

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 7 February 2019**

#### **Attendance list at end of document**

The meeting started at 5.30pm and ended at 7.56pm.

#### **41 Public speaking**

There were no members of the public present.

#### **42 Minutes**

The minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on the 22 November 2018 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

#### **43 Declarations of interest**

Councillor Jill Elson – Minute 45, East Devon Public Health Strategic Plan

Type of interest – Personal interest

Reason – Chair of Exmouth Community Transport

All Councillors present – Minute 46, EDDC Relocation – Knowle Contents Disposal

Type of interest – Personal interest

Reason – Potential interest in bidding for items available

Councillor Andrew Moulding - Minute 46, EDDC Relocation – Knowle Contents Disposal

Type of interest – Personal interest

Reason – Has placed a bid for items available

Councillor Andrew Moulding - Minute 50, Scrutinising the Portfolio Holder decision regarding a Discretionary Home Stay Grant repayment

Type of interest – Personal interest

Reason – Son had been in receipt of a Discretionary Grant

#### **44 Exclusion of the public**

There was one item that officers recommended should be dealt with in this way.

#### **45 East Devon Public Health Strategic Plan 2019/23**

Following consideration of the Public Health Strategic Plan for 2019-2023 by Cabinet on 2 January the Chair of Scrutiny Committee had requested that the document should also be considered by Scrutiny Committee on 7 February.

The strategic aims of the Plan are to help more people to be healthy and stay healthy, to enhance self-care and support community resilience, and to integrate and improve support for people in their homes.

John Golding, Strategic Lead for Health, Housing and the Environment, stated that this work was regarded as core business, with a whole range of Health and Well-being aspirations and activities enshrined in the Council Plan and throughout Service Plans. Public health is an umbrella term for a whole range of East Devon District Council (EDDC) services, from health & safety at work to the provision of nature reserves; from running volunteering events to food hygiene inspections; improving housing conditions to community development; waste collection to leisure provision.

In a multi-disciplinary approach, teams across the Council including Housing, Planning, Countryside and Environmental Health worked together with partners to combat inequalities and encourage healthier lifestyles. EDDC has sought effective and creative ways of achieving this within existing resources.

The Plan sets out the evidence base for this work and is part of a bigger picture, reflecting public health priorities identified nationally and regionally.

A function of the Public Health Intelligence team at Devon County Council is to provide analysis and interpretation of health service data to help develop understanding of the health challenges in local communities. They collate data from many sources annually into the Devon Joint Strategic Needs Assessment [JSNA], showing what is harming the health of the people and therefore indicating what it might be possible for EDDC to do to improve that situation. EDDC officers have liaised with that team, and used this and other evidence e.g. from NHS and Public Health England sources, to create the East Devon Plan, using the best available information at the time.

Comments and discussion included the following;

Loneliness was referred to in the report. The question was asked about what the Council was doing about this, to which the response was that it was difficult to capture loneliness statistically and that many assumptions are made about it, so one of the ways of tackling it is by providing a range of activities which can be accessible to as many as possible across the district.

The plan could be regarded as being urban-centric and not tackling rural isolation - Officers stated that efforts would be made to work across the whole district but with particular focus in priority communities as identified through liaison with public health colleagues at Devon County.

Reference to Parish and Town Councils appear to be missing, but activities could be linked to village halls and community centres - Officers pointed out that there was a broad range of suggestions included in the plan, and local councils could easily be engaged. Spreading ideas and facilitating others to do more locally rather than paying for EDDC staff to undertake activities directly would be a way to achieve more through limited resources.

Officers stated that EDDC has a responsibility to consider health and wellbeing in all council activities, and the Public Health Strategic Plan demonstrates how this can be achieved within current resources.

Two aspects in particular, social prescribing and Making Every Contact Count (MECC) are examples of ways in which any of the local public health priorities can be met, aligned with wider-Devon strategic themes of:

- i. Enabling more people to be healthy and stay healthy
- ii. Enhancing self-care and community resilience
- iii. Integrating and improving support for people in their homes.

MECC is a Sustainability & Transformation Partnership (STP) funded programme and MECC training gives participants the confidence and skills to use brief day-to-day conversations to support people in making positive changes to their lifestyles. The MECC training programme is intended for individuals in public-facing roles e.g. professional staff and community group leaders and Council Members may also wish to consider doing a day's training on it themselves.

Members referred to initiatives such as 'Villages in Action', and activities organised by Leisure East Devon (LED) aimed at getting local people involved, and 'Tri-hards', which was a community led initiative in Exmouth.

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Homes & Communities, Councillor Jill Elson, congratulated the Public Health Project Officer for her work and also commented that Devon

County Council (DCC) were one of the few County Councils to continue to support Community Transport.

A member expressed a view that the district was dominated by the coastal strip rather than the rural hinterland and northern boundary - Officers responded by stating that the strategy is aimed at covering the whole district and would not just focus on the five priority areas referred to.

A member expressed concern that drugs were omitted from the strategy, yet there appeared to be a disproportionate number of drug related deaths in Exmouth, and was not convinced that relevant organisations involved are effective - Officers confirmed that this was a Community Safety priority, and liaison was also taking place with DCC to progress matters.

A member asked whether the role of the Public Health Project Officer role dealt with a budget. John Golding confirmed that there was a budget which covered the officer's salary but not project work. This was within the Environmental Health budget whilst project costs are covered in service budgets. Although it is a big agenda, there is sufficient budget at present to achieve a lot of the identified priorities.

Another question from members related to whether there was a mismatch between the aims of the strategy and what is available with the budgets available. John Golding responded that the budgets available will make a huge difference to people's lives.

The Chairman referred to receiving an email received from a Community Development worker who was in support of the Committee considering these important issues, but who could not attend the meeting. He went on to state that there were no external bodies present at the meeting, such as the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), and asked whether there were any difficulties in working with partners - Officers confirmed that they had been liaising with the Sustainability & Transformation Partnership (STP), and can see opportunities for how the role of EDDC and other districts can evolve within this partnership.

Andrew Moulding confirmed that the budgets relating to this work were largely with DCC, with whom EDDC are liaising. The Council's focus should be to focus on preventative aspects of ill health through its work undertaken e.g. via housing and leisure centres.

**RECOMMENDED** to Cabinet

That this Scrutiny Committee;

1. Would like to thank the Public Health Project Officer for the excellent work being undertaken and supported by colleagues across the Council, and to endorse the East Devon Public Health Strategic Plan 2019-23,
2. Seeks to support the intention in the Plan to cover all areas of East Devon district
3. Encourages improvements to communications with Town and Parish Councils in disseminating public health messages, including increasing the use of social media
4. Requests that the MECC training programme is offered to all EDDC Councillors to help disseminate key messages about Health and Wellbeing in local communities
5. Encourages greater use of Social Prescribing and healthier lifestyles, via Leisure East Devon (LED) and community led initiatives

**46 EDDC Relocation – Knowle contents disposal**

East Devon District Council is in the final stages of leaving its Sidmouth offices in the Knowle Park and moving to Blackdown House in Honiton. Staff will move from Sidmouth to Honiton

in three phases completing on 11 February 2019 when the Honiton office will be fully operational.

The council intends to hand over the Knowle at the earliest opportunity to PegasusLife so that they can pay the purchase price and commence their preparations for demolition and redevelopment. Prior to handover the council needs to clear the building once staff have departed.

In May 2018 the Strategic Management Team (SMT) started to oversee clearance arrangements with the detail to be worked out by the Relocation Team. Options were investigated for disposal and reported back to SMT in September 2018 with enquiries having been made of a range of potential interested parties to test interest. These included local auction houses, clearance specialists, 2<sup>nd</sup> hand furniture sellers and some not for profit groups and charities that sold on used furniture.

An opportunity was offered at SMT's behest for council staff and members to bid for items that had been attributed little or no sale value by the various professional auctioneers and ranged from standard office furniture items to cupboards, upholstered furnishings, tables, curtains for example. This element of the disposal process is likely to raise approximately £2,000 for the Chairman's chosen charities.

Members queried why an explanation about the process for disposal was not given to members before they were invited to bid for items. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that a process had been followed to ensure that all items could be disposed of in a proper manner which could, for example, generate income, or go to other local councils, such as fireplaces being offered to Sidmouth Town Council, a clock going to Honiton Town Council amongst others.

When the council has vacated the Knowle the Relocation Team will write out to town and parish councils with the remaining list to ask whether they have an interest in any items with the requirement that they transport items away themselves. Councils will also be asked if they are aware of and can contact local voluntary and charitable groups that might also be interested. Depending on the level of response the Relocation Team will arrange an open day, viewings or similar scale of access.

Members asked if a definitive list of items for disposal exist, since members have not seen one. The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that he would ensure that a list was circulated to members.

**RECOMMENDED** to the Strategic Management Team

"That the Scrutiny Committee politely reminds the Strategic Management Team to always consider public perception of actions taken, particularly concerning the disposal of public assets."

#### **47 Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committees' meeting on 16 January**

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny committees met on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2019 to consider the Draft Revenue & Capital Budget 2019/20, and associated Draft Service Plans 2019/20, in line with the Council's Constitution (Part 2, Article 7). Recommendations were proposed separately for each committee.

The minutes of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committees' meeting held on 16 January were confirmed and signed as a true record by Scrutiny Committee members, from a Scrutiny Committee perspective, on the basis that this is unlikely to be done at the start of the next Joint Meeting in 2020 with potentially different councilors present. Overview Committee members will be requested to do likewise at their next meeting.

#### **48 Scrutiny forward plan**

Members confirmed that following the referral from Development Management Committee (DMC) on issues involving South West Water (SWW), they remain keen to extend an invite from the Scrutiny Committee to a representative to attend a future meeting. SWW will be asked to attend in March or April.

In relation to Fly Tipping, Councillor Rylance confirmed that she has been waiting for more information from Streetscene about this and had approached Cllr Tom Wright, specifically about per incident costings. He had informed them that this data would become available over a period of time, and so members confirmed that they would now like to invite Councillor Wright to attend the meeting in March to provide this information.

In relation to Broadband, and given the highly critical email circulated recently about Gigaclear, it was agreed to invite Gigaclear and CDS to attend one of the next two meetings to discuss issues relating to coverage in rural areas and also mobile phone coverage.

#### **49 Exclusion of the public**

That under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting as exempt and private information (as set out against each Part B agenda item), is likely to be disclosed and on balance the public interest is in discussing the items in private session (Part B).

#### **50 Scrutinising the Portfolio Holder decision regarding a Discretionary Home Stay Grant repayment**

This item was to provide all information on a particular case to both the Portfolio Holder who made the decision and to the subsequent Councillors queries so that the committee could scrutinise the Portfolio Holders decision. The report contains the Portfolio Holder report and subsequent documents clarifying the queries made. The report also contains the relevant information regarding the Home Stay Grant provisions and the Grant Conditions.

#### **RECOMMENDED** to Cabinet

That;

1. In all future cases the Legal Services Team should be involved
2. In considering future applications, more and fuller information must be provided to the Portfolio Holder
3. Having examined this case, the Scrutiny Committee are concerned that the call-in period is too short and would ask Cabinet to consider recommending to Council that the constitution be amended to extend the call in period from 5 days to 10 days
4. An appeal panel to be set up for post decision appeals.

The Chairman said that this was the last of very many meetings to be held at The Knowle since the inception of EDDC on 1 April 1974. He thanked officers, past and present, for their invaluable help in that time.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.56pm.

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

**Scrutiny Members present:**

Maddy Chapman  
Cathy Gardner  
Roger Giles  
Simon Grundy  
Stuart Hughes  
Val Ranger  
Marianne Rixson  
Eleanor Rylance  
Eileen Wragg

**Other Members**

Susie Bond  
John Dyson  
Jill Elson  
Andrew Moulding

**Officers present:**

Richard Cohen – Deputy Chief Executive, Development, Regeneration & Partnerships  
John Golding – Strategic Lead – Health, Housing and Environment  
Andrew Ennis – Service Lead – Environmental Health & Car Parks  
Helen Wharam - Public Health Project Officer.

Meryl Spencer – Environmental Health Manager (Private Sector Housing)

Anita Williams - Principal Solicitor & Deputy Monitoring Officer  
Sue Howl - Democratic Services Manager

**Apologies from Scrutiny Members:**

Brian Bailey  
Bruce De Saram  
Graham Godbeer  
Cherry Nicholas

**Apologies from Non – Scrutiny Members:**

Mike Howe  
Rob Longhurst  
Brenda Taylor

Chairman .....

Date.....