

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 28 November 2018**

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

The meeting started at 5.30pm and ended at 6.32pm

#### **\*97 Public Speaking**

Mr Blakey, Chairman of Cranbrook Town Council requested that the Council undertake litter picking and bin emptying in the area of Cranbrook as a whole, rather than wait for the complete adoption of the roads in the area. He gave the rationale of efficiency and practicality of the Streetscene service operating in the area ahead of full adoption, as that adoption by the highways authority was inevitable. He did not feel that there was any legal impediment that would prevent the Council from undertaking this service.

In response, the Portfolio Holder for Environment informed Cabinet that he had requested a review of this with his officers to clarify costs and any liability implications that needed investigation.

#### **\*98 Minutes**

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 31 October 2018 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

#### **\*99 Declarations**

Cllr Steve Gazzard, Minute 116; personal interest – as held a season ticket for the football club referred to in the report and is a Member of the ECCT.

Cllr P Skinner; Minute 116; personal interest – as held a season ticket for the football club referred to in the report.

#### **\*100 Matters of urgency**

None

#### **\*101 Matters referred to the Cabinet**

There were no matters referred to the Cabinet by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

#### **\*102 Exclusion of the public**

There were no items that officers recommended should be dealt with in this way.

#### **\*103 Forward Plan**

Members agreed the contents of the forward plan for key decisions for the period 1 January 2019 to 30 April 2019.

#### **\*104 Minutes of the Arts and Culture Forum held on 10 October 2018**

Members received the Minutes of the Arts and Culture Forum held on 10 October 2018. The minutes were commended to the Cabinet by Cllr Bruce De Saram.

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the Arts and Culture Forum held on 10 October 2018 be noted.**

**\*105 Minutes of the Budget Working Party held on 17 October 2018**

Members received the Minutes of the Budget Working Party held on 17 October 2018.

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the Budget Working Party held on 17 October 2018 be noted.**

**\*106 Minutes of the Overview Committee held on 15 November 2018**

Members received the Minutes of Overview Committee held on 15 November 2018.

**RESOLVED that the following recommendation be taken into account with the related report (Minute 111):**

**Minute 21 Digital Strategy**

That the Digital Strategy be recommended to Council for approval, for reason of continuing to improve how customers transact with the Council, whilst maintaining the availability of human interaction for vulnerable groups and other sectors of the community that require help.

**\*107 Minutes of the Housing Review Board held on 22 November 2018**

Members received the Minutes of Housing Review Board held on 22 November 2018.

The Chairman of the Housing Review Board presented the recommendations and sought support for their approval.

**RESOLVED (1) that the following recommendation be agreed:**

**Minute 41 Chairman's welcome**

Pat Gore and Cat Summers be co-opted on the Housing Review Board as tenant/leaseholder representative members.

**Minute 45 Revision to the tenancy agreement**

1. the revised tenancy agreement, and
2. the next steps and timescales detailed in section 2 of the report,
3. that delegated authority be given to the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Homes and Communities and the Strategic Lead Housing, Health and Environment to make minor amendments to the tenancy agreement following the consultation process.

**Minute 46 Fire safety in blocks of flats (compliance with statutory regulations)**

1. the progress made in relation to fire safety in blocks of flats and agree the priority of future works to address property issues related to fire,
2. that members be aware of the significant budget required to bring all blocks of flats up to a fully compliant fire safety standard.
3. the extension of the employment of the additional Programme Works Officer (Fire Safety) for a further 12 months.

**Minute 47 Renewal of Advantage South West subscription**

continuing to pay the annual subscription to maintain the membership to Advantage South West.

**RESOLVED (2) that the following recommendation be taken into account with the related report (Minute 112):**

**Minute 50** Home Safeguard system upgrade

That Cabinet approve the business case for the upgrade of the Home Safeguard call handling system.

**108 Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2019/20**

The Strategic Lead Finance presented the report which asked members to consider and approve the working age Council Tax Reduction Scheme (known as Council Tax Support) for 2019/20 which remained unchanged from 2018/19.

Comments included:

- equalities impact will increase for the scheme planned for 2020/21
- workshops would be beneficial (as had been run previously) to update Members on the benefits system and the changes in place following the introduction of Universal Credit.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. The Council Tax Reduction Scheme for working age customers for 2019/20 (unchanged from 2018/19) was agreed, and
2. For Officers to start scoping and developing a 'banded discount scheme' for 2020/21 with any associated costs being met from the specific reserve set aside for this purpose.

**REASON:**

Each year the Council was required by law to decide whether to revise or replace its scheme. There had been no significant national benefit changes that needed to reflect in the scheme and most authorities in Devon were not proposing to change their scheme for 2019/20. However, the Council would probably need to consider changes for 2020/21. This was because the scheme was very much aligned to Housing Benefit rules and as more customers moved onto Universal Credit, the Council would need to shape the scheme differently in order to simplify the administration process. The Council would no longer be dealing with these as a combined claim.

**109 Council Tax - Long Term Empty Homes Premium**

The Strategic Lead Finance informed members that legislation had recently been passed that would allow Billing Authorities to increase the long term empty homes premium (currently an additional 50% on the full charge) for properties that were unoccupied and substantially unfurnished and have been for more than 2 years. The Government's aim was to help encourage owners to bring their properties back into use.

In response to a question, the Strategic Lead Finance confirmed that there was no additional cost in collecting the premium; and that negotiations were taking place with Devon County Council to secure more of the money collected from the premium for the District.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that from April 2019 onwards to increase the premium up to the maximum of 100% for properties that had been empty for more than 2 years,
2. from April 2020 onwards to increase this to 200% for properties that had been empty for more than 5 years, and

3. from April 2021 onwards to increase this to 300% for properties that had been empty for more than 10 years.

**REASON:**

Raising the premium could help to bring empty homes back into use which would benefit the local community as detailed in the report.

**110 Heart of the South West Joint Committee - Council update**

The report included the recommendation to delegate responsibility for the local authority input into the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) to the Joint Committee and it was important that this delegation was in place across the councils by the time of the Committee's next meeting on the 25 January 2019 which, would be a key formal date in the development of the LIS.

In response to a question about the value to the authority with the budget investment made, the Chief Executive outlined to Members both the benefits to the Heart of the South West area as a whole, but particularly the Enterprise Zone more locally that was now delivering business rates income and growth to the area.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the progress report setting out the work of the Heart of the South West (HotSW) Joint Committee since its establishment in March 2018, be noted
2. to delegate the development and endorsement of the HotSW Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) to the HotSW Joint Committee (noting that final approval of the HotSW LIS rests with the HotSW Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the Government), be agreed
3. that the Budget statement for 2018/19 set out in Appendix B and that in accordance with the decisions taken at the time the Committee was established the Council would be asked to make an annual budgetary provision to meet the support costs of the Joint Committee in line with the 2018/19 contribution. Final clarification on any additional 2019/20 budget requirement would be provided following the completion of the review of the Joint Committee's role, function and management support arrangements and development of its work programme for 2019/20, be noted and
4. that the Budget and Cost-sharing Agreement set out in Appendix B to the report be agreed.

**REASON:**

To update the constituent authorities on the HotSW Joint Committee and the recommendation to delegate responsibility for the local authority input into the LIS to the Joint Committee.

**111 Digital Strategy**

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services gave a short summary of that the Digital Strategy would deliver. The Leader highlighted the key aspect of digital by design, with the technology offering opportunity to customers.

Members also welcomed the strategy reference to retaining the human contract for customers, for those who by choice or circumstance could not access the Council's services through a digital channel.

**RECOMMENDED:**

that the Digital Strategy be agreed and adopted.

**REASON:**

In the pursuit of continuous improvement.

**\*112 Access to information 2017/18**

The report provided information about requests received under the Freedom of Information Act (and Environmental Information Regulations) between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018. The report also looked at steps taken during the last 12 months to improve the accessibility of information.

**RESOLVED:**

that the number and type of requests received under the Freedom of Information Act and the steps being taken to improve access to information be noted.

**REASON:**

To continue to improve the way requests for information were dealt with.

**113 Home Safeguard System Upgrade**

The Strategic Lead Housing, Health and Environment presented the report, which sought approval for the expenditure necessary to upgrade the Home Safeguard call handling system. The upgrade was a necessity for the continuation of the Home Safeguard Service, which in addition to the alarm for private, sheltered and corporate customers, provided the Out of Hours service for East Devon District Council & Teignbridge District Council plus lone working services for both Authorities.

The report also set out the vision for the service, with the steps that would have to be taken to allow the service to grow. Alongside upgrading the call handling system, the service would have to relocate to two locations, and the staffing levels reviewed in order to meet the telecare industry standards. The service could also expand to incorporate a responder service.

Comments included:

- Developing the telecare service was beneficial to the rural community;
- GPs demand for telecare;
- Increase in income as the service developed would recover cost of upgrade;
- Pride in service, with good quality, caring handlers;
- Demonstrated the Council's commitment to housing tenants.

The Capital Strategy and Allocation Group would look at the project at their next meeting, in balance with other capital projects.

**RECOMMENDED:**

that the case for the upgrade of the Home Safeguard call handling system be approved.

**REASON:**

To continue to provide an outstanding service and honour existing contracts. The upgrade would enable the Council to offer a digital solution with the ability to offer a wider range of telecare equipment, and to expand the service. It would also enable EDDC to remain competitive in the current market, and contribute to the Council's income targets and Transformation Strategy.

**\*114 Monthly Performance reports – October 2018**

The report set out performance information for the 2017/18 financial year for October 2018 was supplied to allow Cabinet to monitor progress with selected performance measures and identify any service areas where improvement was necessary.

There were two indicators showing excellent performance:

1. Days taken to process changes to Housing Benefit claims
2. Percentage of planning appeal decisions allowed against the authority's decision to refuse

There were two performance indicators showing as concern for the month of October:

1. Days taken to process new Housing Benefit claims – EDDC was currently working through a transition period to Universal Credit which was impacting on performance.
2. Working days lost due to sickness absence - There had been a significant increase this year in employees who had been absent for two months or more as a result of surgery and serious health issues for 2 or months. These cases were all being proactively managed through HR and reference to Occupational Health advice to facilitate a return to work as soon as possible. EDDC continued to train its managers in this difficult area and work closely with them to facilitate return to work.

The Deputy Portfolio Holder for Environment congratulated the Countryside team for the recent Bronze award in the South West Tourism Awards. The continuing excellent performance in the recycling rate for the authority was also commended.

**RESOLVED:**

that the progress and proposed improvement action for performance measures for the 2017/18 financial year for October 2018 be noted.

**REASON:**

the performance reports highlighted progress using a monthly snapshot report; SPAR report on monthly performance indicators and system thinking measures in key service areas including Development Management, Housing and Revenues and Benefits.

**\*115 Response to the Payhembury Neighbourhood Plan Submission**

To agree the response by the Council to the current Regulation 16 submission consultation for the Payhembury Neighbourhood Plan. Councillor Bruce De Saram gave this thanks to the team for producing the Plan, as did the Deputy Leader as the local Ward Member.

**RESOLVED:**

1. that the formal submission of the Payhembury Neighbourhood Plan be noted and the producers of the plan be congratulated on their dedicated hard work and commitment in producing the document, and
2. that the proposed representation set out at paragraph 5.2 in the report in response to the consultation be agreed.

**REASON:**

To ensure that the view of the District Council was recorded and informed the consideration of the Neighbourhood Plan by the independent Examiner.

**116 Warren View Sports Ground Investigation**

The report asked for consideration to an increase of £20,000 in the project budget. The site was marketed to potential tenants early in 2017, with Exeter City Community Trust (ECCT) identified as the preferred tenant, with heads of terms agreed in the summer of 2017. A key part of the offer from ECCT was the development of all-weather pitches and other facilities to maximise the use of the site, and make it economically viable.

During due diligence for the site, ECCT reviewed East Devon's existing information for the site including extensive investigations, monitoring and assessment of the material beneath the site. ECCT subsequently asked that East Devon commission further investigation and assessment of their development proposals in order to provide reassurance regarding the geotechnical and geoenvironmental risks. £40,000 was allocated in the 2018/19 budget for this work.

Comments included:

- ECCT have the expertise in applying for funding, linked with the recognised club of Exeter City;
- There was a lack of 3G pitches in that area;
- Several diverse groups would use the facilities;
- The site would remain an asset for the Council and would be overseen by the Estates Team;
- Challenge to the former tenants of the site was not accepted;
- Whilst the cost into the project may not be recovered by the Council, investment at this stage would help to deliver the grant funding necessary to deliver the site, and the social benefits were much wider for the District as a whole.

**RECOMMENDED:**

that a further £20,000 for geoenvironmental and geotechnical investigations at Warren View Sports Ground be agreed.

**REASON:**

To reassure Exeter City Community Trust regarding the risks relating to the ground so they can continue to proceed with their proposed development of the site.

**Attendance list****Present:****Portfolio Holders:**

|                 |                                     |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| Ian Thomas      | Leader                              |
| Phil Skinner    | Deputy Leader / Economy             |
| Dean Barrow     | Finance                             |
| Iain Chubb      | Transformation                      |
| Alan Dent       | Corporate Services                  |
| Paul Diviani    | Strategic Development               |
| Jill Elson      | Sustainable Homes and Communities   |
| Marcus Hartnell | Deputy Portfolio Holder Environment |
| Geoff Pook      | Asset Management                    |
| Tom Wright      | Environment                         |

**Non-Cabinet apologies:**

Mark Williamson  
Ian Hall

Simon Grundy  
John O'Leary  
Brenda Taylor  
Peter Burrows  
Douglas Hull  
Eileen Wragg  
Andrew Moulding

**Also present (for some or all of the meeting)**

**Councillors:**

Bruce de Saram  
Pauline Stott  
David Barratt  
Paul Carter  
Rob Longhurst  
Megan Armstrong  
Steve Gazzard  
Geoff Jung  
Steve Hall  
Tim Dumper  
Eleanor Rylance  
Brian Bailey  
Mike Howe  
John Humphreys

**Also present:**

**Officers:**

Mark Williams, Chief Executive  
Richard Cohen, Deputy Chief Executive  
Simon Davey, Strategic Lead Finance  
John Golding, Strategic Lead Housing, Health and Environment  
Henry Gordon Lennox, Strategic Lead Governance and Licensing  
Karen Jenkins, Strategic Lead Organisational Development and Transformation  
Amy Gilbert, Service Lead Housing  
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer

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