

**CORPORATE INFRASTRUCTURE AND REGULATORY SERVICES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

25 March 2021

Present:-

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

Apologies:-

Councillors J Berry, R Bloxham and R Radford

Members attending in accordance with Standing Order 25:-

Councillors Croad, Gilbert, Hosking and Hughes

* 220

Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the two meetings held on 28 January 2021 be signed as correct records.

* 221

Items Requiring Urgent Attention

There was no matter raised as a matter of urgency.

* 222

Public Participation

There were no oral representations from members of the public.

* 223

Scrutiny Work Programme

The Head of Scrutiny updated the Committee as to the suggested work programme for the new Council.

Armed Forces Covenant

The Committee noted the Reference from Council, "to ask the Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee to consider the issues in more depth, building on its previous task group work relating to the Armed Forces Covenant". The former Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee had previously undertaken a task group on the Armed Forces Covenant in 2012, which had been recognised as good practice.

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

RESOLVED that the future Scrutiny Committee consider the Armed Forces Covenant in more depth, building on its previous task group work.

* **224** **COVID-19 update**

(Councillors Dewhirst and Hall declared personal interests in this item by virtue of being a proprietor of a touring park in Devon and a member of a Mental Health Charity in Axminster respectively.)

The Council's Chief Executive updated the Committee on the current position within Devon relating to the Covid-19 pandemic, which included the following:

Prevalence & Impact:

- As of yesterday, Devon's rate was 15.7 cases per 100,000 population which was the lowest incidence of any local authority in mainland England.
- Over the course of the pandemic, cumulative figures as of last Friday of individuals who had had positive Covid-19 tests was 19,727, and unfortunately 660 deaths.
- As of Friday, 48 hospital beds were occupied by Covid patients in the county, compared to January's peak of around 300.
- There were currently 14 Covid outbreaks in care homes, however, it was noted that Devon had the lowest rate nationally for such outbreaks.

Vaccination and Testing:

- Devon was the leading region in vaccinations at 58.2% of the adult population compared to a national average of 58%.
- 94% of care home residents had been vaccinated, with 85% of staff having received a first dose.
- More than 100,000 tests were taking place a week in the county.

Schools:

- There had been low instances of positive cases in the secondary school age population.

Organisation:

- Working with Public Health England on infection control; and engaging with district and other colleagues in managing the recovery for the region, recognising the impact on children and young people, of mental health and of domestic violence and abuse.
- There continued to be a focus on staff wellbeing and discussions around different ways of working in the future.
- There had not been any overspend in relation to Covid resources in any service area.

The Committee wished to put on record its appreciation and gratitude to all those involved in the health and care services at this time.

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive for his attendance and update.

* 225 **Connecting Devon & Somerset (CDS) Update**

(Councillor Gilbert 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 Economy, Enterprise and Skills (EES/21/1), which provided an update on the mobilisation of the new contracts signed by CDS, existing contracts and the overall picture of broadband services across Devon and Somerset. An additional 56,000 premises would be capable of connecting to a full fibre service by the end of 2024 under the new contracts.

The Report update covered the New Contracts, Mobilisation of new Airband contracts, Openreach and Airband Live Contracts Update, Coverage Picture for Devon and the Programme area, Opportunities to extend coverage, and Mobile Boost.

The CDS programme had successfully secured a capital grant of £1 million from the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to deliver a mobile boost programme, which was now up and running and aimed to upgrade 4G mobile phone coverage within homes and businesses, and offered vouchers worth £800 which covered the majority of the cost of the equipment and installation.

As to the remaining numbers of premises that could not be connected by 2024 (around 17,000), it was noted that possible options to address this was through the voucher programme; that a bid was being made for £8 million funding from the LEP; and close working continued with the Government's Building Digital UK around the Gigabit programme.

The Committee welcomed the positive report.

* 226 **Devon County Council Carbon Reduction Plan**

The Committee received the Report of the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment (PTE/21/17) as the Chair of the Environmental Performance Board, which updated Scrutiny on the Council's carbon reduction targets, its Carbon Reduction Plan and progress in meeting those targets, with further details in the Appendices attached.

In February 2019 the Council declared a climate emergency and the Devon Climate Emergency project was formed in May that year with partners from across the county. The 27 partners prepared the Devon Climate Declaration which required its signatories to review their plans (within six months) to reduce their own organisation's carbon emissions.

The Council had met its obligations to review its carbon emissions having signed the Devon Climate Declaration and performance was currently ahead of target.

Discussion points included:

- Priority had been in getting best value for money for carbon reduction.
- £5.8 million had been offered through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme for 10 building refurbishments, in addition to the building refurbishments in the Plan.
- Employee commuting had not been taken into account, but could be for the future.
- New schools had to be built to Government guidelines, which was a minimum of Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating B, but the Council regularly exceeded these, e.g. Loddiswell Primary was EPC rating A+.
- Virtual working during the past year had reduced the Council's carbon footprint from business travel by about 50%.

* **227** **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/21/27) on the Highways Performance Dashboard, which provided an overview of performance on key seasonal aspects of delivery, namely Winter service; Reactive works including potholes and drainage cleaning; Delivery of planned works; Doing What Matters – Defects; and Divestment of Skanska Infrastructure Services.

The Chief Officer reported that the number of potholes was 14% down compared to the same period last year; and that the formal novation of the Highways maintenance contract from Skanska to Milestone Infrastructure Services had been deferred to the beginning of May 2021.

The Committee welcomed the report.

* **228** **Commissioning Liaison Member Role Review**

The Committee considered the Commissioning Liaison Member Role Review, which was being presented to all three Scrutiny Committees, recommending that the role continue.

The Chair thanked the current Commissioning Liaison Members for their hard work and dedication to the role.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Atkinson, **SECONDED** by Councillor Ball and

RESOLVED

- (a) that the new Council continues the role of electing one or two Commissioning Liaison Members for each Scrutiny Committee; and
- (b) that Cabinet review the approach to strategic commissioning to create opportunities to embed the value driven principles of carbon reduction and creation of social value in all commissioning activity.

* 229 **Standing Overview Group - Climate Change**

The Committee received the notes from the Climate Change Standing Overview Group held on 9 March 2021.

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

The Meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 1.47 pm