

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 2017

Present:

Councillor Haines (Chairman)

Councillors Clarence, Colclough, Cox, Dewhurst, Gribble, Hayes, Hocking, Keeling, Kerswell, Morgan, Orme, Parker, Peart and Winsor

Other Members in Attendance:

Councillors Fusco and Russell

Apologies:

Councillors Ford, Connett, Dennis, Eden, Golder, Hook, Brodie, Jeffery, Mayne, Price, Prowse, Smith and Thorne

In Attendance:

Karen Mason, Democratic Services Officer

Adam Pike, Recovery & System Support Officer

Sue Aggett, Business Lead - Health & Wellbeing

Phil Shears, Head of Paid Service

Neil Blaney, Economy Manager

Nick Davies, Business Manager, Strategic Place

Rebecca Hewitt, Senior Community Safety Officer

Liz Gingell, Corporate Performance Officer

Tracey Hooper, Revenue, Benefits & Fraud Manager

Cllr Jeremy Christophers - Leader

Gary Layzell – Civica

Inspector Andrew Tomlinson, Devon & Cornwall Police

203. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2017 were approved and signed as a correct record.

204. MATTERS OF URGENCY OR REPORT ESPECIALLY BROUGHT FORWARD WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman advised that a student governor from Coombeshead Academy was in attendance, Members welcomed John to the meeting.

The recent meetings of the Committee had been held at 4.00 pm, Members were asked to submit their views on the timing of the meeting to the Committee Section, it had been anticipated that the changed time could widen the appeal of standing as an elected representative.

205. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

The Senior Community Safety Officer introduced the annual report which provided detail of the key achievements across the Safety Partnership in the last year. During her presentation, she made particular reference to:

- the Partnership assisting with a domestic homicide review;
- performances within schools to address alcohol misuse;
- the anti-social behaviour service being provided across the area;
- building a positive relationship with secondary schools, safeguarding children and directing them away from offending. This work focussed on vulnerable groups such as looked after children;
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) training to enable taxi drivers and fairground staff to recognise signs of CSE;
- development of a sub-group to assist with identifying vulnerable people who are being targeted to assist with County lines (a new type of drug network), Members were advised there had been a number of high profile arrests in Exeter;
- Operation Turf – an emerging issue around Newton Abbot and Kingsteignton of violence and harassment by young people, information would be shared with local Members outside of this meeting.
- Securing unoccupied buildings in Teignbridge.

During discussion, the following items were raised:

- (a) a Member highlighted elected councillors responsibility in safeguarding children and welcomed the Chief Constable's approach to improving communication;
- (b) community safety and the ambition to ensure all young people were resilient to reduce the possibility of them being subjected to exploitation;
- (c) public transport – whether any training would be provided to bus/coach drivers on CSE. It was suggested that children travelling alone on public transport could be targeted. In response, it was expected that CCTV on buses would allow any complaint to be investigated;
- (d) a suggestion that 'Best Bar None' a national award scheme which promotes responsible management of alcohol licensed premises could be introduced within Teignbridge.

The Chairman thanked the Senior Community Safety Officer for the report and Inspector Tomlinson for attending the meeting.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

206. COUNCIL TAX RECOVERY PROCESS AND DEALING WITH VULNERABLE TAXPAYERS - PRESENTATION

The Council's Recovery & System Support officer provided a presentation on the process undertaken by the Council to recover council tax, during his presentation he made particular reference to:

- Council Tax (CT) recovery reminder letter;
- up to 3 CT notices advising that payment is overdue;
- contact also made via text message where possible;
- an additional step made by the Council to advise the customer of steps they can take to seek debt advice; the letter also provides detail of the additional costs incurred if a summons is issued;
- the recovery process – before the Council applies for a Liability Order the customer would have had a minimum of 3 letters from the Council and an SMS message where possible;
- CT Recovery can be via an attachment of earnings, or benefits.
- Bailiffs – this is a 2 stage process with a 3 week holding period, followed by the enforcement stage;

Members were assured that consideration was given to the vulnerability of customers and the Council considers how support could be provided to ensure the customer understands the recovery process.

The Chairman and Members thanked the officer for his presentation.

207. UNIVERSAL CREDIT - PRESENTATION

The Revenue, Benefits & Fraud Manager referred to the agenda report which provided an update on the current position regarding Universal Credit (UC) in Teignbridge and the likely impacts when the fully digital service commenced in May 2018.

Gary Layzell from Civica provided Members with detail in a presentation, which made particular reference to:

- Universal Credit replacing 6 existing benefits: Child Tax Credit; Housing Benefit; Income Support; income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA); income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA); Working Tax Credits;
- UC would be administered by the Department for Work & Pensions and required claimants to access the service online;
- there would be a phased transition with Newton Abbot Job Centre going live in May 2018; full migration would be completed by December 2022;
- Teignbridge would continue to administer housing benefit for pensioners;
- following the raising of significant issues with the current design of UC, measures and improvements were emerging;

- it had been reported that it was taking 5-6 weeks for a new claim to be assessed and the first payment of UC to be made;
- the switch from fortnightly payments to monthly payments had increased the level of rent arrears;
- financial difficulties had been highlighted – 2/5 households in debt have no money to pay their creditors; 79% of debt related problems included rent; 57% were borrowing money prior to receiving their first UC payment;
- main problems faced by those transferring to UC included: initial payment delay; inability to budget effectively, poor administration; lack of access to banking and affordable borrowing;
- DWP report positive impacts of success in getting people into work;
- other local authorities had experienced the following:
 - a reduction in Council Tax collection;
 - an increase in rent arrears;
 - a reduction in collection of temporary accommodation rent.

A Member questioned the loss in revenue on the homelessness budget if someone was re-housed within 4 weeks and questioned whether there would be an increase in workload to the Council. The officer assured Members that DWP were making changes to the homelessness provision.

A Member also raised concerns about residents being able to claim online. The officer advised that Teignbridge already uses an online claim for housing benefit and the take-up date is over 99% so residents are familiar with making digital claims.

The Committee was assured that the Council was working with Teignbridge Welfare Reform Group to support older people with online claims and providing digital access points.

The Chairman and Members thanked Gary Layzell for his presentation.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

208. LEP - PRODUCTIVITY STRATEGY

The Committee considered the response to the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership's consultation on its Productivity Strategy. It was noted that a group of Members had considered in detail the consultation document and agreed the responses as set out in Appendix 1 of the agenda. It was noted that the Strategy would be supplemented with an action plan.

The proposed response would be considered by the Leadership before submitting it before the deadline of 30 November 2017. The Leader thanked the officers and Members for their work.

Resolved

To endorse the response to the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership's consultation on Productivity Strategy.

209. T10 - GREAT PLACES TO LIVE, WORK; GOING TO TOWN; INVESTING IN PROSPERITY

It had been previously agreed that an overview of each of the Teignbridge Ten super projects would be provided at the quarterly performance meetings, Members received presentations as follows:

The Business Manager for Development Management updated Members on actions to meet the objective 'Great Places to Live' where new neighbourhoods and other developments would be built to the highest standard of design, with great public spaces and landscaping. He advised that an update on the new residential design guide would be provided after the Planning Committee on the 21 November 2017 and provided detail of work on the development framework plan for Houghton Barton, and the work of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGS). Members were advised that 3 projects had a caution, the Cirl Bunting policy had now been adopted and customer satisfaction for 2016/17 had been 82.2% against a target of 80%.

The Economy Manager informed Members of actions being taken to meet the objective 'Going to Town', making reference to the seven key objectives supporting town centres, one current focus of work included trails around the Market Hall for Halloween and Christmas, to drive footfall into the market. Work to broaden the offer to the economy had included evening activities and food festivals, including the Summer Nights festival in Newton Abbot. He highlighted 4 projects which had concern, this related to projects which had been delayed.

Referring to the Best Bar None initiative, the Council hoped to work with businesses, unfortunately currently take up had been slow. Reference was also made to the Business Charter which had been positively received.

The Business Manager for Economy & Assets highlighted the work 'Invest in Prosperity' advising the Council would do all it could to encourage new businesses to set up or move in and existing businesses grow, creating new and better paid jobs, work to meet the objectives including investing in commercial and industrial estates, promptly dealing with planning and other regulatory applications.

The Business Manager advised of two areas of concern in the performance reports relating to delivery to the local plan and broadband provision. He also highlighted the work being undertaken across the district including detail of building and renting out Estuary Court, broadband, providing improved internet access for 5000 residents and businesses in the next 3 years, employment land purchase at Forches Cross.

The Chairman thanked the officers for their update.

210. PERFORMANCE MONITORING - QUARTER 2 DATA

Consideration was given to a report which provided performance data for Quarter 2 (1 July to 30 September 2017) on the Teignbridge Ten (T10) programmes. Each T10 project had actions with performance indicators and/or projects which monitored their progress against targets and milestones.

Members attention was drawn to some amended figures as follows:

- CSCLS 5.1 – Household waste recycled and composted - should read 56.3%, a slight decrease on the 56.42% reported, but still on target;
- CSCLS 5.3 – Residual household waste per household – should read 179.3kg, a decrease in performance on the 179.20kg reported, but still on target.

During discussion, particular reference was made to:-

- (a) CSHAH 5.8 – working days lost due to sickness absence – average per employee. It was reported that a review group to look into management actions to tackle absence had met and would report back to the Committee in due course.
- (b) CSHAH 1.4 – raise awareness and deliver initiatives to prevent increase in melanoma. A Member questioned what action the Council was taking to raise awareness for agricultural workers. It was agreed detail of the project would be shared with Members.
- (c) CSZH 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 electricity, gas and water consumption. A Member questioned the figures provided within the report and it was agreed that detail would be provided in the Members' Newsletter.

Resolved

To note the actions being taken to rectify performance.

211. EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN

The Executive Forward Plan was noted.

212. WORK PROGRAMME

It was agreed that a presentation on the potential for an energy company for Devon be included on the Committee's Work Programme for March 2018.

MIKE HAINES
Chairman