

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17 DECEMBER 2019

Present:

Councillors Bullivant (Chairman), D Cox (Vice-Chairman), Austen, Jenks, H Cox, Daws, Evans, Gribble, Goodman-Bradbury, Hayes, Hocking, Keeling, Morgan, Mullone, Nuttall, Nutley, Orme, Parker-Khan, Purser, Peart, Rollason and Thorne

Members in Attendance:

Councillors Connett, Dewhurst, G Hook and Taylor

Apologies:

Councillors Cook, Eden, Foden, Patch, Parker, J Petherick, L Petherick and Tume

Officers in Attendance:

Robin Barlow, Head of Security & Compliance

Trish Corns, Democratic Services Officer

Sue Heath, Audit Manager

Steve Laklison, Senior Benefits Officer

Rebecca Hewitt, Community Safety and Safeguarding Manager

Tracey Hooper, Revenue, Benefits & Fraud Manager

Barry Seager, Community Safety Officer

Sarah Selway, Democratic Services Team Leader & Deputy Monitoring Officer

Laurence Whitlock, Strata IT Director

100. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 October, 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

101. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Cox declared a Paragraph 12, Appendix B interest in relation to Minute 108, by virtue of his position as a Trustee of Teignbridge Homeless Support Charity.

102. PUBLIC QUESTIONS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 5.8(H)

None.

103. COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 5.8(I)

None

104. EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN

The Committee noted the Executive Forward Plan. Items from the Forward Plan were identified for incorporation into the Overview and Scrutiny work programme.

105. SCRUTINY OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS RELATING TO ISSUES PREVIOUSLY REVIEWED BY THE COMMITTEE

The Committee noted the minutes of the Executive held on 28 November, 2019.

106. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee Work Programme circulated with the agenda was received. Additional items to be included in the Programme was noted as follows:

- Provision of waste & recycling containers at new-build dwellings
14 January, 2020.
- Local Plan Part 1 Draft Plan – 7 February, 2020
- Employment land at Newton Abbot – 7 February, 2020

107. CALL-INS

There were no call-ins.

108. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME

Further to the Executive on 5 September, 2019, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, and the Interim Service Lead for Revenue, Benefits and Customer Support referred to the report circulated with the agenda which summarised the results of the consultation with major preceptors and the public on proposals to introduce a new working-age Council Tax Reduction Scheme from 2020-2.

The proposed scheme adopts a discount-based income-banded approach rather than the full means test required under the current scheme. It is designed to be largely cost neutral, with no significant change to the overall level of support, other than some re-distribution of support across our caseload, with most support to those households with the lowest incomes. It is predicted that 58% of working age households would receive the same level of support, 25% would gain an average of £5.70 per week and 17% would lose an average of £7.29 per week.

There would be no reduction in overall level of support but a redistribution of support to the lowest income households which would typically find it the hardest to meet their council tax liability.

The committee expressed concerns that some larger families with children currently in receipt of the benefit would lose out up to £1500 per year so that individuals would receive more. Only around 22 households will lose this level of support i.e. more than £1,000, and these are households whose average income exceeds £2,000 per month after ignoring any child benefit, child maintenance and disability related benefits. Capping support at 2 children is concurrent with other welfare schemes such as housing benefit, tax credits and universal credit and the public consultation indicates a high level of public support for this proposal.

In response to concerns from the Committee relating to the 17% that would lose out, the Service Lead advised that Teignbridge operated one of the most generous schemes in the country and is the only council in Devon still paying up to 100% support, when other Devon authorities have a cap on support ranging from 70-80%, ensuring maximum protection for the most vulnerable in our community.

The Committee also raised concerns relating to single parent households, or couple households, which were likely to lose out, where one or potentially both parties have limited capacity for work, perhaps because one or the other has a disability. It was noted that the scheme disregards all disability-related incomes in the assessment of support and the Council would be undertaking a joint review of the Council's Exceptional Hardship Policy with Citizens Advice Teignbridge to ensure it provides an effective safety net to the main scheme.

This provides targeted support on a case by case basis, and this relief is shared equally by the Council and its major preceptors. Under this scheme the Council seeks not just to reduce the amount of council tax payable where appropriate but also to provide budgeting advice and to ensure claimants are in receipt of all entitlements and have access to cheaper utility tariffs where available. There is no specific budget for hardship. This is because the Council must not fetter its discretion by reference to an available budget. In previous years the take up of exceptional hardship has been lower than estimated despite the Council taking a proactive approach to encourage claims. Any claim for hardship will effectively operate as a write off against the account and will be funded by all major preceptors in proportion to preceptor share.

The individual clauses in the proposals were voted on and whilst some had unanimous support there were a number where they were supported by a majority vote.

Resolved Council be advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend approval of the proposed changes as detailed in the report circulated with the agenda.

109. MEMBERS IT

Consideration was given to the report circulated with the agenda which set out options for Members IT provision following the roll out of iPads to all Members in May 2019 to enable access to multiple personal devices and not restricted to the iPads, as requested by Councillors. The cost of providing all Members with

secure IT devices to carry out their approved duties had been £26,377. The additional unbudgeted cost to enable access on multiple personal devices as requested by Councillors was estimated at £17,796 to June 2022.

Members were referred to paragraph 7 of the report circulated with the agenda relating to security risks of enabling access on multiple personal devices. Delivering email to personal devices would open a potential risk to the secure network, and an additional email filtering module would need to be purchased, at a cost of £18,000 for the period until June 2022. The cost of this additional module would be shared with EDDC and potentially ECC should they wish to proceed and deploy this enhancement to the Councillor IT provision. Data held outside of the confines of the Strata network has increased risk of security threats. In addition Data Protection requirements are paramount, in which Councillors have responsibilities in their roles as Data Controllers to ensure that the data being held is managed/processed responsibly, and in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations / Data Protection Act 2018, and expectations of their data subjects.

Comments from members included how the app would work on their personal devices, and how the additional charges related to the contribution towards IT they already made from their allowances.

Resolved Consideration of the matter be deferred pending further financial information relating to direct savings and financial benefits to the Council as a result of the roll out of iPads to Councillors and the current IT provision.

110. SOUTH DEVON AND DARTMOOR COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

The Committee referred to the report circulated with the agenda which gave an updated on the work of the statutory Community Safety Partnership (CSP), working across Teignbridge, South Hams and West Devon, to tackle issues such as child sexual exploitation, modern slavery, drug misuse, prejudice related crime, preventing violent extremism and domestic violence and abuse. The Partnership is intelligence led and delivers in the context of the Devon Strategic Assessment and also the Police and Crime Plan that is owned by the Police and Crime Commissioner. The CSP continues to focus on the most vulnerable within our community in response to information provided by the Devon Strategic Assessment and any emerging threats or risks.

The report also provided the Council the opportunity to scrutinise the work of the CSP in accordance with Sections 19 and 20 of the Police and Justice Act 2006 and the Crime and Disorder (Overview & Scrutiny) Regulations 2009.

The report set out the key achievements of the Partnership, and those specific to Teignbridge, such as CSP staff taking part in several Modern Slavery Operations, and positive work with multiple support agencies working towards safeguarding and youth intervention in Teignbridge, working with SPACE and the Police to divert youths from anti-social behaviour.

The Partnership annually reviews the Devon Strategic Assessment and the Local Delivery plan setting the projects for the following year is agreed.

Resolved That the report be noted.

111. SOUTH AND EAST DEVON HABITATS REGULATIONS EXECUTIVE - 30 OCTOBER 2019

The Committee considered the minutes of the South and East Devon Habitats Regulations Executive, held on 30 October, 2019

Resolved The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 October, 2019 be noted.

The meeting started at 1415hrs and finished at 1600hrs.

CLLR P BULLIVANT
Chairman

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