

# 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, 14th February, 2023** at **2.00 pm** at the **Chamber - Kilworthy Park**

Present: **Councillors:**

**Chairman** Cllr Ewings  
**Vice Chairman** Cllr Kimber

Cllr Daniel  
Cllr Kemp  
Cllr Pearce  
Cllr Sellis  
Cllr Spettigue

Cllr Heyworth  
Cllr Moyse  
Cllr Renders  
Cllr Southcott

**In attendance:**

Councillors:

Cllr Jory  
Cllr Mott  
Cllr Ridgers  
Cllr Yelland

Cllr Leech  
Cllr Ratcliffe  
Cllr Wood

Officers:

Director of Customer Service and Delivery  
Director of Strategy and Governance  
Director of Place and Enterprise (via Teams)  
Head of Environmental Health and Licensing  
Public Health Officer (via Teams)  
Climate Change Specialist  
Chair of Community Safety Partnership/Community  
Safety Specialist South Devon and Dartmoor  
Inspector Conway, Devon and Cornwall Police  
Alex Stevens – Regional Policy Manager NFU  
Senior Case Manager – Democratic Services

54. **Apologies for Absence**

\*O&S 54/22

Apologies for absence for this meeting were received from Cllrs A Blackman, A Coulson and D Turnbull.

55. **Confirmation of Minutes**

\*O&S 55/22

The minutes of the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17 January 2023 were confirmed as a true and correct record.

56. **Declarations of Interest**

\*O&S 56/22

Members and officers were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of this meeting but there were none made.

57. **Public Forum**

\*O&S 57/22

The Chairman confirmed that no formal requests had been received in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

58. **NFU Involvement in Devon Carbon Plan - Alex Stevens (NFU)**

\*O&S 58/22

Alex Stevens, the Regional Policy Manager for the National Farmers Union (NFU), gave an overview of the NFU's involvement in the Devon Carbon Plan.

In so doing, reference was made to:

- Domestic food production and energy production having become increasingly important to Central Government;
- Farmers being asked to sign up to the Net Zero Carbon pledge. It was recognised that simple actions could make a real difference;
- The Greenhouse Gas foot printing five-year programme. The Farm carbon toolkit helped farmers, however there could be issues with others taking the data for a marketing tool and farmers worried about the data being used elsewhere. Simple action was knowing some baseline data for farmers was better than nothing;
- Working with the Woodland Trust with tree planting schemes. 15,000 trees had been given out to NFU members over the last few weeks. Infilling of hedgerows and extending hedges were small steps to improve carbon offset. Many grants and information of how to plant trees was available to farmers. If hedges were to increase by 20%, it would be a huge ecological benefit, with the taller the hedge, the deeper the root system;
- NFU Energy provided help and advice with regard to grid connections and renewables particularly with dairy and poultry units;

- Encouraging farmers to take up as many schemes that reduced the impact of carbon on their farms; and
- The ability to arrange for Members to visit a farm if they wished to.

In response to questions:

- The future of agriculture in the local area was likely to have more land ownership outside of agriculture. More farmers were wishing to retire and farm managers may be put in place. Less productive land had to be farmed more sensitively and productive land to be farmed more productively;
- Alternative land use in regard to such things as hedging and fencing off land to use for active travel would be discussed at the next NFU meeting.
- West Devon was located in an area of high livestock production that grew grass very well. It was a challenge to get the balance right between plant based and meat production with people being discerning on what food they buy;
- The need to highlight market dynamics to farmers was important with Devon as a whole felt to be one massive farm providing a balanced diet to consumers;
- The NFU had a place on the Devon Climate Emergency Response Group that fed into the Devon Carbon Plan. The view was expressed that, whilst the Group listened to the science and data supplied, it was not always understood and portrayed.

The Leader outlined that the lead Hub Committee Member for farming was the Lead Member for Economy, with elements also being covered by the Lead Member for the Environment. The continued Council emphasis to be placed upon farming would be a matter for the new Council administration to decide.

Finally, it was agreed that a copy of the presentation slides would be circulated to all Members.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the Committee note the involvement that the NFU had in the Devon Carbon Plan.

#### 59. **Community Safety Partnership -Claire Birch and Rebecca Hewitt**

\*O&S 59/22

The Chair of the Community Safety Partnership updated the Committee on its achievements over the past year. Priorities were on the prevention of sexual violence, domestic abuse, exploitation, drug and alcohol misuse, changes in youth culture and Anti-Social Behaviour. Key achievements were:

- The Let's Talk project was seeing positive results on a whole host of issues, such as online bullying, drug and alcohol abuse and

healthy relationships. There had been 3,107 engagements with parents online over the past year. Feedback from parents had been overwhelming, particularly over the COVID pandemic period where parents did not feel so alone. People had joined from across the world and the Partnership would be looking to see how they could harness and maximise the project;

- A presentation was delivered to schools outlining sexism and misogyny to try to change the culture and encourage children to speak out. The Partnership had attended 9 secondary schools across the area with 1600 pupils attending;
- A big focus was being placed on exploitation and how to recognise it and report it. County lines had been evident in West Devon and ongoing work with teachers and governors was in place to address this;
- Concerns were raised around young people vaping. Strong links had been developed with schools to speak to public health and services were in place to help young people stop;
- The Partnership had been working with the Dartmoor National Park Authority to address instances of anti-social behaviour.

Inspector Conway was invited to address the Committee and advised that:

- police resources had been increased within the area;
- Warrants had been issued whereby the Police had been able to seize knives and weapons in Okehampton and Tavistock over recent weeks;
- anti-social behaviour was down by 21% in the last three months compared to the same period last year. Inspector Conway encouraged Members to keep reporting anything of concern.

During debate, the following points were raised:-

- Social influencing surrounding sexism was being spoken about in schools and was of great concern, with Partnership resources being sent to schools to help address it;
- Pornography that was being viewed by children was impacting on the type of violent crime being seen against young children. The Partnership had been successful in gaining just under £250,000 from the UK Prosperity Fund to address violence against women and girls and any learning gained from the funding would be shared within West Devon.
- Concern was raised over training camps being used for radicalisation within West Devon. The Prevent Agenda was part of the government's counter terrorism strategy and Members were asked to report anything suspicious back to the Partnership.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had identified the following to be raised at the next Community Safety Partnership meeting:

The CSP to attend a proposed conference to be held in the new Council year to present an in-depth report to all Members.

60. **Council Delivery Against Corporate Theme: Community Wellbeing and Economy**

\*O&S 60/22

The Lead Member for Community Wellbeing introduced the update report to the Committee. The Head of Environmental Health and Wellbeing advised that the Rural Poverty Pilot project was being brought back on track with the help of an officer from public health. Feedback was given on recently issued Disabled Facilities Grants.

It was also confirmed that new playing pitch funding was being used on projects in Okehampton and Horrabridge.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the content of the Community Wellbeing Update be noted.

61. **A Plan for West Devon Thematic Update: Thriving Economy**

\*O&S 61/22

The Committee agreed to defer the update report as the presenting Officer was unable to attend.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the Committee defer the report to the next O&S Committee meeting

62. **Draft EV Strategy Plan**

O&S 62/22

The Principal Climate Change Officer introduced the draft strategy to the Committee.

The new government funding scheme for installing off-street charging points are looking for innovative schemes such as solar canopy battery storage.

A soft launch for charging points at village halls was launched at the end of last year and interest was shown. This would need to be packaged up with more viable sites as private sector partners would be engaged to run them.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee **RECOMMEND** the content of the draft EV Strategy to the Hub Committee and for officers to undertake a public consultation in line with the Council's Consultation and Engagement Strategy.

63. **Task and Finish Group Updates (if any)**

\*O&S 63/22

There were no updates given.

64. **Draft O&S Annual Work Programme 2022/23, inc. prep for next meeting**

\*O&S 64/22

The draft proposal for the work programme was reviewed. The following amendments to the work programme were agreed as follows:

- The deferred Plan for West Devon Thematic Update: Thriving Economy report to be taken to the next O&S Committee meeting on 21 March 2023;
- Induction Programme Report;
- Fusion Annual Report; and
- Thematic Update: Homes.

65. **Member Learning and Development Opportunities Arising from the Meeting**

\*O&S 65/22

The proposed Community Safety Partnership seminar for all Members to take place in the new Council year.

The Meeting concluded at 4.15 pm

**Signed by:**

**Chairman**

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