

WEST DEVON HUB COMMITTEE



West Devon
Borough
Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **West Devon Hub Committee** held on **Tuesday, 5th March, 2024 at 2.00 pm** at the **Chamber - Kilworthy Park**

Present: **Councillors:**

Chairman Cllr Ewings
Vice Chairman Cllr Renders

Cllr Bridgewater	Cllr Daniel
Cllr Edmonds	Cllr Jory
Cllr Moody	Cllr Mott

In attendance:

Councillors:

Cllr Cheadle	Cllr Cunningham
Cllr Dexter	Cllr Elliott
Cllr Mann	Cllr Oxborough
Cllr Viney	Cllr West

Officers:

Chief Executive
Deputy Chief Executive
Director – Governance & Assurance
Director – Place & Enterprise
Monitoring Officer
Head of Democratic Services
Assistant Director – Planning
Head of Economy & Place
Principal Planning Officer (JLP)
Head of Planning
Head of Communications
Principal Accountants (via Teams)
Head of Finance
Head of Revenues & Benefits
Head of Housing
Ukrainian Refugee Support Officer
Senior Planning Officer (Conservation)

50. **Apologies for absence**
*HC 50/23
An apology for absence had been received from Cllr Leech, who joined the meeting online in a non-voting capacity.
51. **Declarations of Interest**
*HC 51/23
Members were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be discussed but there were none made.
52. **Items Requiring Urgent Attention**
*HC 52/23
- (a) **Car Parking Meters – Tavistock and Okehampton**
The Leader advised that she had agreed for one item of urgent business to be brought to this meeting and proceeded to invite the lead Hub Member for Communities to address the Committee. In so doing, the lead Member advised that he had just been made aware from Devon County Council that the proposed installation of Car Parking Meters in Tavistock and Okehampton had been suspended pending further discussions with the Borough Council. This update was welcomed by all Members and thanks were extended to the tireless work and campaigning that had been carried out by both local Ward Members and local Community Groups.
53. **Confirmation of Minutes**
*HC 53/23
The Minutes of the Hub Committee meeting held on 30 January 2024 were confirmed as a correct record.
54. **Public Questions**
*HC 54/23
It was noted that no Public Questions had been received in accordance with the Hub Committee Procedure Rules.
55. **Hub Committee Forward Plan**
*HC 55/23
Members were presented with the latest version of the Hub Committee Forward Plan that set out items on the agenda for Hub Committee meetings for the next four months. In noting its contents, Members also highlighted that:
- the report titled: '*Fusion Lifestyle – Leisure Contract Update*' (Minute HC 67/23 below refers)' would be presented by the lead Committee Member for Leisure, Health and Wellbeing and not the Leader of Council as indicated on the Plan; and

- the title of Cllr Moody's portfolio area had now been updated to read: '*Lead Hub Member for Enabling Inclusive, Accessible Services and Customer Communications*'.

56. **Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan Five-Year Review Report 2024**

*HC 56/23

The Hub Committee considered a report that sought agreement of the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan (JLP) Five Year Review Report 2024 and approval for publication of the document on the Council's Website.

During the ensuing debate, reference was made to:

- (a) thanks were extended to those Members who had attended the recent Annual General Meeting of the Joint Local Plan Partnership Board. In addition, further thanks were given to the Assistant Director Planning, who was soon to leave the employ of the Council. Members wished the officer every success for the future and thanked him for his support, hard work and guidance; and
- (b) the status of the JLP. The Committee recognised that the JLP remained sound and up to date and acknowledged that this was a very positive position to be in.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan Five Year Review Report 2024 be published on the Council's website;
2. That the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan continue to be used with full weight in the determination of planning applications and be referred to as appropriate in reports; and
3. That the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan be used as a material consideration for planning decisions.

57. **Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Climate Adaptation Plan**

HC 57/23

Members considered a report that sought the endorsement of the Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Climate Adaptation Plan.

In discussion, the following points were raised:

- (a) When questioned, officers gave assurances that an ultimate Council decision to endorse the Plan would in no shape or form have any impact upon the Development Management decision-making process;

- (b) Members commented on the great amount of detail contained within the published agenda report and appendices and felt that there was information and advice set out that could be applied and implemented immediately;
- (c) Some Members were of the view that the Council had very little ability to influence the contents of the Plan. For absolute clarity, officers confirmed that there were no financial implications to the Council associated with endorsing the Plan and the need to distinguish between this Plan and the Devon Carbon Plan was also noted;
- (d) A Member emphasised the significant detrimental impact that was being placed on the agricultural industry as a consequence of being unfairly blamed for emissions. Other Members recognised the extent of the stresses on the industry, but also felt that there were a number of opportunities contained within the Plan that would in effect support the agricultural sector.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That Council be **RECOMMENDED** to endorse the Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Climate Adaptation Plan set out at Appendix A of the presented agenda report.

58. **Home for Ukraine Scheme and Afghan Relocation Assistance Programme**

*HC 58/23

Consideration was given to a report that provided an update on the Council's participation in the respective Ukrainian and Afghan resettlement schemes. In addition, the report provided information on the conclusion of the Local Authority Housing Fund 1 and 2 initiative and also sought approval for the contribution of funds from identified Section 106 contributions towards 5 Affordable Homes.

In discussion, particular reference was made to:-

- (a) recommendation 3. Officers clarified that the recommendation to contribute £30,000 to provide 5 Affordable Homes at Pilchers Field, Crapstone was a wholly separate issue to the Home for Ukraine Scheme and Afghan Relocation Assistance Programme;
- (b) housing criteria. Members asked that officers ensure that the housing criteria of the Abbeyfield Society was aligned to the criteria applied by Devon Homes Choice;
- (c) the support provided by lead officers. For both the Home for Ukraine Scheme and Afghan Relocation Assistance Programme, a number of Members paid tribute to the excellent work and

pragmatic approach that was provided by lead officers and host families.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the positive progress of the Council's participation in the resettlement schemes be noted;
2. That the successful conclusion of the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF1 and 2) initiative, delivering a total of 8 new properties in Okehampton and Tavistock, be noted; and
3. That the contribution of £30,000 to provide 5 Affordable Homes at Pilchers Field, Crapstone from identified Section 106 contributions, be approved.

59. **Discretionary Housing Payments Policy**

*HC 59/23

Members considered a report which sought approval for the updated Discretionary Housing Payment Policy.

During debate, the following points were raised:

- (a) Officers committed to providing information to Members outside of the meeting in relation to the number of homelessness cases that have utilised the Discretionary Housing Payments Policy; and
- (b) Members commented that the scheme was incredibly effective and well received by Borough residents. When questioned, officers advised that they would continue to help and promote the ability for residents to self-serve whilst ensuring that they could also contact the Council in the best way for them as an individual.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the content of the presented agenda report be noted; and
2. That the Discretionary Housing Payment Policy as set out at Appendix A of the presented report, be approved, to take effect from 1 April 2024

60. **Housing Benefit War Pensions Disregard Policy**

HC 60/23

Consideration was given to a report which sought approval for the continuation of the discretionary disregard of War Pensions and War Widow(er) Pensions from Housing Benefit so as to ensure that those in receipt of those pensions were not adversely affected financially.

During debate, a Member felt that the requirement for Grant Thornton to undertake a 'Housing Benefit Assurance Process' audit was an unnecessary waste of public money.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the contents of the presented agenda report be noted; and
2. That Council be **RECOMMENDED** to adopt the Housing Benefit War Pensions Disregard Policy as set out at Appendix A of the present report.

61. **Month 10 Revenue Budget Monitoring 2023/2024**

*HC 61/23

Members considered a report that provided a forecast for the year end budget position and that also enabled them to monitor income and expenditure variations against the approved budget for 2023/24.

In discussion, officers confirmed that, with regard to the Council's Treasury Management activities, the need to invest in sustainable organisations was a key consideration.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the forecast income and expenditure variations for the 2023/24 financial year and the overall projected surplus of £159,000 (1.9% of the total Budget £8.588 million) be noted.

62. **Capital Programme Monitoring as at 31 January 2024**

*HC 62/23

Members were presented with a report that provided details of the Capital Programme financial position as at 31 January 2024.

With there being no debate, it was then:

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report be endorsed.

63. **Okehampton Business Improvement District Update**

*HC 63/23

The Hub Committee was presented with a report that sought approval for a number of actions to be taken for the progression of the Okehampton BID

In discussion, particular reference was made to:-

- (a) an alternative recommendation 2. In order to provide the lead officer with the necessary discretion, an alternative recommendation 2 was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** that read as follows:

'That it be noted that the Head of Economy & Place will work with the BID Steering Group to carry out the actions required to progress the BID to ballot as set out in the published agenda report and in accordance with the indicative timetable outlined in paragraph 4.2 of the published agenda report therein.'

When put to the vote, the alternative recommendation was declared **CARRIED**;

- (b) the initial views of local businesses. Based upon informal discussions, the lead Member informed that the proposals had been very well received.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That officers be instructed to notify the Secretary of State of the Council's intention to progress to a ballot to vote on a Business Improvement District (BID) in Okehampton; and
2. That it be noted that the Head of Economy & Place will work with the BID Steering Group to carry out the actions required to progress the BID to ballot as set out in the published agenda report and in accordance with the indicative timetable outlined in paragraph 4.2 of the published agenda report therein.

64. **Tavistock Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan**

*HC 64/23

A report was considered that sought approval for the commencement of the consultation on the Draft Tavistock Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan 2024.

In discussion, there was unanimous support expressed for the Plan, which was considered to be a particularly reader friendly document. In addition, the Committee encouraged Members to promote the public consultation exercise within their local communities.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the commencement of the public consultation exercise on the draft Tavistock Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (as set out at Appendix 1 of the presented agenda report) be approved.

65. **Okehampton Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan**

*HC 65/23

The Hub Committee considered a report that sought approval for the commencement of the consultation on the Draft Okehampton Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan 2024.

In discussion, the comments that were raised during the debate on the equivalent Plan for Tavistock (Minute *HC 64/23 above refers) were repeated.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the commencement of the public consultation exercise on the draft Okehampton Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (as set out at Appendix 1 of the presented agenda report) be approved.

66. **Exclusion of Public and Press**

*HC 66/23

RESOLVED

That in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business as the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Act is involved.

67. **Fusion Lifestyle - Leisure Contract Update**

HC 67/23

Members considered an exempt report that provided an update on the Fusion Lifestyle Leisure Contract.

In discussion, there was support expressed for the proposals set out within the exempt agenda papers.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That Council be **RECOMMENDED**:

1. to approve the contract variation and payment profile for the years 2023-24 to 2027-28 as set out in section 4 of the published exempt agenda report;

2. that the funds from the Leisure Earmarked Reserve (as specified in the published exempt agenda report) be used to fund the shortfall of the payment fee between the two years of 2023/24 and 2024/25; and
3. to delegate authority to the Director of Place and Economy, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and the Leader of Council to finalise the terms of the profit share agreement for the five years 2023-24 to 2027-28.

(NOTE: THESE DECISIONS, WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE FROM 5.00PM ON THURSDAY, 14 MARCH 2024, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF MINUTES HC 57/23, HC 60/23 (Part 2) and HC 66/23 (Part 1) WHICH ARE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COUNCIL MEETING TO BE HELD ON 26 MARCH 2024, UNLESS CALLED IN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES)

The Meeting concluded at 4.15 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
