

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a joint meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 2 December 2015

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 3.00pm and ended at 4.48pm.

***9 Election of Chairman**

Councillor Roger Giles was elected Chairman of the joint meeting.

The Chairman welcomed Councillors to the joint meeting and reminded the Overview and the Scrutiny Committee Members that voting on any proposed recommendations would be conducted separately for each committee.

***10 Appointment of Vice Chairman**

Councillor Peter Bowden was appointed Vice Chairman of the joint Committee.

***11 Public speaking**

There were no public speakers.

***12 Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Jill Elson – Min no. 14

Personal interest

Reason: Chairman of Exmouth Community College

Cllr Graham Godbeer - Min no. 14

Personal interest

Reason: Chairman of AONB.

Cllr Roger Giles – Minute no. 14

Personal interest

Reason: Opposition to bed closures in the district

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***13 Exclusion of the public**

RESOLVED:

that the classification given to the documents to be submitted to the Cabinet be confirmed; there were no items which officers recommended should be dealt with in Part B.

14 The Devolution debate for the Heart of the South West

Leaders of the various authorities in the geographical area known as the Heart of the South West have been debating a possible devolution bid to Government. The area covered includes Devon County Council, Somerset County Council, Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council. Administration of the draft bid is being undertaken by officers at Somerset County Council.

Members had already seen the published Statement of Intent, published in September 2015. Newsletters have also been published by the HotSW Devolution Programme Management Office.

The Chief Executive updated the committees on the progress to date in producing a draft bid. Themes had emerged on the following areas:

- Productivity and economic growth: specifically on devolving powers over skills, apprenticeships and business support; alongside greater control over the public sector property portfolio
- Health, social care and wellbeing: focus on reducing ill-health and the reliance on health and social care service; as well as support to deliver integration of health and social care
- Improved connectivity and resilience: better coordination of infrastructure and local growth; more housing and economic infrastructure; improved delivery of flood and coastal defence
- Governance: expanding the current arrangements to create a place based board, supported by a Chief Executives Group; alongside “passporting” of powers down using existing formal decision-making structures where possible.

He also took the committees through the “Golden Opportunities”: Marine; Nuclear; and Environmental Futures.

The committee were asked to consider what factors they felt they should advise their Leader to keep in mind, as part of the process of signing up to the proposed bid on behalf of the Council. The County councils and Plymouth had set Timescales, with the draft bid expected by Monday 7 December. It was expected that this draft bid could be circulated to Members, possibly as a confidential document at that stage, for consideration before the matter came to Council for decision on delegation.

The Chief Executive was thanked by a number of members for his clear presentation and clarity of responses to questions. The committees debated:

- Concern on the involvement with the NHS and CCGs showing a 5-year forward plan. Comparison was made between Greater Manchester’s devolved powers of “an invitation to develop a plan for integrating health and social care across the area” to Cornwall’s “greater ability to work with local health organisations to help integrate health and social care”.
- It was too early to define cost savings that devolution may bring
- Any devolution had to be fiscally neutral, so the process would not bring in any new money. Instead it would look at a more efficient use of existing money through better coordination and shared outcomes that will deliver savings that can be invested back into budgets
- Likely at present that the draft bid will not include governance arrangement of an elected mayor, but a place based board or combined authority – this was not to be confused with regional government
- Enterprise zones are a separate issue from devolution, which may marry up but can operate independently
- In answer to a question, newsletters are produced after each meeting of the Leaders and the meetings are held in private
- Was there money available to undertake any devolved powers when more budget cuts were expected over coming years
- Neighbourhood plans would continue as a separate initiative, but towns and parishes may wish to consider the wider picture in developing those plans where ambition is present for developing growth
- Clear objectives taken from the Council Plan must be in place before any negotiation could successfully take place – described as “red lines”
- Transparency could be improved with a group of members monitoring the work of the Leader and Chief Executive in undertaking delegated powers if in place – for

example, making use of Portfolio Holders and members with specific skill sets to aid the Leader

- Need to see the draft bid before any decision made on delegation
- Look to include rural proofing to the draft bid to protect and recognise importance of rural areas

The Overview and Scrutiny Committees voted separately on the proposals and each Committee supported the recommendations:

RECOMMENDED

1. That clear objectives are set in preparation for negotiation if the bid proves successful in reaching Government discussion
2. That an oversight group be set up of Portfolio Holders and appropriate members to follow the process of the bid
3. That the work and the process to date be noted
4. that the Leader be given delegated authority to sign the proposed Devolution Bid on behalf of East Devon District Council subject to ratification of Council on 16 December 2015
5. That an element of rural proofing is put forward for inclusion in the draft bid

Attendance list

Overview Committee members present:

Peter Bowden
Graham Godbeer
Mike Allen
Ian Hall
Rob Longhurst
Peter Faithfull
Matt Booth
John Humphreys
Christopher Pepper

Scrutiny Committee members present:

Roger Giles
Alan Dent
David Chapman
Cherry Nicholas
Brenda Taylor
Marianne Rixson
Dean Barrow
Alison Greenhalgh
Bill Nash

Other Members present:

Jill Elson
Tom Wright
John Dyson
Geoff Jung
Ben Ingham

Susie Bond
Dawn Manley
Megan Armstrong
Iain Chubb
Geoff Pook
Ian Thomas
Steve Hall
Andrew Moulding
Phil Twiss
Paul Carter
David Barratt
Paul Diviani

Officers present:

Henry Gordon Lennox, Strategic Lead Legal Licensing & Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
Simon Davey, Strategic Lead Finance
Mark Williams, Chief Executive
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer
Ian Baker, South West Audit Partnership

Committee Members apologies:

Overview

Maria Hale

Scrutiny

Cathy Gardner
Simon Grundy
Maddy Chapman
Val Ranger

Other Member apologies:

Steve Gazzard
Mike Howe
Pauline Stott
Mark Williamson
Phil Skinner

Chairman

Date.....