

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 6 October 2016

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 6.00pm and ended at 08:58pm

Prior to the business of the meeting, the Chairman welcomed new Members to the committee, Councillors Jenny Brown and Bruce de Saram.

***12 Public speaking**

Members of the public present elected to speak prior to item 8 on the agenda, St Johns Court, Exmouth.

***13 Minutes**

The minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on the 7 July 2016 were confirmed as a true record. Later in the meeting consideration was given to an email circulated to all Scrutiny Committee members on 5 October by Councillor Ranger.

***14 St John's Court, Exmouth**

The Chairman welcomed the Director of Operations David Summerfield; Deputy Director of Operations, Jacquie Mowbray-Gould; and the Programme Manager for SMART Kevin Grady, from the Devon Partnership NHS Trust (DPT).

Ian Cann, from a campaign group, informed the committee that there was an inaccuracy in the report provided by the DPT in that Councillor Eileen Wragg was not a member of the St John's Court Community Engagement Group. He advised the committee that information about the DPT premises portfolio had not been provided, and there was no evidence that the DPT had looked into alternative uses for the existing site. "Initial assessment" was now being carried out at Exeter, which only brought distress to patients due to travel and unfamiliar surroundings. Some patients dispute being given any choice about where to attend, and finding great difficulty in travelling on bus services between Exmouth and Honiton. He outlined the background to the campaign group and the offers they had made to reach a solution, but felt that there was no intention from the start to engage with others to reach resolution.

Keith Edwards, from the Save St John's Project Group, spoke to the committee about the concern locally from patients and carers about the future of the service provision. He informed the committee that there was no evidence of suitable alternative sites in Exmouth and the option of relocating the services to Exmouth Hospital was not viable due to the space required, although the recent CCG consultation on bed reductions may have an impact on the space at the hospital. Exmouth had been clearly identified as a growing town and it was short sighted to sell off a building that had the capacity to cope with that future growth. He also queried the published running costs of the building, in particular the paper exercise of depreciation.

The committee had already received a background paper on the transformation changes planned by Devon Partnership NHS Trust, which included making better use of the Trust's estate.

St Johns Court in Exmouth currently provides a number of outpatient services to patients with mental health needs, acting as a base for approximately 55 staff. The Trust intends to

sell the site and relocate those services elsewhere to more affordable premises in the town. The Trust is exploring alternative locations. The St Johns Court Community Engagement Group was established to hear views of local stakeholders and as a vehicle to provide updates – at present this group is suspended until the Trust has new information to report.

The Director of Operations gave the committee some background on the past use of the building, leading up to the current use as an administration base and treatment rooms. Until an alternative site was in place, the services provided would remain at St John's. He outlined the national and local context of extreme budget pressures that had brought about the need to review the buildings in the Trust's portfolio rather than make savings by cutting services.

The Portfolio Holder for Homes and Communities spoke about the increase in patients in need of mental health services, including the youth to adult care, and council tenants. The DPT has a very broad base of services to cover, but it was clear to her that there was a perception in Exmouth that there was a continuing request to travel to Exeter for services. She outlined the need to retain services within the town because of the large population, which was set to increase.

Questions and debate on the issue of supplying mental health services in Exmouth included:

- The DPT was willing to look into the impact of lengthy travel times from Exmouth to Honiton and what impact that was having on service users;
- The range of services available from the current location, including treatment of depression and anxiety, delivered by a range of professional staff;
- Occupancy was at 30% as at the date of the meeting; occupancy information had been previously published – both the administrative level and clinical intervention level was at a low occupancy rate. Operating costs had also been published;
- Acceptance that mental health services were £10m underfunded per year for Devon despite continued work to fight for more resources; 90% of cases were managed in GP surgeries – leaving the remaining severe conditions to be treated by other services such as those available at St John's; IAPT service primary care counselling service was being developed, assisted by some government funding;
- Rationalising premises elsewhere in the county has proved successful and has helped to join up more services to give complete care;
- Understanding that difficult decisions had to be made to continue to fund the existing service level
- Confirmation that current service provision will remain in Exmouth;
- 18 sites had been considered; there was still a possibility that the redevelopment of Rolle College may provide a solution. The option to build a new centre on the existing site, funded from capital receipt from premises and land, was not viable because the balance of capital could not be allocated to Exmouth – it would fall to the Trust capital fund for the whole of the county;
- Space required was estimated at enough for 40 FTE utilising hotdesking; and five consultation rooms. In response to a question, the number of frequent users of the site (requiring 12 or more interventions per year) was 70;
- Home visits, particularly for more rural areas, were recognised as an issue with both travel costs and travel time. Analysis had been undertaken to look at more clinic based care to increase productivity, but for some cases a home visit was a better choice for the patient;
- Following a meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee of Devon County Council in March, site visits had been made to service locations but no

- further report had been requested to that committee since then;
- DPT currently own St John's Court. In answer to a question, there was concern about what intervention NHS Property Services may make but currently the ownership remained with the Trust.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Committee

1. Asks that it remains the intention of the DPT to keep St John's Court Exmouth open until alternative accommodation is in place;
2. Asks that the existing level of service is at least maintained;
3. Asks that the DPT continues with ongoing engagement, including consultation, with local campaign groups and relevant stakeholders;
4. Ask that the DPT reviews the redevelopment plans for Rolle College as a matter of urgency because of the progress made in those plans;
5. Asks that the DPT keep the Scrutiny Committee updated once progress has been made.

The Chairman thanked the DPT representatives for attending and for responding fully to the questions and issues put by Members.

***15 Scope for raising the profile of the Scrutiny Committee**

The Democratic Services Officer presented her scoping report and asked the committee to consider in particular what outcomes they were looking to achieve and what actions they would need to undertake to achieve them.

Discussion included:

- Measureable outcomes, such as the number of topics suggested for scrutiny work were successfully scoped as work for the committee and completed;
- Information to public and all councillors, including at town and parish level, on what the Scrutiny Committee does – an example was outlined from Exeter City Council's website which sets out what each of their Scrutiny Committees covers;
- Use existing means of communication such as the Knowledge, through the Communications Team and through Ward Members advising their local town or parish council about upcoming topics of interest at Scrutiny Committee and requesting their questions or views be put forward; along with suggestions of topics for scrutiny work;
- Build momentum in scrutiny work by using a focus on key issues of interest to the public, such as the current New Devon Clinical Commissioning Group consultation on hospital beds, as a "hook" to engage them;
- Undertake work that matters to the public;
- Look to what has been achieved under the Council Plan as a starting point to narrow down potential topics to those that hold public interest and could make a real difference in tackling;
- The Knowledge was written as a newsletter for councillors, not for the general public, but did have a healthy readership;
- Audio recording quality was not currently good. The committee were advised that the current system was undertaken at minimal cost as no budget was available at the time; there is now a tender process in place to replace the current system with newer technology that would bring about a marked increase in quality of audio recordings of meetings. The number of audio downloads from the website remains

- very low;
- Press releases should still be encouraged for key topics;
- Means of social media communications should be explored for getting information about the work of the committee out to a wider audience.

The committee were reminded to be mindful of the terms of the constitution in terms of avoiding duplication with the work of the Overview Committee; and that topics must be scoped in order to give a clear indication of what work was required, what outcome was hoped to be achieved and that the work was in line with the terms of reference of the Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED that

- The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee would undertake regular informal discussion with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Overview Committee to ensure that duplication was avoided and work was carried out as determined by the council's constitution;
- A draft document be prepared outlining the role of the committee and asking for suggestions for topics, in order for the committee to agree its content before it is disseminated via town and parish councils through Ward Members, and through the Knowledge;
- The upcoming Police and Crime Commissioner visit to Scrutiny on 3 November is publicised through the Knowledge and the communications team in order to encourage the public and town and parish councils to submit questions through their Ward Member;
- The above approach be applied to the current New Devon Clinical Commissioning Group consultation on hospital beds scheduled for the 24 November.

At this point of the meeting, the Chairman permitted discussion over the submission by Cllr Ranger of amendments to the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on the 7 July. The Chairman had read out the following statement at the start of the meeting:

“Before I ask the Committee if I can sign the minutes of the meeting of 7 July 2016 as a true record, I want to draw your attention to an email I have received from one of our Committee members – Val Ranger - raising various points about these minutes. As you know, the July minutes have already been referred to Cabinet. Can I please remind you that you are entitled to raise any issues on the minutes at a meeting of Cabinet when these are being considered?”

Looking at the useful comments raised by Councillor Ranger and comparing these with the printed minutes of the meeting, I can appreciate that Councillor Ranger wanted added emphasis and more detail to be given to the Council's approach to public consultation and to the way in which the Exmouth Regeneration meetings are run. However, the minutes do refer to the regeneration projects and associated consultation both in the preamble and in the recommendations to Cabinet. Minutes are written impartially and are not a verbatim record of the meeting. They refer to the main points of the debate and how the Committee reached its recommendations. It would not be good practice to include verbatim detail in the minutes but for information, the audio recording of the meeting is available on the Council's website.

Bearing these points in mind, can I now ask that the minutes before you be signed as a true record?”

A lengthy debate followed with mixed views expressed on the contents of the minutes.

Some members content that the minutes as published were a reflection of the discussion. Others disagreed and wanted to see the inclusion of the points listed by Councillor Ranger. There was agreement that the minutes were accurate, but some members wanted a fuller account to be recorded.

The committee were advised that the minutes had been to Cabinet and had been noted; they were not yet ratified by Council. The suggested additions to the minutes did not alter the recommendations set out that were considered by Cabinet. There was also some confusion amongst Members as to the process of minutes being considered by Cabinet before ratification at Council. The Chairman reiterated his advice to Members that they were welcome to accompany him to any Cabinet meeting when minutes of the Scrutiny Committee were being presented.

RESOLVED that

1. The amendments proposed by Cllr Ranger be included as an addendum to the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee on the 6 October 2016, subject to a check that any specific facts stated in those amendments were correct and that they were clearly set out as comment made by Councillors, not as statement of facts;
2. That a brief report comes back to the Scrutiny Committee to set out for information the legalities of draft and final minutes within the committee timetable processes.

***16 Update on Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee**

The Vice Chairman updated the committee on the recent meeting of the Strata JSC held at Exeter on the 15 September 2016.

Roll out of the Global Desktop Infrastructure

- Software glitches have occurred and the GDI trial at EDDC postponed. To be restarted in the New Year
- Teignbridge currently migrating to the new system and should be complete by the end of the year.
- No anticipated problems with the roll out at Exmouth and Honiton
- This delay of almost 12 months has resulted in savings for current year being reduced from £254,000 to £97,000

Convergence Plan

The plan is the unifying of different systems used by individual councils, which covers software for:

- Planning, Building Control and Land Charges. So far Exeter only
- HR, Payroll. Time and attendance, Door access - all three councils now possess a common suite of software. (ITrent which was already being used by EDDC)
- Exacom for managing the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) currently being introduced to all three authorities
- and several other software applications

He outlined the next steps for the JSC, for which he is Chairman, to undertake some groundwork in talking to staff in the three authorities for their feedback on the changes so far, including the roll out of the new global desktop. This would then help set out and prioritise a future work plan for the JSC with regular reporting to each of the three authorities involved.

RESOLVED that regular updates be received from the Vice Chairman to the committee on the progress of the Strata JSC.

***17 Performance monitoring for first quarter 2016/17**

The Vice Chairman raised those indicators showing concern or variation for debate with the committee. Due to the committee not meeting since July, a number of updates were reported on some indicators.

Variation for “Enter into a new innovative recycling and waste collection contract extending the options for recycling and reducing waste that is incinerated or sent to landfill”. As work had progressed since the officer comments recorded for the first quarter, the committee were updated with the news that the new contract was in place and the new service elements of the contract started in Exmouth from February 2017 and for the rest of the District from July 2017.

Concern for “Promote inspection outcomes under the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme and to improve the ways in which we draw attention to those outcomes”. IT processes need developing to further this aim but is dependent on how it is prioritised for Strata to undertake this. The Vice Chairman commented that he would refer this issue to the Strata JSC to reach a solution.

Variation for “Seaton Beach Management Plan to produce a plan covering from Seaton Hole to Axmouth harbour”. A steering group for this work had now met in September and agreed terms, with the next meeting scheduled for December.

Variation for “Produce a renovation plan for Beach Gardens Exmouth”. Since the officer comment had been recorded, locations for the protected grasses had been identified and the work on the renovation plan could continue.

Concern for “Promoting use of Council assets as potential locations for joint venture energy generation” and “Work with local government and other sectors to identify shared service and shared resource opportunities with a view to savings and more efficient service delivery from, and of, assets”. The Council has been unable to recruit from the first round of interviews for the post of Property and Estates Manager, so a specialist agency is being used to hopefully secure the right person for the job in a very competitive market with the private sector.

Variation for “Implementation of revenues and benefits self-service modules and roll out to customers”. The existing self-service modules has received a recent software update. Once this has been evaluated, the team will decide if the purchase of another software module is necessary to complete the implementation of this service.

Variation for “Undertake a review of the process for writing the Local Plan in future”. Expanding on the officer comments set out in the report, the committee were informed that the review had been discussed with the South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) but it became apparent that they had not undertaken any similar work for other partners or had no real knowledge of the plan making process. The next step is for the Service Lead for Planning to find out if the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) are able and willing to undertake the review. As set out in the report, there is also concern that future plan production will be different in nature because of the decision to produce a joint Strategic Plan with Exeter City, Teignbridge, Mid Devon and Devon County, and a sub-level plan at local level with a much

narrower scope. This review has already been identified by the Committee for some time and the offer of the Committee assisting in this review has been made. The Service Lead for Planning will come back to the Committee with a report in due course once he has some news from the PAS.

Issues raised from the report also covered:

- Query over new recycling and waste contract – with new vehicles due for delivery in November, why would it take until July 2017 for the entire district to be covered by the new service? There was agreement by the committee to request attendance by the PH to discuss this point and update the committee on the new service roll out;
- Variance or concern was a continual issue for the determination of planning applications in eight weeks – the committee requested an update on staff resources and the recent systems thinking review of the planning service;
- New CIL post was now filled

The committee were reminded that the purpose of the report was to monitor the variations and concerns of the agreed service plan elements and performance indicators. Any issue with the service plan elements could be debated at the draft Budget and Service Plan meeting held every January.

RESOLVED

1. that the PH Environment be invited to attend the Scrutiny Committee on the 24 November for an update on the roll out of the new service elements of the recycling and waste contract;
2. that the Service Lead – Planning be invited to attend a future meeting to discuss both the review of the process of the Local Plan; and the outcome of the recent systems thinking review, specifically relating to staff resource in dealing with planning applications within government target of eight weeks.

***18 Scrutiny forward plan**

The committee were reminded to provide questions for the Police and Crime Commissioner, due to visit the committee at their 3 November 2016 meeting.

Additions to the plan agreed were:

- Request the Portfolio Holder for Environment to attend the 24 November 2016 meeting to discuss the new recycling and waste service roll out;
- Draft document on the role of the committee for discussion at the 3 November 2016 meeting;
- To be allocated – Service Lead – Planning to attend on issues raised under minute 16;
- Broadband update when appropriate.

Topics requested for scoping were 3G coverage for mobile phones; and the work of the communications team.

Attendance list (present for all or part of the meeting):

Scrutiny Members present:

Roger Giles
Alan Dent
Dean Barrow
Colin Brown
Jenny Brown
Bruce de Saram

Cathy Gardner
Simon Grundy
Douglas Hull
Bill Nash
Val Ranger
Marianne Rixson

Other Members

David Barratt
Jill Elson
John Dyson
Pauline Stott
Tom Wright

Officers present:

Giles Salter, Solicitor
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer

Scrutiny Member apologies:

Maddy Chapman
Cherry Nicholas
Marcus Hartnell

Other Member apologies:

Andrew Moulding
Graham Godbeer
Dawn Manley

Chairman Date.....

Addendum:

Additional notes to minutes of the Scrutiny Committee 7 July 2016

Minute 9

That during discussion by the committee a comment was made by a councillor that a requirement of a skill set was not a requirement of any other committee.

Minute 10

That during discussion by the committee comments were made by some councillors that:

- All Exmouth residents should be invited to participate in any future survey relating to the master plan;
- Consultation on Exmouth had started in 2010;
- Publication of Exmouth Regeneration Board minutes had only recently happened in the last couple of years
- The officer group that meet on Exmouth Regeneration do not publish notes or action points from those meetings
- Some officers attend both the ERB and the officer group
- Axminster would soon undergo regeneration. It was hoped that this would not be lead 'top down', but rather by consultation from residents up

- Regeneration Board meetings should be run as Part A and Part B meetings so that public and press are only excluded when commercially sensitive information is discussed
- Greater openness by EDDC would improve public confidence in their decisions.
- The Regenerations Boards should run as a standard committee rather than as an invitation only board
- Many other District councils have consultation policies in place
- Examples given of surveys by other District Councils which showed when all consultations were open, closed, and the results of each. Some members felt that consultations were difficult to find on the EDDC website and there is no logic to them with an example given as the 2014 Viewpoint survey shows before the 2016 survey that was about to open. Two consultation banners were at that time running across the website homepage but others were also open and the Member felt this could be confusing
- The LGA offer support to councils to develop and improve consultation so it does not have to have a major cost attached to improve consultation
- After Regeneration Boards meet there should be a press release stating what took place and what will take place in the future
- That Councillor Rixson expressed her dismay at the inclusion of the Sidford land in the Local Plan with reference to the unsuitability of the site, in particular relating to the site being on a flood plain and with considerable traffic congestion.