

**CORPORATE INFRASTRUCTURE AND REGULATORY SERVICES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

27 June 2024

Present:-

Councillors F Letch MBE (Chair), C Slade (Vice-Chair), Y Atkinson, J Brook, A Dewhurst, R Radford, D Sellis, J Trail BEM and J Wilton-Love*

*(P Crabb – non-voting, virtual attendance)

Apologies:-

Councillors J Berry, R Chesterton, J Hodgson, M Squires and D Thomas

Members attending in accordance with Standing Order 25

Councillors R Croad, S Hughes and C Leaver.

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Declarations of Interest

No declarations were received, over and above the other registrable interests of Councillors of Devon County Council, arising from membership of City, Town or Parish Councils and other Local Authorities.

[✘ A list of county councillors who are also district, borough, city, parish or town councillors](#)

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Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2024 be signed as a correct record.

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Public Participation

There were no oral representations from Members of the Public.

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Scrutiny Work Programme

The Head of Scrutiny updated the Committee as to the work programme including that it was planned to hold a further session of the Standing Overview Group (SOG) in September 2024 and report back to this Committee, should Members be minded to approve the SOG report when considered on today's agenda.

* **170** **Future Delivery Model for Highways Maintenance Service**

The Cabinet Member for Highways Management introduced the Report of the Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport (CET/24/44), regarding the County Council's Highway Term Maintenance Contract with Milestone Infrastructure which was due to terminate in March 2027 with no options to further extend the contract. The current contract through which the Council commissioned routine, reactive, emergency and some planned highway maintenance work, started in April 2017 and over its 10 years had had a value of over £400 million, being one of the largest contracts the County Council commissioned.

Following consultation and assessment in line with national guidance, the Report invited Members to consider 5 short listed Delivery Model options to deliver the highway maintenance service beyond March 2027 and to advise Cabinet of Members' ranking of the most important attributes of a Future Delivery Model for the Highway Maintenance Service. However, Members wished to look at the delivery models and attributes alongside an outline business case (detailing costs including TUPE, pensions, reactive work components; savings; full market effects, shareholder dividends, value for money, tax and other issues included in the risks and opportunities analysis), to understand the wider implications associated.

The Committee heard from Dorset Council and Torbay Council Officers (both unitary authorities), briefly summarising their respective models. Whilst these experiences were helpful, Members also recognised that Devon County Council (two tier authority) had one of the largest road networks in England to maintain.

Other Member comments and discussion included:-

-Members generally concurred with the order of importance of attributes listed at Appendix 4 to the Report, but wished to review this further alongside outline budgeted delivery model options;

-feasibility/desirability of bringing services back in house;

-desire for a good level of control by the County Council (including over work undertaken by utility companies) and improved central-local communications on works;

-desire to achieve best value (risk/reward) given the finite budget for repair/revenue works;

-desire to use more local, smaller companies where appropriate;

-need to improve the condition of the network (e.g. A and B roads);

-consideration of narrowing down model options for analysis, by not undertaking further work on the Joint Venture option;

-public perception/expectation; and

-flexibility to carry out additional work when at a site (e.g. potholes) where appropriate.

The Cabinet Member for Highways Management advised that in light of the above, he was content for this matter to be considered at a later Cabinet meeting (e.g. October or November 2024), to give this Committee time to consider the matter in further detail and present its views to Cabinet;

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

RESOLVED: that a further report be brought to this Committee's next meeting on an outline business case, prior to consideration by Cabinet (detailing costs including TUPE, pensions, reactive work components; savings; full market effects, shareholder dividends, value for money, tax and other issues included in the risks and opportunities analysis), for the respective delivery models options and for the further consideration of attributes.

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Motorhomes Task Group - Update on Recommendations

The Cabinet Member for Highways Management introduced the Report of the Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport (CET/24/45), regarding progress on actions agreed at Cabinet (on 12 April 2023) following the Motorhomes Task Group Report (23 March 2023) which aimed to support motorhome visitors, but also take accounts of residents' views. Work would continue to both welcome and manage motorhome visitors, alongside the District Councils to achieve a more consistent approach across Devon's authorities and restrictions applied where necessary, with clear, fair and robust enforcement as appropriate.

In response to Members' comments, it was noted that the Task Group had considered a range of issues which were generally more prevalent in coastal communities (including instances of overnight parking and inconsiderate parking), as well as long term parking of/living in motorhomes. Any measures aimed to balance against effects on the Devon tourism economy.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Letch, **SECONDED** by Councillor Trail and

RESOLVED: that the progress on actions as agreed at Cabinet on 12 April 2023 (following the report from the Motorhomes Task Group to this Committee on 23 March 2023), be welcomed.

(note: There was a short adjournment taken after this debate).

* **172** **Devon Preventing Serious Violence Strategy 2024-29**

The Cabinet Member for Public Health, Communities and Equality introduced the Report of the Director of Public Health, Communities and Prosperity (SC24/03) regarding progress towards delivery of this Devon wide strategy. This was a multiagency mechanism for delivering activities in relation to its statutory Duty on behalf of all specified authorities, with focus on delivering the plan in 2024/25.

Members' discussion and comments included:-

- welcoming the work on this important strategy;
- supporting children (including younger and adolescents) and families via family hub and Early Help and other routes;
- research into impact of trauma/shame on violence/abusive behaviours, together with trauma informed practice;
- identifying and supporting children affected by familial imprisonment/offending;
- research into breaking intergenerational cycles of harmful behaviour; and
- multi-agency working with health and other bodies.

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

RESOLVED:

(a) that this Committee supports and commends the Devon wide Preventing Serious Violence Strategy and welcomes progress made towards delivery; and

(b) that a briefing update on the delivery of the Strategy be brought to this Committee in 9 months.

* **173** **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - Annual Report**

The Cabinet Member for Public Health, Communities and Equality introduced the Report of the Director Legal and Democratic Services (LDS/24/01) on the good progress made in meeting EDI Objectives, launching a new EDI action plan, 6 monthly key achievements and performance data 2023/24, performing well when benchmarked. Some 83% equality actions were now completed or well in progress. The County Council remained committed to its EDI work programme and demonstrating its cost effectiveness and impact.

Members were pleased to learn of Devon's progress and enquired about Member EDI training completion rates, with data presented referring to staff completion only.

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

RESOLVED: that EDI achievements to date be acknowledged, in particular progress of the Race Equality Action Plan in responding to the Race Equality Audit 2020 and integration of race equality actions into a broader action plan.

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Locality Budgets

The Committee considered the Report of the Director of Public Health, Communities and Prosperity (SC24/02) regarding the annual statement for audit and monitoring purposes, summarising the allocations approved by Members to respond to local needs within electoral divisions supporting projects or activities that benefit local people and communities.

2023/24 funds had remained within budget, with 2024/24 grant fund increasing from £5000 to £8000 per Member, with a total of £627,069 (including carry forward) for 2024/25 projects.

Member comments included:-

-noting individual Members' spending data was available; and

-welcoming the work of Devon's Locality Officers.

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

RESOLVED: that the Council's Party Group Leaders be requested to ask all Members to make full use of their community budgets to benefit Devon's local people and communities.

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Treasury Management Stewardship Annual Report 2023/24

The Committee considered the Report of the Director of Finance and Public Value (DPF/24/65) regarding the 2023/24 Treasury Management outturn position, reviewing performance and key matters arising from the county Council's Treasury and Debt Management activities 2023/24.

Long term external debt was reduced by £46.5 million during 2023/24, with three LOBO (Lender Option Borrower Option) loans repaid in full without incurring a premium. This was facilitated by undertaking short term borrowing, which should all be repaid by the end of 2024.

Investment income of £7.947 million was achieved in 2023/24 against a full year budget of £3.75 million. This represented a return of 4.53% including the Property Fund investment and made a positive contribution towards the Authority's revenue outturn position. Successful prudent management of the Council's short-term cash reserves has delivered a surplus of just under £4.2 million for the 2023/24 financial year.

Cash balances going forward into 2024/25 were at a lower level than for many years, partly as a result of the repayment of external debt. However, the

Safety Valve agreement with the Department for Education should reduce the risk of a further erosion of cash balances. The requirement for future external borrowing to fund the Authority's capital programme would be kept under review.

Members' discussion and comments included:-

-requesting detail of Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) loans value and maturity dates (next due wef 2027 onwards), noting Officer ongoing actions to ensure appropriate and timely measures;

-noting the close operation and monitoring of the DfE Safety Valve funding to ensure Devon met the DfE's ongoing funding targets and resulting effects on County Council cash balances.

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

RESOLVED:- that the 2023/24 Treasury Management outturn position Report (DPF/24/65) be commended to Cabinet.

* 176 **Future Finance Project - Standing Overview Group Meeting, 9 May 2024**

The Committee considered the Report of the Director Legal and Democratic Services (LDS/24/26), on progress with the project's implementation, following successful and compliant procurement process. Following completion of the design and build phases, the integrated system testing was nearing completion, and moves towards user acceptance testing, data migration underway. Integration of the finance with other Council systems were being fully tested before user acceptance testing, with the project on track for phase 1 to go live in August 2024 and further phases planned thereafter.

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

RESOLVED:-

(a) that the SOG report be accepted as an accurate record of the meeting ensuring transparency in scrutiny activities; and

(b) that a further session of the Standing Overview Group be held in September 2024.

* 177 **Future Meetings**

Please use link below for County Council Calendar of Meetings:
<http://democracy.devon.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeed=175>
Next meeting: Wednesday 25 September at 10.30am.

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

The Meeting started at 10.30 am and finished at 1.15 pm