

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 22 March 2018**

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

The meeting started at 6.00pm and ended at 8.59pm.

#### **\*34 Public speaking**

There were no public speakers at the meeting.

#### **\*35 Minutes**

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

#### **\*36 Declarations**

Councillor Rob Longhurst – minute 39 – pecuniary interest – user of Exmouth Pavilion.  
Councillor Pauline Stott – minute 39 – personal interest – user of Exmouth Pavilion.  
Councillor Bill Nash – minute 39 - personal interest – council representative on LED Board.  
Councillor Alan Dent – minute 39 - personal interest – council representative on LED Board.  
Councillor Phil Twiss – minute 37 – personal interest - client and supplier to Voneus.

#### **37 Broadband update**

The Chairman welcomed Graham Rooms of the Talaton Broadband Committee; Paul Laurence the Director of Strategic Relationships at Voneus; and Phil Roberts from Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS).

Mr Rooms outlined to the committee the story behind Talaton seeking a local solution to their poor broadband speed, beginning in 2016. Preliminary exploration of a BT community solution was too expensive to pursue, but the community were able to take advantage of the CDS scheme as many residents met the necessary criteria for the voucher scheme. They liked the approach to delivery that Voneus offered, and ended up with 120 residents coming forward to be part of the scheme. With infrastructure set up at the Exeter Science Park, Talaton was now able to see speeds between 20 and 25 MB/s. He illustrated with some local examples the difference that had made to the local community.

Mr Rooms also thanked Voneus and CDS for the help in delivering the scheme.

The committee asked a number of questions relating to the fixed wireless solution that Talaton had in place. Discussion included:

- The infrastructure was delivered by the fixed wireless solution provider (in this case Voneus), with that provider covering the capital cost of the infrastructure to provide the service;
- Fixed wireless worked on the need for line of sight, so solutions had to be found to get around the topography of an area;
- Voneus did promote their service to local parishes; the Talaton example had received local press coverage;
- Having better broadband speed allowed the use of mobile provider boosters to help improve mobile phone reception in areas where reception was poor;
- Other fixed wireless solutions were available;
- Internal wireless setup within the home was also key to good broadband speed.

In terms of an update from CDS, Phil Roberts reported that:

- 85% of premises had been delivered so far, with the wholesale network holding a kitemark to ensure that a minimum standard for speed was maintained at all times;
- The current voucher scheme was suspended until the completion of Phase 2, after which it would open again for those not covered by that phase and meeting the necessary criteria;
- Phase 2 was due for completion within days and an update from CDS covering statistics on delivery would be issued shortly after that completion;
- Claw back threshold was clarified as at 20% with predicted funds back over a seven year period, starting from a two year period after completion – therefore the trigger point for that money had not yet been reached;
- Gigaclear, contracted for the Phase 2 project, were investing large sums in the infrastructure and implementing points of termination (POTs) at each home, so that it avoided the limitations of copper wire;
- There would always be some remote areas where it was difficult to support a business case because of high cost of connecting up few properties. Some areas could be linked up if on the periphery of an existing broadband solution;
- Residential service is offered to small businesses up to 3 or 4 employees; service level agreements were required for medium to large businesses where a shorter call-out response time was needed;
- There was a provision to business too, with the Gigaclear role out with 2,500 businesses expected to be added in the current phase of work. Statistics on businesses delivered would be provided after the meeting;
- Focus on business need was important, as has been highlighted in the national report “Connected Nations 2017”;
- EDDC had bid for funding in helping to deliver a service for Northleigh, Southleigh and Gittisham;
- Gigabit voucher scheme was available for businesses providing up to £3000 towards costs if meeting the criteria;
- The Church of England is embracing the desire for use of existing structures for fixed wireless.

**RESOLVED** that the Committee welcomed the progress to date on delivery and congratulated the Talaton Broadband Committee on their successful work.

**RECOMMENDED to Cabinet**

1. That Cabinet recommend to Council that a letter be sent to all local MPs seeking their support to help secure superfast broadband provision for all communities despite their rurality;
2. Promote to local parish and town councils the options available to them including the CDS voucher scheme once open again, fixed wireless solutions, and the recent success at Talaton;
3. That a letter be sent to the Diocese asking for their continued support using church premises in providing the infrastructure necessary for a broadband solution for rural parishes.

**\*38 Strata update**

The Chairman welcomed Laurence Whitlock, IT Director for Strata. The committee had received an extensive report outlining the work on delivering the expected savings in the business plan.

The target was to deliver £252K of savings across the three authorities of Exeter City Council, Teignbridge District Council and East Devon District Council. This had been

exceeded in the previous year, and a target had been set for next year at £382K. A strong management team was in place within the company.

A number of key solutions had been put in place and continued to be rolled out across the three authorities, including global desktop and Skype telephony, in order to deliver a modernised infrastructure and a better level of resilience. A recent example of this was the ability of staff to continue working from home and other locations during recent inclement weather.

Members discussed:

- Expectation of Members in reaching officers by telephone, suggesting more use of direct numbers instead of through the switchboard, which may be receiving a high volume of calls;
- Merits of exploring provision of equipment to Members rather than use of own devices, and related IT support to Members;
- Strata were well placed to deal with cyber attacks, and a team of four were in place to cover this area of work. Mr. Whitlock assured the committee that the level of protection was excellent and compared well with other local authorities;
- Well planned and executed migration of officers to the Exmouth office; planning was in place for Honiton, where the majority of existing equipment was being relocated, so a phased approach was being arranged;
- Strata staff engagement had substantially increased and the quality of staff was excellent;
- Future challenges for Strata included a redesign of their business case request process, as currently they were asked to deliver anything and everything – establishing a mechanism to understand the priority of the work, and if it had delivered a business benefit once completed, was underway;
- Councillors had the opportunity to be involved by attending the Strata Joint Executive or Joint Scrutiny Committees who meet regularly at Exeter Civic Centre;
- The Lead Member for Member Development would work with Democratic Services on the issue of managing expectation of Members in contacting officers and access to committee papers.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Whitlock for his report.

**RESOLVED** that the committee acknowledges the savings to the Council made by Strata and thank the Strata staff for their continued efforts, in particular in keeping the council operating during recent inclement weather.

### **39 Exmouth Pavilion Car Park**

The committee had received a comprehensive paper on the background to the Exmouth Pavilion Car Park. It outlined that the car park had been included in the Parking Places Order since 2008 with a charging regime applied from April to October, but the charging tariffs for that and the Elizabeth Hall car parks were not implemented at that time. During the car park review of 2012, this was picked up as part of the order and noted that it was used exclusively for the patrons of the Pavilion.

Cabinet, following consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, recommended that “the arrangements for LED to control and manage the Esplanade Car Park, Exmouth, be formalised in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, Economy – following which, negotiations took place between LED and the Council.

The need to resurface the car park brought back focus to the issue of the land still being in the ownership of the Council. The Council, as well as LED, had not identified a budget to undertake such work, and neither party was managing the car park on a charging tariff that would generate income against which to offset maintenance cost. Detail on continued discussions between the Council and LED were set out in the report.

A consultation exercise for a number of car parks was approved by Cabinet in February, covering such aspects as extending charges to throughout the year, and on concessions to support events. This consultation will now include the concession proposed for the Exmouth Pavilion car park of refunding up to £2 parking charges for the Exmouth Pavilion customers subject to a minimum spend in the Pavilion of £3.50. Charging for use of the car park does not form part of the consultation because it is already in place under the existing Parking Places Order. Dialogue had already been undertaken with users of the Pavilion, including Councillor Longhurst whom had requested an examination of the issue to the Scrutiny Chairman.

Member discussion included:

- Confirmation that a concession for free parking for dance class users was in place for a year but would then be reviewed; this was seen as a reasonable measure to ease patrons into paying a charge for use of the car park;
- Concern from Exmouth members that there was continued pressure on parking locally whilst the redevelopment of the area was underway, and it would be better to defer any charge until the regeneration work was complete;
- Concern that introducing a charge would lead to some groups not using the Pavilion and therefore impact on LED and the council's asset;
- An additional 13 spaces had been found nearby that, although small in number, would help alleviate some demand;
- The consultation covered the level of concessions, not that the car park would become fee paying;
- The area was a public car park that should have been a fee paying area for many years;
- Concessions were not intended to become permanent but as a means of phasing towards a car park that aligns with all other fee paying car parks owned by the Council;
- Authority to resurface the car park as the liable landowner is covered in the Council's standing orders with a delegated authority, and therefore does not require Cabinet or Council agreement;
- Consultation period runs after Easter for a month and will be publicised;
- Lack of Ward Member and Exmouth Town Council involvement was acknowledged and it was conceded that it would have been better to do so; it was hoped that adding in the concession proposal for the car park into the consultation exercise went some way to amend that error;
- Detail on when the contract to resurface the car park, which was part of a larger contract for a number of works, would be provided after the meeting;
- Desire from some Members to see a concession on the Exmouth Pavilion car park to be a permanent concession.

**RESOLVED** that the committee regret the failure to consult with Ward Members on the changes to the Exmouth Pavilion Car Park

**RECOMMENDED** to Cabinet that:

1. That there must be early consultation with Ward Members for any matter of substance in their local ward;
2. That the proposed concession of refunding £2 parking charges for the Exmouth Pavilion car park customers subject to a minimum spend in the Pavilion of £3.50 be a permanent concession, for reason of ensuring existing local people who are regular café customers are not discouraged from continuing to support the Pavilion.

The Chairman thanked Andrew Ennis for his honest and forthright approach in responding to questions from Members and commented on his quality as an officer, as excellent.

\*40 **Forward plan**

The forward plan was noted. The Tree Team would attend the committee's June meeting to provide an update on their work.

Information on beach huts was requested in relation to impact since the phasing in of the fee changes. Some of this information had already been reported to the committee through updates.

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

**Scrutiny Members present:**

Dean Barrow  
Cherry Nicholas  
Maddy Chapman  
Roger Giles  
Alan Dent  
Bill Nash  
Marianne Rixson  
Bruce de Saram  
Simon Grundy  
Val Ranger  
Eleanor Rylance

**Other Members**

Brian Bailey  
Tom Wright  
Geoff Jung  
Ian Thomas  
Pauline Stott  
Peter Faithfull  
Megan Armstrong  
Rob Longhurst  
David Barratt  
Steve Hall

**Officers present:**

Andrew Ennis, Service Lead Environmental Health and Car Parks  
Simon Davey, Strategic Lead Finance  
Laurence Whitlock, IT Director for Strata  
Giles Salter, Solicitor  
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer

**Apologies from Scrutiny Members:**

Cathy Gardner  
Darryl Nicholas

**Apologies from Non – Scrutiny Members:**

Jill Elson  
Iain Chubb  
Mike Howe  
Graham Godbeer

Chairman ..... Date.....