in November 2021. The Council, as part of its Strategic Plan 2021-25, had highlighted the need to work in partnership to help tackle poverty and support people that were experiencing hardship.

The Report updated the Committee on progress made to date in this arena and covered a definition of 'food insecurity'; Understanding and Learning in Partnership, current quantitative and qualitative research, the Household Support Fund (HSF), community resilience (capacity and capability building) and use of locality budgets by Members; wider strategic work and The HAF (Holiday Activity & Food) Programme and the role of NHS Devon via the Integrated Care Partnership for example.

Details of these gateways and the wider support available on the Council's website: [Cost of living | Help and advice for people in Devon | Devon County Council](#)

The Council continued to work with a range of partners on the long-term opportunities to understand, learn and develop practice and approaches, alongside the equally important short-term immediate distribution of direct support from funds such as the Household Support Grant and community resilience building enablers, such as the GCF. Over the next 12 months the County Council would continue to help deliver the initiatives described in the Report in partnership with other agencies and Team Devon principles.

Members' questions and discussion points with the Head of Communities, and Communities Collaboration and Resilience Lead included:

- the need to prioritise those hard to reach groups for additional available support and the valuable work of the CAB in this area to help people maximise their benefit entitlements;
- the various groups/segments of the community in need of support including working households and on which more information would be provided for Members;
- the operation of the Growing Communities Fund on which more information was available at: [Growing Communities Fund - Communities \(devon.gov.uk\)](#)
- the operation of the Household Support Fund funded by the DWP which included direct help for children who received free school meals for food vouchers during school holidays and the efforts of Schools to identify more eligible children;
- the ways used by the DWP in identifying households in need via Council tax information for example,
- the separate provision and support for asylum seekers; and
- the view in regard to the complex systems of various forms of support available for vulnerable families; and
- arrangements for a Food Security Summit in Spring 2023 via the Devon Food Partnership to connect a range of partner organisations with an interest in Food Insecurity.

The Chair thanked the Officers for their report and responses to members questions.

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

RESOLVED that the convening of a Food Summit in 2023 with other agencies/partners be welcomed and that Member (s) from this Committee be invited to attend.

* **93** **Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2023/24**

The Committee considered the Report of the Director of Finance and Public Value (DF/23/06) on a treasury strategy, setting out the strategy and plans to be followed in the coming year, as part of the budget process. The proposed Treasury Management Strategy for 2023/24 was set out at Appendix 1 of the Report.

The Treasury Management and Investment Strategy set out the minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy, 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 2023/24 were set out in the Strategy Overview section and included:

(a) Consideration of the need for prudent management of the Council's cash resources in order to support the capital strategy and meet the Council's strategic priorities.

(b) The inclusion of external borrowing to fund the proposed South Devon Freeport development.

(c) The pressure on the Council's cash resources and continued uncertainty around the Safety Valve in relation to Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND), which might result in a further requirement for external borrowing.

(d) The potential for higher investment income resulting from the increased level of interest rates.

In general, the investment strategy remained broadly similar to that for 2022/23, with no changes, for example, to the approved counterparty criteria.

The Treasury Management and Investment Strategy would be considered by Cabinet along with the draft budget for 2023/24 on 10 February, and become part of the budget book to be approved by Council at its budget meeting on 16 February.

Members' discussion points with the Head of Investments included the strategy for lending (to other local authorities for example); and the current level of the SEND budget deficit and future uncertainties in this area.

Members commended the continued prudent approach inherent in the updated Strategy, as recommended by the Officers.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor J Brook and **SECONDED** by Councillor A Dewhirst and

RESOLVED that the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy as updated be commended to the Cabinet.

* 94 **Report of the Standing Overview Group: Farming/Waste Management**

The Committee received and noted the Report of the Committee's Climate Change Standing Overview Group meeting of 25 October 2022

The Report outlined the topics covered at the meeting of 25 October 2022, which covered the Socioeconomic impacts of climate change on the farming sector; and the carbon impact of Waste Management. The report highlighted the key points raised during discussion and detailed the agreed actions.

* 95 **Information Previously Circulated**

The Committee noted the list of information previously circulated to Members since the last meeting, relating to topical developments which had or were currently being considered by this Scrutiny Committee:

(a) Information following a Masterclass on Active Travel;

(b) Risk Registers for the respective Scrutiny Committees.

(c) Highways Performance Dashboard – Briefing Note

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

The Meeting started at 2.15 pm and finished at 3.44 pm