

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 22 February 2018

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 6.00pm and ended at 8.40 pm.

***29 Public speaking**

There were no public speakers at the meeting.

***30 Minutes**

The minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on the 16 November 2017 were confirmed and signed as a true record subject to two typographical errors for correction.

31 Crime and Disorder Update

The Chairman welcomed Gerry Moore, the Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour Officer, alongside Councillor Tom Wright who is the Council's representative on the Police and Crime Panel.

The update covered the work of the East and Mid Devon Community Safety Partnership (CSP), which has a Steering Group, and a number of multi-agency Local Action Groups (LAGs). The LAGs continue to operate successfully and are well attended; additionally a LAG for Cranbrook had been set up. Some examples of local initiatives and problem solving of the LAGs were provided to the committee.

The priorities of the CSP for the current year are:

- Anti-social behaviour
- Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse
- Scams and Online Safety
- Substance Misuse
- Crime Prevention
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Modern Day Slavery
- Preventing Violent Extremism
- Hate Crime
- Local Priorities
- Have a communications strategy

These priorities are expected to be carried forward into 2018/19 with the addition of raising awareness of County Lines, the term used for organised drugs networks.

Gerry Moore highlighted in particular the success of the RISE hub, a support for persons with addiction problems, operating one day a week in Axminster until the end of September 2018. RISE, the agency contracted for this area of work, will be replaced by another agency EDP in April. In response to a question, Gerry was happy to promote this work more widely to towns and parishes. He also highlighted a number of excellent initiatives that funding available to him from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) had been spent on. Examples included the hard hitting play 'Last Orders' delivered to secondary schools about the dangers of alcohol misuse.

The CSP hold their Annual Conference in April, details of which had been circulated to Members previously. This year's theme is 'Protecting Vulnerable People' and there will be

presentations on adverse childhood experiences, domestic and sexual violence and abuse, dangerous drugs networks and child exploitation.

Councillor Tom Wright had provided an update from the Police and Crime Panel, highlighting the increase in precept and still proposed cuts in PCSO numbers. The committee had previously requested a degree of protection for PCSO numbers from the Police and Crime Commissioner, and continued to champion the importance of retaining them in the District, particularly for the smaller towns and rural areas.

Exmouth Ward Members on the committee sought further information on connecting up their CCTV with a monitoring hub, for which money was available from the OPCC; however the Town Council would have to fund replacement of hardware. They also sought an update on localised anti-social behaviour in the town, which was reported as vastly improved after some intervention.

The Chairman had previously circulated a recently published LGA guidance on modern slavery, which he was keen to explore further. The committee had already received a presentation on the topic and some further awareness training had been undertaken more widely. The committee were informed that the existing safeguarding policy covers the protection element referenced in the LGA guidance, but the position on procurement would need to be checked in more detail. Recent RIPA training received by officers had also highlighted the need for a co-ordinated approach for information sharing, again as referenced in the LGA guidance. This was currently being explored.

The Chairman welcomed the offer from Chief Inspector Johns to attend a future meeting, as she was unable to attend this committee, to talk further on the topic.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that the post of Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour Officer be retained beyond 2018/19, for reasons of continued support in this key area, particularly in maintaining the successful Local Action Groups in the District.

(At the time of making the recommendation, the post was part of the draft Budget for 2018/19 that had yet to be agreed by Council on 28 February 2018, but had been recommended by the Scrutiny Committee at their joint meeting with the Overview Committee on the 17 January 2018)

RESOLVED that a paper exploring the LGA guidance “Modern slavery – a council guide” is provided at a future meeting to establish where the Council can improve upon existing practices in safeguarding and procurement to help raise awareness and work to prevent modern slavery.

32 Quarterly monitoring of performance for third quarter 2017/18

The committee had received the report for the third quarter and noted comments against those items showing variation or concern, including comments added to update on some of those because of the historical nature of the report covering October to December 2017.

Questions on the report had been submitted prior to the meeting, with written responses subsequently provided. These [additional questions and responses](#) are available online.

Comments were made from some committee members that there were quality issues with the report each time it was presented – both in the ability to measure the items under each

Council priority, and a lack of officer comment or lack of clarity in officer comment against the item. Many examples were quoted from the report to underline this.

Specific issues discussed included:

- The quality of applications for CIL money was not sufficient, and applicants had been advised of the evidence base that was required;
- Some objectives, such as the Green Space Strategy, had been achieved, but now Members wished to see performance monitoring against the implementation of that strategy;
- Information on air pollution was widely available online;
- Explanation on what information councillors are entitled to be provided with – only information that is relevant to the role can be provided, as stipulated in the Constitution;
- Terminology of “on track” could be misinterpreted – some preferred the term “work in progress” or “ongoing”, but the SPAR software used for performance monitoring does not permit this change in terminology; this should be investigated to see if it can be changed;
- Understanding that delivery of the flood alleviation scheme at Feniton was now dependent on an external body, Network Rail, and therefore was expected to be an issue marked as “concern” for some time;
- Welcoming the use of local heritage asset data when considering planning applications;
- “Paper light” initiative also included digitising paper files as well as reducing printed copy.

The Strategic Lead – Governance and Licensing would refer the issues raised on the quality of the performance monitoring report with the Strategic Management Team.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that:

- 1. The Overview Committee be requested, as part of reviewing the Council Plan, to also review the Council Actions listed under each Council Priority, to ensure that the action is clear in its intention, and is measurable;**
- 2. That future reports on Performance Overview, Council Action Plans and Key Performance Indicators contain comments on every item listed, regardless of action status classification, for reason of providing clear information on progress in that quarter.**

***33 Scrutiny Forward Plan**

Additional items to allocate to the forward plan were:

- Update on Broadband provision to the March meeting, following confirmation that the representative from Connecting Devon and Somerset could attend. Once confirmed, parish and town council clerks would be notified of this meeting.

The election report, due to this meeting, had been deferred due to purdah concerns, as a by-election had been called for a vacant ward seat in Exmouth. The Chief Executive was unable to attend the next scheduled meeting of the committee in March; therefore the item was set for the 19 April meeting.

An issue relating to a change to the car park near Exmouth Pavilion had been raised by councillor Rob Longhurst directly to the Chairman. Following some discussion on what the committee specifically wished to explore, there was agreement to receive a paper outlining

the circumstances of that specific car park. This would permit the committee to examine if further scrutiny was required.

The Chairman raised the issue of a need to review the process of the joint meeting with the Overview Committee to consider the draft service plans and budget in January each year. This has been highlighted following his request to call in a decision on an additional post position by the Cabinet after the joint meeting; the additional post had subsequently been agreed to put to Council as part of the agreement of the draft budget for 2018/19. There was general support for a review of how the draft service plans and budget is considered. The Portfolio Holder for Finance advised that he was going to review the process himself alongside the Strategic Lead Finance; but suggested that if the committee were to pursue it, it would be a sensible approach to undertake a rolling review of the services and associated costs to build an understanding of the budget over time, as to undertake the service plans as a whole was a large undertaking.

Following on from a national press article relating to meat, the committee agreed that an information paper on how the council undertakes food safety and hygiene would be helpful to ascertain if further scrutiny work was required. A request would be made for this through the Portfolio Holder for Environment.

Information would also be submitted in relation to complaints about disruption caused by building developments, to ascertain if this fell into the remit of the committee to scrutinise further.

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

Scrutiny Members present:

Cathy Gardner
Cherry Nicholas
Maddy Chapman
Roger Giles
Alan Dent
Bill Nash
Marianne Rixson
Bruce de Saram
Simon Grundy
John O'Leary
Darryl Nicholas
Val Ranger
Douglas Hull

Other Members

Susie Bond
Brian Bailey
Tom Wright
John Dyson
Geoff Jung
Paul Diviani
Andrew Moulding
Ian Thomas
Eileen Wragg

Officers present:

Henry Gordon Lennox, Strategic Lead Governance & Licensing and Monitoring Officer
Tabitha Whitcombe, Democratic Services Officer
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer

Apologies from Scrutiny Members:

Dean Barrow
Eleanor Rylance

Apologies from Non – Scrutiny Members:

Jill Elson
David Barratt
Pauline Stott

Chairman Date.....