

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the consultative meeting of Cabinet held Online via the Zoom app. on 6 October 2021**

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

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.25 pm

#### **75 Public speaking**

A statement submitted by a member of the public was received under minute 87.

#### **76 Minutes of the previous meetings**

The minutes of the consultative meetings of Cabinet held on 1 September and 8 September 2021 were agreed.

#### **77 Declarations of interest**

Min 91; Colyton Neighbourhood Plan Examiner's Report.

Councillor Paul Arnott, Personal. Ward Member for Coly Valley.

Min 83; Exmouth Queen's Drive Group held on 7 September 2021.

Councillor Nick Hookway, Personal. Ward Member for Exmouth Littleham.

Min 93; Seaton Jurassic.

Councillor Jack Rowland, Personal. Ward Member for Seaton.

#### **78 Matters of urgency**

None.

#### **79 Confidential/exempt item(s)**

None.

#### **80 Forward Plan**

Members agreed to recommend the contents of the Forward Plan for key decision for the period 1 November 2021 to 28 February 2022 for approval.

#### **DECISION:**

The recommendation was approved by a Senior Officer. The Senior Officer Decision Notice is listed above under Additional Documents.

#### **81 Minutes of Scrutiny Committee held on 29 July 2021**

The Portfolio Holder for Democracy, Transparency and Communications outlined her current work in reinvigorating the Member Development Working Group, including further review of Member Champions. She planned to survey the Members, to help identify skill sets across the Council, and review the existing training offer in both topics, and how that training was delivered.

The Chief Executive outlined the background for the drive for more Member Champions, being the request from the Planning teams that previous related member champions in

planning areas had been invaluable in assisting with queries and helping to improve the planning knowledge of other Members.

Councillor Alan Dent, who had been involved with the original training program and had experienced the collaborative working outlined by the Chief Executive, stressed to Members that attendance at training was key.

The Monitoring Officer reminded Cabinet that Council had already agreed previously to review the role of Member Champions when they were re-introduced to see whether they were beneficial. The Leader requested that a report on Member Champions and the role going forward would be brought to Cabinet in the future.

In light of the discussion and comments, Members agreed to note the recommendations of Scrutiny Committee held on 29 July 2021 and agreed that no further recommendations were required.

#### **Minute 7 Report on proposed actions to improve staff morale**

1. That the 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.
2. 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.

#### **82 Minutes of Community Grant Panel held on 31 August 2021**

Members agreed to note the minutes of Community Grant Panel held on 31 August 2021.

#### **83 Minutes of Exmouth Queen's Drive Delivery Group held on 7 September 2021**

In response to a query, gaining a permanent planning consent means that the temporary attractions can continue, but it does not compromise any future plans for the site which will have to be considered as a fresh planning application.

Members agreed to note and recommend the minutes and recommendations of Exmouth Queen's Drive Delivery Group held on 7 September 2021 to officers for decision.

#### **Minute 4 Planning Position update**

That in order to provide certainty moving forward, permanent planning consent for temporary uses on the Queen's Drive site be sought as soon as possible.

#### **84 Minutes of LED Monitoring Forum held on 14 September 2021**

Members agreed to note and recommend the minutes and recommendations of LED Monitoring Forum held on 14 September 2021 to officers for decision.

#### **Minute 75 Strategic Outcomes Planning Guidance (SOPG) DIAGNOSTIC final report**

that the Strategic Outcomes Planning Guidance DIAGNOSTIC report be approved.

**DECISION:**

The recommendation was approved by a Senior Officer. The Senior Officer Decision Notice is listed above under Additional Documents.

85 **Minutes of Housing Review Board held on 16 September 2021**

Members agreed to note and recommend the minutes and recommendations of Housing Review Board held on 16 September 2021 and to:

**Recommend the following to officers for decision;**

**Minute 2 Appointment of Vice Chair**

that the recommendation that tenant representative Peter Sullivan be appointed Vice Chair of the Board for the ensuing year be passed for approval.

**DECISION:**

The recommendations were approved by a Senior Officer. The Senior Officer Decision Notice is listed above under Additional Documents.

**Minute 9 Updated Housing Policies**

that the policies are formally adopted by the Council is passed for approval.

**Minute 12 Procurement of the gas servicing/services contract**

that delegated authority is granted to the Strategic Lead for Housing, Health & Environment in conjunction with the Housing Service Lead and the Strategic Lead for Governance & Licencing and the Strategic Lead for Finance, to agree to proceed with the relevant stages of the procurement process and agree to granting the contract to the contractor identified in the process to deliver the 3 Star Gas Servicing Contract.

**Minute 13 Housing Revenue Account and Housing Capital finance report**

that the Housing Revenue Account and Housing Capital Finance report is passed for approval.

**DECISION:**

The recommendations were approved by a Senior Officer. The Senior Officer Decision Notice is listed above under Additional Documents.

**Recommend the following to Council;**

**Minute 8 Housing Strategy 2020-2024**

that the Housing Strategy be adopted and is passed for approval.

**Minute 11 Property & Asset; expanding the compliance and cyclical servicing arm of the property and asset team.**

that Cabinet and Council approval be sought for additional budget to resource new posts for the delivery of compliance and cyclical service work streams to ensure that the Council's housing stock remains safe and compliant so that tenants can feel safe in their homes.

86 **Minutes of Housing Task and Finish Forum held on 9 September 2021**

Members agreed to note and recommend the minutes and recommendations of Housing Task and Finish Forum held on 9 September 2021 to Council.

**Minute 29 Affordable Housing TaFF conclusions report**

that the Housing TaFF recommend to Cabinet and Council the recommendations set out in section 4 of the report, with the following addenda:

1. Identify EDDC or market sites or existing developer led sites.
2. Develop agreements with developers for them to develop and make profit with EDDC having a portion of market and/or affordable/social houses to reflect the Council's contribution to the development. This will enable to identify skills, models and opportunities.
3. Concurrent with 1. Identify communities that need support to develop a community-led housing scheme by offering technical and financial support.
4. In the meantime develop flexible models to get proof of concept.

87 **A proposal for an Affordable/Social Housing Task Force**

A statement from Mr Smith of Cranbrook was read out on his behalf in relation to this item. In the statement, Mr Smith outlined that in excess of 5000 "family units" were registered at Devon Home Choice awaiting housing provision. Since April 2017, no purchase, or build of, social housing had been undertaken by the Council, with no plans to do so for 2021/22. The company East Devon Homes had been unfit for purpose in his opinion; and that Cabinet had been slow to grasp the gravity of the housing shortage, He gave an example of Cranbrook, built to deliver housing development obligations for the District, but still leaving a localised need. He asked Cabinet to act with urgency to address the housing situation, and that any Task Force put in place was subject to performance monitoring.

In response to the statement, the Chair gave this thanks for the contribution made. He stressed the number one priority for the Council was to address the housing crisis. The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning disputed some of the comments made in the statement, and reminded the Cabinet that whilst homes had not been developed by the Council, our acquisitions and housing association developments have delivered 200 - 300 new affordable homes per year.

The Strategic Lead for Housing, Health and Environment presented his report, containing the recommendations from the Affordable Housing Task and Finish Forum. The report recommended the creation of a Task Force of officers employed to focus on delivery of social and affordable housing. Learning from the TaFF's investigations and our Housing Company experience found that we need to create officer capacity with the right skills, a source of funding, a risk appetite, and a single purpose team to achieve the ambition of increasing the output of social and affordable housing. He advised the Cabinet that patience was required to deliver this proposed intervention, particularly in a competitive housing market, but the proposal offered an exciting and realistic delivery model.

Debate included:

- Imperative to act swiftly with a model that would succeed;
- Shortage of rental properties was acute;
- Resourcing the proposed task force team was key, and best practice from other authorities should be sought to help develop the job descriptions;
- Review the financial incentive to downsize, balanced with the level of smaller homes available; this would be referred to the Housing Review Board to consider;

- Exciting opportunity to invest half a million, obtained by savings through budget underspend, to make a significant difference to the District in driving forward multiple delivery models of affordable housing;
- The level of second homes made a sizeable impact on the housing crisis, and detailed information on the number of those, at ward level, would be helpful to establish pinch points. The issue of second homes should be referred onto the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning.

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Homes and Communities, in response to a question, informed the Cabinet about her work in bringing forward lobbying with the support of local authorities in the South West, specifically on the issue of retaining a higher percentage of right to buy sales (RTB), and expressed concern about homes being decarbonised through significant investment being lost to RTB.

**Recommendation to Council:**

That Council approves the appointment of a Housing Task Force with the staffing resource outlined in the report to deliver more social and affordable housing with a budget of £250,000 per annum for two years.

**Reason:**

To deliver on the ambitions contained in the Council Plan and the recommendations coming through the work of the Affordable Housing Task and Finish Forum to produce more social/affordable housing.

**88 Public Health priority actions 2019-2020 Annual Review**

The Public Health Project Officer informed members that each year there was a review to this work and summarised how EDDC met the targets and aspirations of its Public Health Strategic Plan. The Annual Review of Public Health 2019-2020 actions looked back at the year which pre-dated the pandemic. It showed the commitment to activities across council service plans, which all aimed to make a positive difference to people's physical health and mental wellbeing across East Devon.

The Strategic Lead for Housing, Health and Environment responded to comments on the Sport England Steering Group in relation to involvement with Cranbrook; and to confirm that the Public Health Strategic Plan was regularly refreshed every 3 to 4 years, driven by the annually refreshed service plans. With work currently ongoing preparing the annual report for the pandemic year, the Strategic Plan would be refreshed to reflect learning and the wider recognition of good population health and wellbeing.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance commended the dedicated work of the Public Health Project Officer, particularly in her involvement with the Poverty Working Panel.

Having received the report and noted the contents, members welcomed the contribution made by the services through activities reviewed annually which underpinned the Public Health Strategic Plan and that no further recommendations were required.

**89 Corporate Debt Policy**

The Service Lead Revenues, Benefits, Customer Services & Corporate Fraud & Compliance introduced the Corporate Debt Policy which had been updated to reflect changes in legislation, the Poverty Strategy, changes in statutory fees and other related

policies. She also highlighted that the updated policy reflected the work of the Poverty Strategy. Citizens Advice had been consulted as part of the review process, and had agreed that the approach for debt recovery was sensible.

**RECOMMENDED that;**

Senior Officers approve the updated Corporate Debt Policy.

**REASON:**

To ensure the Corporate Debt Policy reflected the latest changes in legislation, statutory fees and was in line with other related policies and strategies.

90 **Innovation and Resilience Fund (IRF) - Exemption to Standing Order for Project Sponsor Services**

The report set out the action taken by officers to commission specialist project sponsor support to help East Devon business owners prepare robust applications to the Innovation and Resilience Fund (IRF). This assistance would ensure the required IRF scoring criteria was addressed wherever possible by the project proposals put forward. The external support would allow officers to focus on the assessment and reporting of full submissions ahead of member Panel decision-making and maximise the likelihood of EDDC being able to allocate its total ARG top up (£1.14m) before the Government spend deadline of 31 March 2022.

In response to a question, the Portfolio Holder for Finance confirmed that the funding would be allocated before the deadline; and that he looked forward to considering applications to this Fund.

Having received the report, members noted the contents, and agreed that no further recommendation was required.

91 **Colyton Neighbourhood Plan Examiner's Report**

The Chair stepped back from chairing the meeting for this item because of the declaration made as local Ward Member. Councillor Dan Ledger, acting as Vice Chair in the absence of Cllr Hayward, chaired this item.

The report provided feedback and set out proposed changes following the examination of the Colyton Neighbourhood Plan. The independent examination of the Plan had now concluded and the final Examiner's report received. If accepted, a decision notice would be published accordingly. This would confirm that the Plan could go forward for public vote in a local referendum as the penultimate stage in the plan-making process.

Councillor Helen Parr, as Ward Member, commended the plan to the Cabinet, highlighting the extensive work by the steering group that had prepared the plan. The Parish Council had accepted the recommendations made by the Inspector.

Having received the report and noted the contents, members;

**RECOMMENDED to officers:**

1. that the Examiner's recommendations on the Colyton Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan) be endorsed,

2. that a 'referendum version' of the Plan (incorporating the Examiner's modifications) proceed to referendum and that a decision notice to this effect be published,
3. that the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group be congratulated on their hard work.

**DECISION:**

The recommendation was approved by a Senior Officer. The Senior Officer Decision Notice is listed above under Additional Documents.

92 **Council Plan 2021-2023**

The Chief Executive provided the updated draft of the new Council Plan for 2021-2023, following the meeting of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Portfolio Holder for Council and Corporate Co-ordination voiced his thanks to the Chief Executive, Jo Avery and other officers for their work and support in assisting in the preparation of the draft Council Plan. He commended the document to Cabinet.

Having received the report and noted the contents, members;

**RECOMMENDED to officers:**

That the draft of the new council Plan 2021-2023 final text progress to the design and publication phase, be agreed.

**RECOMMENDED to COUNCIL**

Approval of the new Council Plan 2021-2023

93 **Seaton Jurassic update report**

The report of the Service Lead for Place Assets and Commercialisation gave an update on the current position for Seaton Jurassic, which became the direct responsibility of the Council on 17 September 2021 following the exit of Devon Wildlife Trust. Cabinet were asked to consider the next steps for the site, and what options Cabinet requested further investigation into, before a final decision on a deliverable option could be considered in January 2022.

Debate included:

- Devon Wildlife Trust had made excellent efforts to deliver from the site;
- Appreciation for the detail in the report, which helped to make the public aware of the issues with the site, and the ongoing costs even as the building remained closed;
- Concern that a five year old building needed remedial works because of defects, especially in light of the cost of the building at £4.2m. The project should therefore be investigated by the Audit and Governance Committee (including referral to the Scrutiny Committee as appropriate). In response, the Chief Executive advised the Cabinet that such an investigation should be undertaken independently, and therefore could be referred to SWAP for addition to their audit plan;
- Appreciation for the work undertaken by officers and relevant Portfolio Holders in bringing forward the next steps required and to begin to explore the options available to the Council.

Having received the report and noted the contents, Cabinet acknowledged that Seaton Jurassic would remain closed until a final decision has been made over the preferred option for its future use, and whilst remedial works are being fully scoped, and noted the current position of the centre.

**Recommended to officers:**

1. That arrangements be made to ensure that, should the building remain vacant for the summer season of 2022, that opportunities are explored to ensure a café type use can trade in part of the building for the summer season as an interim measure;
2. That best efforts are made to negotiate and agree with the three principal funders arrangements to protect the Council's position against having to repay the principal sums;
3. That the next steps set out in section 10 of the covering report are progressed;
4. That the three options set out in section 11 of the covering report be considered with a further report to Cabinet for January 2022;
5. That the Seaton Jurassic project be referred to the Audit and Governance Committee for examination in the first instance.

**Cabinet recommend to Council**

1. A revenue budget of £45,000 to meet ongoing costs for the current financial year for the centre be approved.

**Attendance List**

**Present:**

**Portfolio Holders**

M Armstrong	Portfolio Holder Sustainable Homes and Communities
P Arnott	Leader
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
S Jackson	Portfolio Holder Democracy, Transparency and Communications
N Hookway	Portfolio Holder Tourism, Sport, Leisure and Culture

**Cabinet apologies:**

P Hayward	Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder Economy and Assets
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**Also present (for some or all the meeting)**

Councillor Denise Bickley  
Councillor Jake Bonetta  
Councillor Colin Brown  
Councillor Fred Caygill  
Councillor Maddy Chapman  
Councillor Bruce De Saram

Councillor Alan Dent  
Councillor Peter Faithfull  
Councillor Sam Hawkins  
Councillor Richard Lawrence  
Councillor Paul Millar  
Councillor Helen Parr  
Councillor Eleanor Rylance  
Councillor Eileen Wragg  
Councillor Tom Wright  
Councillor Geoff Pratt

**Also present:**

**Officers:**

Tim Child, Service Lead - Place, Assets & Commercialisation  
Simon Davey, Strategic Lead Finance  
John Golding, Strategic Lead Housing, Health and Environment  
Henry Gordon Lennox, Strategic Lead Governance and Licensing (and Monitoring Officer)  
Libby Jarrett, Service Lead Revenues and Benefits  
Robert Murray, Economic Development Manager  
Helen Wharam, Public Health Project Officer  
Mark Williams, Chief Executive  
Susan Howl, Democratic Services Manager  
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer  
Andrew Hopkins, Communications and Events Consultant  
Charles Plowden, Service Lead Countryside and Leisure

Chair .....

Date: .....