

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the consultative meeting of Cabinet held at Online via the Zoom app. on 8 September 2021

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.42 pm

59 Public speaking

Cllr Paul Millar spoke on the issue of Exmouth Town Hall remaining closed to the public. He said he had had representations from two residents of his ward who would have benefitted from the Town Hall being open. He claimed that Exeter City Council's offices were open to the public and was unaware of any District Council in the region whose offices remain closed to the public for housing issues. He understood that COVID safety measures such as screens were vital to protect the welfare of staff but stated the council needed to provide a limited face-to-face service to residents whose situations warrant that kind of service.

The Strategic Lead Finance; whose responsibility covered Customer Services and Revenues and Benefits, responded saying there was clear message being communicated out to residents that the Town Hall was supporting the public by appointment-only face to face meetings. Offering appointments from both Exmouth and Honiton meant that the council could provide prepared targeted support with the appropriate trained officer in order to address residents' particular issues.

60 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the consultative meeting of Cabinet held on 28 July 2021 were agreed as a true record.

61 Declarations of interest

Min 72. Beer Community Land Trust Refinancing of Development Loan.
Councillor Geoff Pook, Personal, Chair of Beer CLT and ward member.

62 Matters of urgency

None

63 Confidential/exempt item(s)

None

64 Forward Plan

Members agreed to recommend the contents of the Forward Plan for key decisions for the period 1 October to 31 January 2022.

DECISION:

The recommendation(s) was/were approved by a Senior Officer. The Senior Officer Decision Notice is listed above under Additional Documents.

65 **Minutes of Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee held on 12 July 2021**

Members noted the minutes of Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee held on 12 July 2021.

66 **Minutes of Recycling and Waste Partnership Board held on 14 July 2021**

Members considered the minutes and recommendations of Recycling and Waste Partnership Board on 14 July 2021.

Members noted the following minute but considered no further recommendation was required;

Minute 7 SUEZ bridging solution regarding contract tipping point

1. that the Board had received the presentation regarding the bridging solution and had requested more detail in a written report.
2. that a more detailed report on a bridging solution would be brought forward for its consideration in due course.

Members agreed to recommend the following minutes;

Minute 8 SUEZ report on current collection issues and action plan

1. that SUEZ be requested to provide a written improvement and action plan to deal with current collection issues, including further material segregation trials, in discussion with crews and EDDC officers, be approved
2. that members visit the Greendale depot site to observe the work that is undertaken there, with members also shadowing collection crews on their rounds, be agreed.

Minute 10 Force majeure position and performance framework

that the current force majeure position with SUEZ cease with the ending of coronavirus restrictions on 19 July 2021, be approved.

DECISION:

The recommendation(s) was/were approved by a Senior Officer. The Senior Officer Decision Notice is listed above under Additional Documents.

67 **Minutes of Community Grant Panel held on 22 July 2021**

Members agreed to note and recommend the minutes and recommendations of Community Grant Panel held on 22 July 2021.

Minute 59 Community Buildings Fund

1. that the Community Buildings Fund eligibility criteria be extended to include:
 - a. Community buildings within town council areas, but outside of the town itself and in a separate village;
 - b. all community-owned pubs.
2. to recommend to Council that the budget for the Community Buildings Fund be increased to £35k for the financial year 2022/2023.

DECISION:

The recommendation(s) was/were approved by a Senior Officer. The Senior Officer Decision Notice is listed above under Additional Documents.

68 **Minutes of Asset Management Forum held on 27 July 2021**

Members agreed to note and recommend the minutes and recommendations of the consultative meeting of Asset Management Forum held on 27 July 2021.

Minute 62: Request for budget from Asset Maintenance Reserve

to recommend to Council that the sum of £245,700 be made available from the Asset Maintenance Reserve to fund the emergency works to the properties identified within the report as follows:

- a) Sidmouth Swimming Pool £35K (excluding VAT)
- b) Connaught Gardens Shelter 1B £62K (excluding VAT)
- c) Connaught Gardens Watch Tower £25K (excluding VAT)
- d) Exmouth Town Hall and Exmouth Pavilion Mansafe System £9,700 (excluding VAT)
- e) Initial remedial works from Fire Risk Assessments £44K (excluding VAT) with further capital bid required
- f) Norman Lockyer Observatory £70K (excluding VAT)

69 **Minutes of Scrutiny Committee held on 29 July 2021**

Members agreed to have this minute moved to the next Cabinet meeting on 6 October 2021, in order for it to be discussed fully before making any recommendations for approval to senior officers.

Minute 7 Report on proposed actions to improve staff morale

- A. That Cabinet (through the Portfolio Holders for Democracy & Transparency and Strategic Planning) assess whether Member Champion roles should be reintroduced, particularly in respect of the Council as Local Planning Authority.
- B. That Cabinet considers asking the Member Development Working Group to meet as soon as possible to review and revise the member training programme with a view to providing training designed to mitigate concerns raised in the staff survey.

70 **Financial Monitoring Report 2021/22 - Month 4 July 2021**

The Finance Manager gave a summary of the Council's overall financial position for 2021/22 at the end of month four (31 July 2021).

Current monitoring indicated that:

- The General Fund Balance is being maintained within the adopted levels. The first four months of the financial year had seen a return to more stable financial performance however, service demand remained high in many service areas. Income levels continued to recover, for example car parking income, as services reopen. Specific cost pressures had been identified and importantly funded from additional Government grant, these were listed within the report.
- The Housing Revenue Account Balance was being maintained at or above the adopted level.

Having received the report and noted the contents, members accepted the variances identified as part of the Revenue and Capital Monitoring process up to Month 4 be acknowledged and that no further recommendations were required.

71 **Home Safeguard: Contract with PPP (Night Owl)**

The Strategic Lead Housing, Health and Environment presented the report which sought approval for an exemption to Standing Orders for the temporary outsourcing (for 4 months) of Home Safeguard's emergency pendant alarm and out of hours service between 10:15pm to 7:15am.

The Night Operators were a team of 4 call handlers, with 3 members of the team working a shift pattern of 2 nights on and 4 nights off, with the 4th member of the team covering holiday and sickness. During the last 12 months the team had lost 3 night call handlers and had been unable to recruit replacements. At the same time there was an upgrading to the call handling system and a need to ensure appropriate resilience was maintained throughout the period.

Discussions included the following:

- Opposition to outsourcing to external contractors
- The need to review the salary levels as they appear low and therefore not helping when trying to recruit
- People deserve to be rewarded the pay their job demands
- Staff cannot be expected to be paid less than agency staff. The service needs to be kept in-house and invest in our own services
- As a statutory service this was the only option for now in order to fulfil our duty to these residents
- This was a short-term fix

The Deputy Leader stated that this was a way forward subject to a defined 4-month duration with continual reassessment to the recruitment issue. He stated the need for customer relationship management reports in the early stages of the contract to check performance and customer satisfaction.

The Strategic Lead Housing, Health and Environment John Golding with the support of the Leader, wished to express his thanks to colleagues and staff who had covered these extra shifts at short notice; he was extremely proud of this service and the people who worked in it.

Having received the report and noted the contents, members;

RECOMMENDED

1. approval of the Contract Standing Orders Exemption
2. the granting of authority for the signing of the contract with PPP (Night Owl)
3. that a further report be brought back in February 2022 in relation to this matter.

DECISION:

The recommendation(s) was/were approved by a Senior Officer. The Senior Officer Decision Notice is listed above under Additional Documents.

72 **Beer Community Land Trust Refinancing of Development Loan**

The Strategic Lead Finance presented a request from Beer Community Land Trust (CLT) asking the Council to refinance two elements of previously approved development loans. The request was to help the Trust address delay issues through Covid and certain cost increases as identified in their request. During discussions it was stated that the council should do everything it could to be supporting CLTs especially as they were little cost involved. Members congratulated the Beer CLT for the successful work they had done to date.

Having received the report and noted the contents, members;

RECOMMENDED:

1. to approve Beer CLT request of refinancing previously approved development loans as detailed in the report, and
2. that the Council's costs of entering into revised agreements, including due diligence, legal and surveying costs are to be met by the Borrower.

Decision:

To approve Beer CLT request of refinancing previously approved development loans as detailed in the report. That Cabinet recommends that the Council's costs of entering into revised agreements, including due diligence, legal and surveying costs are to be met by the Borrower.

This being in line with the report:

The Council has made available development finance to the CLT for two schemes providing local affordable housing and amendments of refinancing agreed as follows:

- 1st scheme (7 houses; 4 affordable rental and 3 discounted sales) - Now complete with original loan being £1,060,000, the majority now repaid in line with the agreement. The final sum outstanding is £290,000 due for repayment now. The request from the CLT is for a further 5 year term, with £40,000 principal paid off now, leaving £250,000 being refinanced giving a repayment date of October 2026.
To be refinanced on the same terms in relation to corresponding Public Works Loan Rate with a margin added to ensure compliance with subsidy control/competition rules.
- 2nd scheme (6 units; 2 houses and 1 flat affordable rental, 2 houses and 1 flat shared equity) – Currently in development with a loan of £1,150,000. The request does not to increase the amount borrowed but asks to reschedule the loan tranches and extend the term of the loans by a maximum of 6 months.
- The 1st tranche of £250,000 scheduled repayment June 2022 extended to November 2022
- The 2nd tranche of £550,000 to be released in September 2021 with repayment in October 2026
- The 3rd tranche of £350,000 to be released before March 2022 with repayment by November 2022

Again to be refinanced on the same terms.

The development finance to Beer CLT has previously been agreed on the understanding that appropriate collateral is legally secured to protect the Council and all costs are recovered to give a cost neutral or better position to the Council. Should Cabinet agree to the refinancing as requested then it will be ensured these two key aspects remain.

Reasons for decision:

The decision is in line with the recommendations of the report presented to Cabinet and members of Cabinet were in agreement with the report.

The report set out the proposed policy for the deployment of the Innovation and Resilience Fund (formerly known as the AIR Fund) and associated Terms of Reference for the decision making panel. The policy document detailed how the application process would be managed and the criteria businesses and organisations would be required to meet to access the grant funding.

Having received the report and noted the contents, members;

RECOMMENDED:

1. the approval of the appended Innovation and Resilience Fund (IRF) policy document
2. the delegation of authority to the Service Lead (Growth, Development and Prosperity) in consultation with the Leader, Deputy Leader, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Chief Finance Officer to agree such further changes to this policy as may be required
3. the approval of the appended Terms of Reference document for the IRF Panel
4. the delegation of authority to the Service Lead (Growth, Development and Prosperity) in consultation with the Leader, Deputy Leader, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Chief Finance Officer to agree such further changes to this Terms of Reference document as may be required
5. the approval of the appointment of a cross-party group of members to the IRF Panel, comprising the Leader, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holders for Finance and Climate Action & Emergency Response, two Conservative members, one of the Independent members and one Cranbrook Voice member, to be nominated by the respective Groups.

DECISION:

The recommendation(s) was/were approved by a Senior Officer. The Senior Officer Decision Notice is listed above under Additional Documents.

74 **Housing Options team staffing requirement**

The report addressed a staffing requirement within the Housing Options team. Members verbally supported the request and thanked John Golding and his team for coping with the extra workload over the last few months.

RECOMMENDED that Cabinet recommend to Council;

to approve the additional budget in respect of two additional fixed term, full time Housing Officer posts for 12 months each; to deal with the additional demand on the homelessness service. The budget is in the region of £67,576 for two 12 month posts.

REASON:

To ensure the Housing Options team are better equipped to tackle the level of pressure on the homelessness service.

Attendance List

Present:

Portfolio Holders

M Armstrong

Portfolio Holder Sustainable Homes and Communities

P Arnott	Leader
P Hayward	Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder Economy and Assets
G Jung	Portfolio Holder Coast, Country and Environment
D Ledger	Portfolio Holder Strategic Planning
M Rixson	Portfolio Holder Climate Action and Emergency Response
J Rowland	Portfolio Holder Finance
J Loudoun	Portfolio Holder Council and Corporate Co-ordination
N Hookway	Portfolio Holder Tourism, Sport, Leisure and Culture

Cabinet apologies:

S Jackson	Portfolio Holder Democracy, Transparency and Communications
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Also present (for some or all the meeting)

Councillor Jake Bonetta
Councillor Colin Brown
Councillor Maddy Chapman
Councillor Olly Davey
Councillor Steve Gazzard
Councillor Vicky Johns
Councillor Paul Millar
Councillor Andrew Moulding
Councillor Geoff Pook
Councillor Eleanor Rylance
Councillor Eileen Wragg

Also present:

Officers:

Sue Bewes, Housing Services Manager
Amanda Coombes, Democratic Services Officer
Simon Davey, Strategic Lead Finance
John Golding, Strategic Lead Housing, Health and Environment
Henry Gordon Lennox, Strategic Lead Governance and Licensing (and Monitoring Officer)
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer
Robert Murray, Economic Development Manager
John Symes, Finance Manager
Tom Winters, Economic Development Officer

Chair

Date: