

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 9 May 2017

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 6.00pm and ended at 7.54pm

***54 Public speaking**

Alderman Graham Liverton reported to the Committee the decision made to withdraw officer support for the Manor Pavilion Theatre Management Steering Committee. He felt this was because of the disagreement over the Manor Pavilion Car Park becoming a pay and display car park. He made reference to an earlier Portfolio Holder decision relating to Sidmouth and a concession to sell coffee, citing this as another example of a lack of consultation with local users and Members. He felt that the Council had acted in an arrogant fashion with poor communication, and concluded that the East Devon Alliance would agree with his view.

***55 Minutes**

The minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on the 30 March 2017 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

56 Manor Pavilion Car Park

The Chairman, along with five other members of the Scrutiny Committee, had requested a call-in of the Cabinet decision of 5 April 2017 "that public pay and display parking in Sidmouth's Manor Pavilion car park be offered". The Chief Executive had determined that the call-in was not valid and the Chairman explained to the committee the reasons given.

The committee still had the opportunity to discuss the issue and put forward a representation to the parking places order before a formal variation to the order is made.

The Strategic Lead Housing, Health and Environmental, and the Service Lead Countryside & Leisure, outlined the process undertaken to date in reaching the proposal to make the car park pay and display. Officers were proud of the culture offer available and wanted to maintain and enhance that offer for the benefit of residents and visitors alike. As part of the Council's agreed transformation strategy, this had to be balanced with the need to manage assets well – leaving income from the car park to go towards the costs of the Theatre. There would be a statutory consultation period on the parking places order, and comments made would be taken into account, including the debate at this meeting.

Local Ward Members for Sidmouth outlined their concerns on the proposal. Whilst most were in agreement with the principle of charging for the car park, they felt that charging after 6pm was out of line with surrounding car parks. There was also some dispute about when, and whom, were consulted on the proposal prior to the draft budget meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees in January, or indeed after that. There was also some dispute about how heavily the car park was used. Concern was raised that introducing a charge would reduce the number of users, which would ultimately be counter-productive.

Officers outlined the practicalities and considerations of the car park becoming pay and display, including:

- Direct email contact with relevant Ward Members;
- Some discussion already undertaken at the draft budget meeting;
- Changing the initially proposed three hour maximum stay to four hours, following a comment about the impact on visitors to matinee performances;

- Better management of the car park to prevent local residents, shoppers and beach users using the carpark to the detriment of theatre users, for which the car park was intended;
- Better use of a council asset to provide an additional income stream to the Theatre.

Debate covered:

- Doubts by some Members that fees would be paid after 6pm when other free parking was available in relatively close proximity, both on and off street;
- Some expenditure was required initially for resurfacing, lining and the installation of a ticket machine. Calculations on the expected income had been made based on income from other car parks in the town, and the recent change to pay and display for a Beer car park – reaching a professional estimate at £1000 per space per year;
- Raising income through the car park would provide another income stream to the Theatre to be put towards the maintenance and development of the site, helping to relieve some of the subsidy by the taxpayer in running the theatre;
- Annual permit holders could use the car park for the maximum stay, but officers felt it was unlikely that the car park would be taken up entirely by such users;
- Users unable to walk from the other car parks in the area could park directly outside the venue on the single yellow line, provided they could display a blue badge or it was after 6 pm; no disabled user spaces had been designated in the redesign of the layout of the car park;
- Concern that a mixed use of the site for both public cars and delivery lorries would not be practical; the Theatre Manager outlined the proposed new layout of the car park, including two access points, to give confidence that the car park could operate effectively;
- The car park already had a sign to make clear that the car park was for theatre users only;
- Ward Members were made aware through emails in March of this year of the detail of the proposal; as well as the opportunity to comment at Cabinet on 5 April 2017;
- Look at practicalities of clamping to deter misuse of the car park;
- Some Members felt the existing Steering Group should remain as a group supported by Council Officers, despite being advised that the group could continue in its own capacity and report to the Arts and Culture Forum;
- Look again at a joint ticketing venture; this was cautioned against because of the impact that would have operationally on the Theatre Manager, having to act as a car park attendant when his role is to manage the operation of the theatre.

RECOMMENDED that

1. The Manor Pavilion Car Park fee paying charges only apply up to 6pm;
2. Endorse the maximum stay for the car park for four hours;
3. Officers are reminded that there must be early consultation with the local ward member(s) and the relevant town or parish council for any significant service change that affects a local community.

***57 Mental Health Services for East Devon**

The Chairman of the Honiton Hospital League of Friends and the Honiton Dementia Action Alliance, Heather Penwarden, spoke with the Committee on her background and current role. She asked Members to consider the current state of mental health services in the district. This request was as a result of the recent closure of 'the Haven', Honiton, run by MIND and the transfer of the East Devon Community Mental Health Team from Honiton to Exeter. Discussion on mental health was particularly relevant in Mental Health Awareness Week.

Mrs Penwarden outlined the issues brought to her attention in two separate approaches – one through an existing service user with a long term condition who was directly affected by the closure of “The Haven”; and one a service professional, on the change from local service assessment to a centralised service. Both cases highlighted the negative impact on both existing service users and those to be assessed in two clear ways: the loss of a community feel drop-in centre, leading to a lack of social contact that adversely affected the patient; and the negative impact of travelling, for some great distances, that may not be possible both financially and emotionally.

The committee discussed the importance of mental health services being easily accessible and properly funded. Discussion included:

- Links to recent decision to close local hospital inpatient beds;
- Need to ensure that Devon County Council’s Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee were examining the funding and transformation decisions made on mental health services;
- Similar examples elsewhere in the District, including the removal of self-referral for ongoing treatment which impacted adversely on recovery for the patient;
- Belief that the impact of centralising service provision will only make patients unwell, because of the removal of the social and community feel of drop-in centres.

RESOLVED

1. that the Committee regrets the recent closure of “The Haven” and would have wished to see alternative local services to be established before its closure;
2. that the Chairman write to the appropriate Portfolio Holder, at Devon County Council, to advise that the Committee wished to debate the current state of mental health services in the district and ask him and officers to attend, giving him the chance to respond; and this this includes a request for officers to attend from the Devon Partnership Trust to cover the two funding streams that cover mental health services;
3. that the Chairman write to the new Chairman of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee to advise of the Committee’s intended debate on mental health service issues in the district and invite his attendance to respond in respect of the allocation of resources for health services.

The Chairman thanked Heather Penwarden for her useful insights, and pledged to continue pursuing both health and social services to attend a future meeting for further discussion, on what is an important issue for the District.

***58 New Devon CCG decision on reducing community hospital inpatient beds**

The Chairman had requested the Chief Operating Officer of the NEW Devon CCG to attend the meeting, in light of the recent decision by the CGG on bed closures. The officer was unable to attend but had agreed to update the committee at their next meeting on the 22 June 2017.

***59 Draft Scrutiny Annual Report to Council**

The draft report presented will be updated to reflect the final meeting of the civic term. A request was made to number the paragraphs; other comments made would be taken into account and the final report agreed by the Chairman and Vice Chairman.

RESOLVED that the report be finalised by the Chairman and Vice Chairman on behalf of the committee, taking into account comments made at the meeting, prior to submission to Annual Council.

***60 Scrutiny Forward Plan and suggestions to scope**

The committee's forward plan was updated at the meeting to include an update from the New Devon CCG on the 22 June 2017 meeting. Broadband (including mobile phone coverage) updates would continue.

Topics put forward for scoping were:

- review of the procurement approach agreed by the Housing Review Board at their meeting of 9 March 2017;
- How sites are put forward for the Local Plan or for future plans, such as the GESP;
- Building regulation limits of internal room sizes; in particular for houses of multiple occupation;
- Multiple consultation examples had been considered previously by the committee, but the consultation process still remained a guide and not a policy;
- The role of the District Councillor in communication with local town or parish councillor in dissemination of information from a district level (as linked to consultation on changes in service provision or charges that impact at a local level).

A request was made to make contact with the Local Government Association with a view to establishing what was expected of scrutineers. The Lead Councillor for Member Development, Councillor Maddy Chapman, offered to work with Democratic Services on future training for the committee.

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

Scrutiny Members present:

Roger Giles
Alan Dent
Dean Barrow
Maddy Chapman
Bruce de Saram
Cathy Gardner
Simon Grundy
Cherry Nicholas
Val Ranger
Marianne Rixson

Other Members

Megan Armstrong
David Barratt
John Dyson
Peter Faithfull
Phil Twiss
Pauline Stott
Geoff Jung
Brian Bailey
Stuart Hughes
Rob Longhurst
Tom Wright

Officers present:

John Golding, Strategic Lead Housing, Health and Environmental
Charlie Plowden, Service Lead Countryside and Leisure
Graham Whitlock, Manor Pavilion Theatre Manager
Giles Salter, Solicitor
Sue Howl, Democratic Services Manager
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer

Apologies:

Marcus Hartnell
Bill Nash
Darryl Nicholas
Colin Brown
Jill Elson

Chairman Date.....