

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 8 MAY 2018

Present:

Councillor Ford (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors Clarence, Cox, Dennis, Dewhirst, Eden, Gribble, Hayes, G Hook, J Hook (was Brodie), Jeffery, Kerswell, Nutley, Orme, Peart, Prowse, Smith and Evans

Other Members in Attendance:

Councillors Christophers, Clemens and Jones

Apologies:

Councillors Haines, Colclough, Connett, Golder, Hocking, Morgan and Thorne

Officers in Attendance:

Sharon Sissons, Democratic Services Officer (Exeter City Council)

Also in Attendance:

Robert Hawken - Engagement Officer and Co-Chair of the Devon Learning Disability Partnership Board

Sophie Holmes - Senior Commissioning Officer and Co-Chair of the Devon Learning Disability Partnership Board

Sally O'Donnell - Involvement Officer, Devon County Council

433. CHAIR

In the absence of Councillor Haines, the meeting was chaired by Councillor Ford.

434. MINUTES OF THE SOUTH EAST DEVON HABITAT REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2018 were noted.

435. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 April 2018 were approved and signed by the Chairman, subject to the addition of Councillor Eden having been noted as attending the meeting.

436. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

437. PRESENTATION ON CITIZENSHIP

Robert Hawken, Engagement Officer and Co-Chair of the Devon Learning Disability Partnership Board and Sophie Holmes, the Senior Commissioning Officer and Co-Chair of the Devon Learning Disability Partnership Board made a joint presentation on citizenship. They spoke about the work of the Board in partnership with stakeholders and its support of the challenges faced by adults with a learning disability to lead fulfilling and rewarding lives with the same opportunities as everyone else. The presentation included details of the seven key themes around citizenship as well as details of a web site for more general information on welfare of –

- Purpose
 - Friendships and Relationships Freedom
 - Money
 - Home
 - Help
 - Life
- www.centreforwelfarereform.org a free on-line resource from The Centre of Welfare Reform Limited

Robert Hawken referred to the importance of understanding the challenges that people with learning and other disabilities have. He detailed the numbers of people with a Learning Disability in Devon, which was estimated to be 14,720. Of that number, approximately 3,238 people with a learning disability were known to services, although that did not mean they were all receiving services from Devon County Council. He added that, of the overall number, 11,482 people with a learning disability living in Devon rely on being able to access Universal Services in their communities to live their life, but that being able to access community life was really important to their long term independence and wellbeing and reduce the need for a call on the statutory services.

Mr Hawken explained that following changes to the Disability Living Allowance that he was offered a position by Devon County Council as an engagement officer, as well as holding a position as a Co-Chair of the Devon Learning Disability Partnership Board. He explained that the job had enabled him to earn his own money, gain new skills, make new friends and have a sense of purpose. He finished the presentation by stating that Citizenship was for everyone, it was about celebrating the differences being a member of the community enabling all to fulfil their potential in life.

Sophie Holmes responded to Members' questions -

- the impact of important welfare reforms, meant that many more people were now in a position where they had to gain employment. It was important that the right environment and conditions were in place, with employers

acknowledging the need for resources as, well as in some cases, a change of culture.

- there were more opportunities for learning, along with a focus on employers across Devon as part of a five year Strategy including consideration of apprenticeships for individuals with learning disabilities with ongoing dialogue with other large employers as well as regular engagement with Job Centre Plus, all with a view to assist individuals with disabilities gain experience in the workforce. It was important to encourage as many businesses to get on board and Devon County Council were already leading by example.
- there was a need to ensure there was adequate employment support available in the towns and also more rural communities, with the necessary support for travel in place.
- there were 51 support intervention programmes in existence where employment was linked to education through work with local colleges such as Exeter College, Petrocs and Bicton. The Commission offered a pathway with education and work experience with employers, with a view to moving to paid apprenticeships and then a permanent position. There were, however, some issues with the move onto the next stage. They were also working with older adults in day services and were applying the principle of supporting internships for greater access to work. A trial with four individuals would be run in this academic year and she would report back on the outcome.
- local authorities used to have an employment team who worked with the NHS and improving health equality was one of the main themes, and a Member's suggestion of approaching social services and reintroducing some facility to provide a community hub for education and work experience was noted.

A Member welcomed the presentation and the aspirations for greater support but cited the lack of funding, but she was aware of the importance of an inclusive and cohesive approach. Sally O'Donnell, the Involvement Officer, from Devon County Council was also at the meeting and referred to the seven themes of citizenship adding that one of the biggest barriers to accessing information was the inability to access written information. The move to create more information in an 'Easy read' format was encouraging to offer information on a variety of subjects including housing and accessing health services, and enabling organisations to advise about their services. The NHS were particularly good at producing easy read information, such as leaflets on preventative medicine or health screening, but a wider circulation of leaflets would help publicise services such as workshops and health screening.

A Member commented on examples of individuals who no longer received disability living allowance and were living independently and could be threatened with homelessness. Ms O'Donnell referred to the work of the service advice centre and

the challenges and opportunities to make a change. The Chairman suggested including MP's in the region in lobbying for any support.

The Managing Director at Teignbridge District Council confirmed that a number of individuals were already employed, but acknowledged the funding constraints of the public sector environment. He offered himself as the initial point of contact for the Authority in respect of the Commission's anticipated Task and Finish Group. The Chair suggested that the presentation be made to the wider Senior Management team. The Managing Director agreed that would be very useful. The Leader also welcomed the opportunity to raise this issue and see how as a Council, what other options for full or part time employment would be possible. He also considered it might be useful to make the presentation to Job Centre Plus staff, who had a presence in the Council offices. Ms Holmes thanked Members, and of course she did not expect Teignbridge District Council to act alone, but it was more about creating a change in culture in the workplace and community. It was important to have as many employers as possible with an understanding of the requirement of people with learning disabilities, and look at the level of investment needed for them to achieve and retain employment in every locality.

The Chairman thanked Robert Hawken and Sophie Holmes for their informative presentation, and expressed the unanimous support of the Councillors present for the endeavours of the work of the Devon Disabled Learning Partnership.

438. EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN

Resolved – The Committee noted the Executive Forward Plan.

439. WORK PROGRAMME

It was noted that the Chairman would liaise with officers to ensure there were items for future meetings.

Councillor Hook referred to the previous Executive and the discussion regarding the monitoring of the use of single use plastics when it was suggested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee form a working group. Councillor Ford suggested that an overview be presented to the June Committee to understand the issues around this important topic. This would have the benefit of informing the future work of the proposed Working Review Group.

The Work Programme for the remainder of the year was noted.

Cllr Mike Haines
Chairman