



## Agenda for Overview Committee Thursday, 27th June, 2019, 6.00 pm

### Members of Overview Committee

Councillors: N Hookway (Chairman), V Johns (Vice-Chairman),  
M Allen, S Chamberlain, B De Saram, I Hall, M Hartnell,  
S Hawkins, F King, J Loudoun, M Rixson, T Woodward and  
C Wright

**Venue:** Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton

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(or group number 01395 517546)

Tuesday, 18 June 2019

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1 Public Speaking

Information on [public speaking](#) is available online.

2 Minutes of the previous meeting (Pages 3 - 8)

3 Apologies

4 Declarations of interest

Guidance is available online to Councillors and co-opted members on making [declarations of interest](#).

5 Matters of urgency

Information on [matters of urgency](#) is available online.

6 Confidential/exempt item(s)

To agree any items to be dealt with after the public (including press) have been excluded. There are **no** items that officers recommend should be dealt with in this way.

7 Annual report of the Overview Committee 2018 - 2019 (Pages 9 - 11)

The report sets out the work covered by the Overview Committee in the last civic term.

8 Brief outline of scoping issues (Page 12)

The Democratic Services Officer will present the principles of scoping issues to the committee.

## 9 Overview Forward Plan (Page 13)

An opportunity to review the current issues planned for scoping and adding to the work of the Committee. Suggestions are welcomed from committee members to add to the current plan.

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If you are recording the meeting, you are asked to act in a reasonable manner and not disrupt the conduct of meetings for example by using intrusive lighting, flash photography or asking people to repeat statements for the benefit of the recording. You may not make an oral commentary during the meeting. The Chairman has the power to control public recording and/or reporting so it does not disrupt the meeting.

Members of the public exercising their right to speak during Public Question Time will be recorded.

[Decision making and equalities](#)

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**EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL****Minutes of the meeting of Overview Committee held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 28 March 2019****Attendance list at end of document**

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.11 pm

**24 Public Speaking**

There were no questions from the public on items on the agenda.

**25 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the Overview Committee held on the 15 November 2018 were confirmed as a true record. The minutes of the joint meeting held with the Scrutiny Committee on the 16 January 2019 were also confirmed as a correct record.

A query was raised on the issue of SMART objectives and if that discussion, as set out in the minutes of 16 January, had taken place.

In response, the committee were informed that the process of reviewing the service plan objectives would have involvement of the Scrutiny and Overview committees in the next civic term earlier in the process, with joint meetings in the autumn to debate the service objectives coming forward from the new Council Plan.

Councillor Allen challenged that the objectives put forward on 16 January had not been amended at their request, specifically in regard to those relating to Economy and Regeneration.

The Chairman advised that the new Overview Chairman in the new civic term would have to closely monitor any developing plans accordingly.

**26 Declarations of interest**

Minute 28 Poverty, homelessness, human rights and health and wellbeing in East Devon - scoping report.

Councillor Mike Allen, Personal, Works in food bank run by Honiton Community Church.

Minute 30 Overview Draft Annual Report.

Councillor Ian Hall, Personal, Chairman of Cloakham Lawns Sports Centre.

**27 Digital East Devon - Firmstep presentation**

The Chairman welcomed the Service Lead for Organisational Development and Transformation, Karen Jenkins.

She outlined steps the Council will be implementing as part of the Digital Strategy. This included a step change in the delivery of digital services, by introducing new software – Firmstep. The outcome would be to meet the growing customer demand for the choice to transact online, with better customer journeys – both in completing the transaction, but also kept informed of progress in getting to completion.

The committee received a presentation from Firmstep Customer Ambassador, Hilary Jones and colleague Tamsin Cooper. Hilary explained her own experience of implementation at Scarborough Borough Council, and gave practical examples of what customers can expect from the changes.

Tamsin Cooper took the committee through some specific examples of transactions that a customer could complete in one place, through their own customer account. This meant that a customer didn't need to search for each individual service they required, or had to complete information for each of those services required. Logging into their customer account provided access to all the relevant information to that customer.

Other benefits of the new software included:

- Tailoring ability to provide the right questions and validate the responses, streamlining the process to what the customer needs;
- Ability to transact on behalf of others, such adult with mature parent who is not confident in transacting online;
- Transactions working across smartphones, tablets and other devices;
- Feedback built in to keep customer updated on progress and provide reminders;
- Frees up frontline staff to help with customers who do need personal interaction in order to transact, because much of the administration will have been dealt with by the software.

Developers from Strata – John Williams and Roy Podbery – were also present. They would be working on moving the existing online transactions to the new software, and creating new ones, working closely with officers delivering the service.

Councillors raised several questions on service delivery to understand how the changes would benefit residents of East Devon.

Debate on the issue covered:

- Helping digital inclusion for all sectors of the community, through front line staff helping people to become more confident in transacting online, and Councillors championing that support;
- Recognition that not all transactions can be offered online, because of their complexity;
- Frontline staff helping customers complete information online was already happening, and this would extend that further, to other transactions;
- Using a wide range of means to help people, including community groups and family members, as well as frontline staff;
- Expected take-up was high, based on experience both with existing LAGAN (current software) transactions at the Council, and with authorities across the country using Firmstep;
- Firmstep was compliant with data protection regulation, working with a secure workflow and on a permissions basis;
- The Digital Strategy was clear that this was not a channel shift to all transactions being online – but to offer the choice, accepting that some services, such as homelessness triage cases, needed personal interaction;
- Positive approach to providing a solution to customers that can signpost to what they need, regardless of who is providing it - such as other authorities or voluntary bodies that can provide help and advice.

The committee were advised to look specifically at Scarborough Borough Council's website, as a working example of the range of services available to residents to transact with online. A customer network also existed to provide lots of case examples and shared good practice.

In response to a question about timeframe for implantation, the committee were informed that Phase 1, covering existing transactions that the Council offers online, would take between 12 and 18 months, before moving onto Phase 2 for new transactions. There would be continual improvement to keep developing what was available, to meet demand. Development for the Cloud 9 based East Devon App was also planned, to include voice recognition.

The Chairman welcomed the development in online services and agreed that it was an exciting time for improving service delivery further. He thanked the representatives for their extensive presentation and helpful examples.

## 28 **Poverty, homelessness, human rights and health and wellbeing in East Devon - scoping report**

Cabinet received the report at their meeting of the 6 March 2019, in response to a Council motion in December 2018.

The motion put was "Following the findings of both the UK Equalities and Human Rights Commission and the UN Special Rapporteur on the impact of benefits changes and other spending cuts on people living in the UK, this Council will receive a report on the potential impacts on residents in East Devon and the need for further support from this Council, for example in supporting the roll-out of Universal Credit, homelessness prevention or for local food banks".

The report tried to scope the subject, and suggested themes for further investigation to provide a locally meaningful analysis of poverty and interventions that could influence, and perhaps provide action, to alleviate the impact of poverty on individuals and communities. It was recognised that the implications highlighted were as a result of national social welfare policy decisions, where the Council had limited influence. The report also proposed that the council work alongside Devon County Council, who were also investigating the issues and share the same concerns.

Cabinet resolved to agree the scope with the themes set out in the report, namely:

- Welfare benefits
- Homelessness
- Food banks
- Local economy
- Health and wellbeing of individuals and communities

Draft terms of reference have been made for this work, falling to the formed Devon Strategic Partnership Welfare Task Group. This group includes representation from East Devon District Council.

The committee discussed:

- Including in the review what local services can provide;
- Defining affordable homes and pushing back against developer arguments for not fulfilling the target percentage of affordable homes being built;

- Impact on affordable housing, recognising housing crisis, and reduction or withdrawal of grants to build homes;
- Profit had increased for house builders.

Cllr Allen tabled a paper setting out his suggestions for key areas of focus for the Council's approach that should be included, which is appended to these minutes. The suggestions would go forward with the minutes of the meeting to the Task Group.

**RECOMMENDED** to Cabinet

that the additional suggestions for key areas of focus go forward to the Devon Strategic Partnership Welfare Task Group for consideration alongside Cabinet's agreed themes of the scope.

29 **Environmental sustainability and climate change emergency**

Devon County Council have agreed, following a proposal by their Cabinet, to declare a 'climate emergency' and start a county-wide partnership to ensure that Devon is carbon neutral by 2050. The report before the committee, due to go before Cabinet in April, requests a commitment from this authority to be part of this partnership. The County will be working with Exeter University and others who can draw in the necessary experts to ensure that any plans adopted have the impact sought.

The committee discussed:

- Delivery of charging points in car parks. Many authorities were undertaking their own installations. There was some debate that, whilst this might help in respect of emissions, the electricity still had to be produced;
- Need for government support to change housing build requirements to include better standards, such as quality insulation and PV panels, balanced with what those measures cost on the overall cost of build;
- Society demand for new products, rather than repair, reuse and recycle;
- Need to see some specific proposals, on how the District can sustain itself and how;
- Need to bring forward the proposed date for these measures – too little too late?;
- Need of a test bed – such as East Devon – to establish what would be needed to reach the target;
- Future Council Plan should reflect the need to address climate change.

**RECOMMENDED to Cabinet**

to recommend to Council that we work with Devon County Council on a shared climate change programme, and signal our commitment to tackling climate change in areas where we can affect positive and meaningful change in our activities, and those of our partners, communities and residents.

30 **Overview Draft Annual Report**

The committee considered the draft report on the work of the Committee in the current civic term.

The Vice Chairman, Councillor Ian Hall, voiced his concern that despite a successful Housing Taff undertaken by the committee during 2017/18, no real progress was evident. He wanted to see progress in providing more social housing and assisted living accommodation, giving an example of opportunity in his own Ward. He asked that this issue be pursued into the next civic term to bring about progress.

There was also a request to make clear that the committee had always strived to push forward for a more business approach to aspects such as commercial property investment.

**RESOLVED** that the final version of the Overview Annual Report be agreed by the Chairman and Vice Chairman before submission to Annual Council in May 2019.

**CLOSING WORDS OF THE CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman gave thanks to the support from officers, both in terms of reports provided, legal advice, and from the Democratic Services Officer.

He asked the committee to continue to, and to develop, strategic forward thinking in the coming civic term. He felt that the role of the committee was important to the Council and should continue to be so.

**Attendance List**

**Councillors present:**

G Godbeer (Chairman)  
I Hall (Vice-Chairman)  
M Allen  
T Dumper  
P Faithfull  
R Longhurst  
G Pratt

**Officers in attendance:**

Anita Williams, Principal Solicitor (and Deputy Monitoring Officer)  
Karen Jenkins, Strategic Lead Organisational Development and Transformation  
Mark Williams, Chief Executive  
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer

**Councillor apologies:**

M Evans-Martin  
S Hall  
D Hull  
J Humphreys  
M Williamson

Chairman .....

Date: .....

Cllr Allen tabled a paper setting out this suggestions for key areas of focus for the Council's approach that should be included:

- All relevant services to be subject to poverty proofing
- The success of the Problem Families Programme to be turned into local action
- A grant fund for revenue funding of Foodbanks for three years to be developed
- Improve skills and employment career advice to schools and through co-ordination with job centres
- Encourage the CCG and County Council to focus on poverty alleviation through co-ordination with this Council
- Community team to engage the faith and voluntary sector in an audit of what exists and how to help this sector to efficiently harmonise with statutory bodies
- Supporting residents to access benefits and responding to the impacts of welfare reform
- Working with voluntary sector partners to provide debt advice and financial advice
- Promoting and signposting residents to sources of affordable finance
- Supporting residents in fuel and water poverty to reduce their energy and water bills
- Continuing to promote the Living Wage to employers
- Working with businesses to identify ways that they might use their skills, capacity and resources to support achievement of shared objectives around poverty and disadvantage
- Working with partners to support low income residents into higher paid employment and raise skills, attainment and life chances
- Continuing to promote digital access for residents on low incomes
- Continuing to promote volunteering as a means to develop skills and employability and build communities
- Promoting community pride and cohesion through supporting a range of community events and celebrations
- Working with partners to improve health outcomes for people on low incomes, including physical and mental health
- Constructing new Council homes and working with social landlords and developers to deliver more affordable homes
- Providing housing, employment and skills support for homeless people
- Delivering a range of projects to support groups of people that are more likely to experience poverty, including women, children and substance abusers.

## Annual Report of the Overview Committee 2018/19

- 1 The Committee started their civic year in discussing the case for an Events Strategy, and a new post of Business Development and Events Officer. The proposal had come forward as part of the Transformation Strategy to deliver increased income generation, with delivery of a clear purpose, direction and ambition of maximising the potential of some of the Council's assets. The committee discussed the required skills set of such a post, and welcomed the evolving change in approach of how the Council views its assets, balancing income generation with community need.
  - 1.1 The committee recommended to Cabinet to approve the Events Strategy and to recruit the post, as well as referral back to the Strategic Management Team to discuss where in the Council such a post would sit.
  - 1.2 As means of update, an events consultant has been appointed to work with the Council during 2019 on planning a programme of event for Queen's Drive Space in Exmouth, and the Gate to Plate event in Honiton on a three-day week basis.
- 2 The committee received a thorough presentation from Tony Norton, Head of the Centre for Energy and the Environment, College of Engineering, Mathematics and Physical Sciences at the University of Exeter. Mr Norton presented the report prepared by Andy Wood, East of Exeter Projects Director, alongside some slides of the data presented in the report relating to the deployment of renewable energy.
  - 2.1 Slides were shared with the committee relating to the progress report to parliament, showing how the policy deficit on delivery of renewable energy set out how current national policy, and the regular amendment or replacement of policies, would not deliver what was required to meet the government target. This policy deficit had been taken into account as part of the evidence base for the GESP process.
  - 2.2 The Portfolio Holder for Economy spoke about the changes already in place but voiced that there was a clear need for further work on how the Council can contribute towards the goals of the GESP and look at own practices. He proposed that a step forward could be that he held a think tank on the topic, with an open invitation to any Members interested in the subject to contribute. The Chairman agreed this as a way forward, asking the Portfolio Holder to provide a report back to the committee on the findings of the think tank, so that the committee continued to debate the issue and make proposals to the Cabinet in due course. The committee awaits a report back on this topic.
- 3 The committee welcomed the opportunity to debate principles of the Commercial Property Investment Framework back in September 2018. Work by officers and the Asset Management Forum had produced a framework that was set to deliver £450K additional net rental income per annum by 2020/21 through circa £20,000,000

investment. Aside from income, additional benefits would come from regeneration, business rates income, New Homes Bonus, employment, prosperity and the unlocking and accelerating delivery of sites. The Framework had been drawn up to provide a clear, costed, risk managed and structured programme of investment, using rigorous criteria and with the appropriate decision making capabilities to respond to market opportunities in an agile but safe manner.

- 3.1 The committee had, for some time, championed the need to develop sources of income for the Council, in order to help alleviate the expected deficit in the Medium Term Financial Plan. The committee had looked at examples of other authorities in producing income from their own, and purchasing additional, assets.
- 3.2 The committee debated the principles of the framework and resolved to support those principles. The framework was considered by Cabinet in February and subsequently approved by Council with an availability of up to £20K through existing resources or Public Works Load Board funding.
- 4 The committee had received a draft submission to The House of Lords Select Committee on Regenerating Seaside Towns and Communities, which covered a number of specific examples as evidence. The discussion was taken into account by the Deputy Chief Executive in finalising the submission that was considered by Cabinet before being submitted.
- 5 The committee considered the latest version of the Transformation Strategy and the Financial Plan for 2019 – 2020, with specific support for the Transformation Strategy to look to protect the delivery of front line services. Both documents were subsequently agreed at Council.
- 6 The Digital Strategy was also considered by the committee, with debate covering the benefits to the community with the continuing improvements to service delivery, but also mindful that human interaction was still, and would continue to be, available to those who needed it. The strategy was recommended to Cabinet and subsequently adopted by Council.
- 7 The results of the Viewpoint Survey were shared with the committee, and some feedback was given on how the format could be further improved in communicating the results of that survey.
- 8 Continuing the theme of the Digital Strategy, the committee welcomed a presentation on the change in the Council's digital offer to Firmstep. This software solution would meet the growing customer demand for choice to transact online, with better customer journeys in the process. The solution provided the option of a customer account, which provided access to all the relevant information to that customer, as well as providing feedback on how any transactions were progressing. A number of

practical examples were shared with the committee.

- 8.1 The committee discussed the benefits of the changes, including how front line staff could assist customers through the process to help boost the customer confidence for future use. Members were also assured that there was recognition that not all transactions can be offered online, because of their complexity.
  
- 9 The committee received a report on Poverty, homelessness, human rights and health and wellbeing in East Devon. This report, presented to Cabinet, set out the scope of the project. Cabinet had resolved to agree the themes for a localised investigation and analysis of poverty and related social welfare issues, working with Devon County Council. Overview members debated how the scope could be enhanced, with a recommendation covering these suggestions to go forward to the Devon Strategic Partnership Welfare Task Group.
  
- 10 The committee completed their civic year considering a report on Environmental sustainability and climate change emergency. The committee were pleased to learn Devon County Council had agreed to declare a 'climate emergency' and welcomed the move to work with the County, using the expertise of Exeter University. They wanted to see some specific proposals on how the District can sustain itself, and felt that the targets should be brought forward.

Scoping template

## Overview Committee

Scope of work :

Broad topic area:	
Specific areas to explore within topic area:	
Areas NOT covered by the review:	
Desired outcomes of the review:	
Who should be consulted to obtain evidence (e.g. Ward Member, officers, stakeholders)	
What evidence already exists (consultation, good practice examples)	
What experts are needed to help with the review:	
What other resources are needed:	
Undertaken by the Committee or is a TAFF required:	
Timescale including start date:	
Who are the recommendations being reported to:	

<b>Overview Committee Forward Plan 2019/20</b>
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**Work allocated to the Forward Plan:**

<b>Meeting date</b>	<b>Topic</b>
25 July 2019	Review draft drone policy tbc Public toilet review tbc
29 August 2019	New Council Plan
5 September 2019	Joint meeting with Scrutiny Committee on service plans.
14 November 2019	Economic Development update report.
15 January 2020	Joint meeting with Scrutiny Committee on service plans and draft budget for 2020/2021. 9am start.
30 January 2020	
27 February 2020	
26 March 2020	

**Work for scoping and allocation to the Forward Plan:**

<b>Proposed date</b>	<b>Topic</b>
tbc	Natural Capital in the Heart of the South West document
tbc	Business case for increase in community engagement officers
tbc	Review of Governance Arrangements – committee structure/Cabinet & Leader model
tbc	Select Committee report on Coastal Town Regeneration
tbc	Select Committee report on Rural Economy
tbc	Review of Out of hours telephone system provided by the council for residents and tenants