

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the consultative meeting of Scrutiny Committee held Online via the Zoom app on 7 October 2021**

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

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.20 pm

#### **11 Public speaking**

There were no members of the public registered to speak.

#### **12 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 29 July 2021**

The minutes of the previous consultative meeting held on 29 July 2021 were received.

#### **13 Declarations of interest**

Minute 17. Further report on proposed actions to improve staff morale. Councillor Mike Allen, Personal, The Member has made a Code of Conduct complaint which remains outstanding.

#### **14 Matters of urgency**

There were no matters of urgency.

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

There were no confidential / exempt items.

#### **16 Decisions made by Cabinet called in by Members for scrutiny in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules**

There were no decisions made by Cabinet called in by Members for scrutiny.

#### **17 Further report on proposed actions to improve staff morale**

The Chief Executive presented a further report setting out proposed actions to improve staff morale. This followed the two previous reports to the Scrutiny Committee regarding staff morale and the issues raised and identified by staff in the HSE survey. Appendix 1 of the report set out the proposed action/project plan which is currently being factored in to the forward plans for other Committees. Appendix 2 included the annual Human Resources summary report for 2020/21 which highlighted a number of relevant considerations which are normally reported to the Committee.

Questions to the Chief Executive and discussion included the following points:

- Consideration could be given to Portfolio Holders having a greater role liaising between Members and Officers and this could assist new Members with signposting when queries arise.
- The management structure is in place to enable staff to respond to Members appropriately.

- Consideration could also be given to providing Members with regular updates when there are changes of Officer / post holder.
- The average age of the workforce is increasing and now stands at 48.
- The issues around Members' behaviour were improving but require consistent attention.
- More could be done to reduce staff absence and this was reflected in the proposed action plan. A follow up staff survey would be undertaken for comparison purposes.
- Regarding the Council's Investors in People status, the Chief Executive and the Corporate HR Manager had met with the IIP assessors and the next assessment is due within the next 15-18 months.
- In response to a point regarding the handling of a Member's complaint under the Code of Conduct, it was noted that there is a process for keeping those involved informed about progress.
- Regarding the fear of Covid-19 and staff returning to the workplace, it was noted that there is a policy of encouraging all staff to be double vaccinated and to take a lateral flow test before coming to the office. Public Health advice is also being adhered to regarding social distancing.
- With regard to Member Development, there were previously open meetings for new Members to attend and ask questions and it was noted that recent new Members have not had an opportunity to meet with colleagues.

The Monitoring Officer advised that the relevant Portfolio Holder is aware of the need for the Member Development Working Group to meet and had stated at Cabinet the day before about her intentions to re-invigorate the Group. The Code of Conduct and Member Officer Protocol are currently being reviewed and need to be in place so that training can be specific to the policy framework. All Members are welcome to attend and contribute to the Standards Working Group meetings as these policies are considered.

Further discussion included the following:

- It is anticipated that the Personnel Committee will handle staff and employment matters moving forward, but the Scrutiny Committee remains free to request further information and reports on matters of concern at any time.
- Regarding the theme of procedure in meetings in the proposed Action Plan, it was noted that training for Members on making succinct points in meetings had been raised during a previous discussion.
- Work is currently underway through the Personnel Committee to address issues around recruitment.

The Committee wished to acknowledge the excellent work across the Council in maintaining services during recent challenging times.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

1. That the proposed action plan set out in Appendix 1 of the Chief Executive's report is accepted and it be endorsed that the CEO takes forward the actions identified and takes any further reports on the matter to the Personnel Committee.
2. That the relevant Portfolio Holder be invited to the next Scrutiny Committee meeting to provide an update on progress with the Member Development Working Group.

18 **Quarterly Monitoring of Performance - Quarter 1 2021 - 2022 - April to June 21**

The Chief Executive presented the report and highlighted 4 performance indicators which are showing a status of concern:

- the number of households living in temporary accommodation,
- working days lost due to sickness absence,
- percentage of planning appeal decisions allowed against the authority's decision to refuse, and
- percentage of Stage 2 complaints responded to within stated timeframes.

Consideration of the report included the following points:

- There was concern as to how to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation and addressing affordable rents and social housing is at the forefront of the Administration's aims.
- The matter of providing sufficient emergency accommodation over the winter is being addressed.

The report was noted and the Committee acknowledged that action is being taken to address the supply of emergency accommodation over the winter.

19 **Forward Plan**

An update on progress with previously agreed forward plan items would be provided at the next meeting.

**Attendance List**

**Councillors present:**

T Wright (Chair)  
V Ranger (Vice-Chair)  
M Allen  
A Bruce  
M Chapman  
O Davey  
S Hawkins  
T McCollum  
P Millar  
H Parr  
E Rylance  
J Kemp

**Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)**

M Armstrong  
P Arnott  
D Bickley  
C Brown  
N Hookway  
G Jung  
D Ledger  
A Moulding

J Rowland  
I Thomas  
E Wragg

**Officers in attendance:**

Henry Gordon Lennox, Strategic Lead Governance and Licensing (and Monitoring Officer)

Wendy Harris, Democratic Services Officer

Sarah Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer

Mark Williams, Chief Executive

**Councillor apologies:**

A Colman

C Gardner

Chair .....

Date: .....