

WEST DEVON OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE



West Devon
Borough
Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **West Devon Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Tuesday, 13th February, 2024** at **2.00 pm** at the **Chamber - Kilworthy Park**

Present: **Councillors:**

Chairman Cllr Kimber
Vice Chairman Cllr Johnson

Cllr Calder	Cllr Casbolt
Cllr Elliott	Cllr Guthrie
Cllr Mann	Cllr Saxby
Cllr Southcott	Cllr Squire
Cllr Vachon	Cllr Viney
Cllr Wakeham	Cllr West

In attendance:

Councillors:

Cllr Daniel	Cllr Edmonds
Cllr Ewings	Cllr Renders

Officers:

Director Customer Services and Delivery
Director Strategy and Governance
Senior Leisure Contracts Manager
Senior Democratic Services Support Officer
Senior Environmental Health Officer
Community Safety Partnership
SW Regional Manager- Fusion
Centre Manager Meadowlands – Fusion
Sports & Development Manager – Fusion
Head of Devon Building Control Partnership

24. **Apologies for Absence**
***O&S 24/23**
Apologies for absence for this meeting were received from Cllr A Blackman
25. **Confirmation of Minutes**
***O&S 25/23**
The minutes of the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 16 January 2024 were confirmed as a true and correct record
26. **Declarations of Interest**
***O&S 26/23**
There were no declarations of interest.
27. **Public Forum**
***O&S 27/23**
The Chairman confirmed that no formal requests had been received in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.
28. **Leisure Contract - Fusion Annual Report 2023**
***O&S 28/23**
The Senior Leisure Contracts Manager introduced the report and passed over to the Regional Manager for Fusion to give his presentation. During this he highlighted;
- Nationally recovery rates from attendance since the Covid pandemic were lower than before the pandemic, however Meadowlands and Parklands were doing slightly better than the national rate.
 - Accountancy period had changed to a 15 month year reporting to councils.
 - Children in Care Scheme developed in partnership with Fusion and the Council
 - Café launched in Meadowlands and Parklands to launch in February 2024
 - Wet and Wild swimming pool sessions returned to Meadowlands
 - Staff internally promoted into new management roles and enrolled on management training courses to ensure continuity
 - NPS scores – anything under an 8/10 is deemed a non-positive score. Changing rooms and facilities often score low across the leisure industry, however it does not make them complacent.
 - Swimming lessons were the quickest recovery group since covid with a growth of 160%.
 - Recruitment in leisure has been a struggle.
 - Sports and Community Development work with OCRA working with schools, the holiday programme and fitness festivals.
 - Pilot scheme with the PCN and Okehampton Medical Practice to provide a non-gym based class in the college.
 - Sporting Academy for talented athletes to access the centres free of charge.

- Outreach to local communities to find out what is required.
- Challenge with increase in National Minimal Wage.
- Car parking fees seen as a deterrent by users.

A Member thanked the staff at both centres for being so positive and welcoming on the visits to the centres by members of the O&S Committee recently. They were impressed with the café at Meadowlands and felt it drew people into the centre. The Director of Customer Services and Delivery said the authority was successful on gaining some funding to decarbonise the leisure centres even further. This would fund the feasibility studies. Then a bid would be put in for further funding to carry out the work

Another Member commented on the need for Parklands to be painted internally and externally to make it more appealing to users. The signage to Parklands needed to be improved. The Manager of Meadowlands confirmed the dome and entrance canopy were to be cleaned during March. The Regional Manager stated there was a discussion to be had with the Council on car parking charges. Repairs on equipment was questioned by a Member as taking a long time. The Manager of Meadowlands stated that having changed suppliers to a more local firm the repairs were being completed much quicker. The Regional Manager would look into the slow response time from reception staff at Parklands. There would be closer working with health care providers to engage with those who could make use of the centres who currently are not. Looking to partners in communities to work with. Outreach officers would look to advertise in local newsletters

The Manager of Meadowlands stated that several schools were lost for swimming sessions when the centre closed for 4-5 weeks for repair work. He had managed to gain four of these schools back and was working on others. The Regional Manager explained that the programme of swimming teacher training, lifeguard training and front line staff training was in place so that when the services and programmes grow there are staff in place.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the contents and progress of Fusion's Annual Report for 2023 and proposals for 2024;

The Committee would review the pricing and timings of car parking fees at Meadowlands (Wharf Car Park).

29. **South Devon and Dartmoor Community Safety Partnership**
***O&S 29/23**

The Leader of the Council introduced the report to Members.

It was stated that through bidding for funding from the Police and Crime Commission West Devon received £27k to support the Let's Talk programmes. 6,500 people have gone through the programmes from all over the world. The Leader encouraged Members to attend the Annual Forum on 27 March which was being hosted by West Devon.

The Leader also encouraged Members to take part in the upcoming priority setting process and speak with her on any community safety issues. Domestic homicide reviews in West Devon were a large part of Officer's workload. She reported the police were dealing with a case of a young person having been radicalised. There would be more feedback and updates in the Members bulletin on a monthly basis. The CSP Officer stated that she would email all Members with a list of partnership they work with. A new police front desk was opening at the police station in Tavistock.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee acknowledged the work of the Community Safety Partnership and;

Would encourage Members to take part in the annual priority setting process to reflect the priorities in their communities.

30.

Devon Building Control Partnership - Verbal report

***O&S 30/23**

The Head of Devon Building Control Partnership took Members through the role of the partnership and gave updates on the past years events.

- Teignbridge, South Hams and West Devon work within this Partnership
- Approved inspectors are private sector inspectors and work in competition with the DBCP. The local authorities retain the statutory duty to enforce the building regulations within its geographical area.

The majority of KPI's were being achieved and amongst them were;

- Full applications that were checked within 15 days, national guidelines look to 60%. DBCP are currently achieving 92%.
- Completion certificates issued within 7 days target is 85% and the partnership is achieving 98%

New legislation came into force in 2022, known as the Building Safety Act. Building Control bodies both private and public sector would be overseen by the Building Safety Regulator. This will include auditing building control teams and their managers. They will have the powers to investigate and sanction building control teams including financial penalties, suspensions and special measures and in certain circumstances could lead to criminal charges. Surveyors are required to undertake training and sit an examination.

There has been a downturn in application numbers in the current financial year due to rising costs in the construction industry and the financial uncertainty. They are 19% below the previous four year average which means the partnership will need to rely on

earmarked reserves. Staff retention and recruitment is an issue, both regionally and nationally.

In response to a Member question the Head of Building Control stated that this was the biggest change in building control and the construction industry in decades and he had staff members who after 30 to 40 years in the profession having to prove their competency now are choosing to retire and therefore there was difficulty in recruiting. Building surveyors are no longer able to offer advice when on site. There are there only to oversee and issue a certificate if the works are correct. Concerns have been voiced to the government, the regulator and the LGA stating the stress this is causing. He believed on 6 April 2024 when this comes into force there could be less than 20% of local authority and private sector surveyors registers and licensed to carry out the role. Training sessions have been provided weekly over the last 9 months for staff but he felt the exams are not written in a way that is helpful. He would be happy to facilitate further meetings with Members should they wish and in person next time to go through more detail.

31. **Task & Finish Group Updates (if any)**

*O&S 30/23

The Director of Customer Services and Delivery suggested the Fusion Task and Finish Group visit the centres and meet with the Managers and report back on a half-yearly basis to ensure they are doing what was promised and make them accountable.

This was agreed by the Committee.

It was agreed the SWW Task and Finish Group would meet with SWW Officers as a working group to work together on issues and report back to the Committee.

A meeting date would be arranged and circulated to Members of the group.

32. **2023/24 Committee Annual Work Programme**

*O&S 31/23

Livewest were to be invited to the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in April. A Livewest Task and Finish Group consisting of Cllrs Elliott, Johnson, Mann, Viney and West would be set up.

An update on Waste and Recycling would go to the April meeting.

In the next municipal year each Council Plan themes would be reviewed at each one of the Overview and Scrutiny meetings. The Lead Member for each theme would report back on actions and progress. A work programme for the next municipal year would be brought to the next Committee meeting.

The Wildlife Warden would soon been in position and an update would be given at a future meeting.

DCC would be invited to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in the new municipal year.
If no Officers were available to attend, the Devon County Councillors for West Devon would be invited to attend.

The Meeting concluded at 4.30 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
