

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 12 NOVEMBER 2024

Present:

Councillors Atkins, Bullivant, Hall, Hayes, Nuttall, Parker, Radford, Rogers, Rollason, Ryan, Sanders (Chair), Steemson and Thorne

Members in Attendance:

Councillors Buscombe, Clarence, Morgan, Nutley, Parrott, G Taylor, J Taylor and Williams

Apologies:

Councillors Cox, Dawson, Foden, James and Major

Officers in Attendance:

Neil Blaney, Director of Place

Graham Davey, Housing Enabling and Development Manager

Kay Fice, Scrutiny Officer

Christopher Morgan, Trainee Democratic Services Officer

Amanda Pujol, Head of Customer Experience and Transformation

52. APOLOGIES

53. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Cllr Radford was nominated as Vice-Chair by Cllr C Parker, seconded by Cllr Hayes and unanimously agreed

RESOLVED that Cllr Radford be appointed as Vice-Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

54. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 September 2024 were approved as a correct record and subsequently signed by the Chair

55. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None

For item No. 9 (updates from outside organisations – Dartmoor National Park Authority) Cllr Steemson declared an interest as an employee of Dartmoor National Park and remained in the meeting as the item was for information only

56. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (IF ANY)

None

57. COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS (IF ANY)

None

58. EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN

The Executive Forward Plan showing issues to be considered over the next few months was noted, in particular flagging up that Housing and Homes is a priority for this Committee and will be covered later in this Agenda.

Items considered at recent Executive meetings include UK Broadband and the Statement on Community Involvement, noting that although the current Policy is fit for purpose a revised Policy will be effective from November 15.

There were no further questions or comments made by those present

59. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY FORWARD PLAN

The Committee's Forward Plan showing issues to be considered was noted.

The Chair drew members attention to the Council Strategy Q2 Performance Monitoring Report which had been circulated as a Supplementary report. There were no questions or comments

60. OUTSIDE ORGANISATION UPDATES FROM THE COUNCIL'S APPOINTED REPRESENTATIVES

Cllr Morgan provided an informative update on the Dartmoor National Park: Who are we and what we do

- One of 15 national Parks in the UK
- Designated in 1951 and covers 368 square miles
- Most land is in private ownership
- Approximately 10 – 11m visitors p.a.
- National Park purposes:
 - (i) To **conserve** and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Parks: and
 - (ii) To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities by the public
- 19 members of the National Park Authority (5 representing the 'national interest'. 10 by Councils, 4 appointed by local parishes)
- Dartmoor Partnership Plan 2021 – 2026 and Local Plan (responsible for all Planning Applications)

- Operate Ranger Service & Visitor Centres and an Outreach vehicle
- Outreach, Education & Volunteering (Second Sunday volunteers meet at Haytor Downs around 10.30am)
- Archaeology & history
- Access, Footpaths & Land Management
- Committees and Working Groups
- Dartmoor Foundation (charitable body) being set up
- Sister Park in USA Cuyahoga Valley Ohio have focussed on nature recovery [the river was so polluted that it caught fire – now they have reintroduced lake salmon]

A number of questions were raised and answered where appropriate:

- Regarding the reduction in the numbers of ponies and sheep in common areas – what is being done to maintain the shape of the moors? Partnership Plan involves farmers and there is a need to maintain balance recognising that there are financial pressures on hill farmers. Maps and statistics are available on the website.
- Why the reluctance to prepare a financial plan for more than one year? Cash settlement received, often after the start of the year. Costs have been increasing but not matched by increased income. The National Park are heavily reliant on Government grant funding and do not have any other significant funding sources or opportunities to generate income
- The challenging housing situation within the Park was noted

The full presentation can be seen at the link below:-

[Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 12 November 2024](#)

61. EXECUTIVE MEMBER BIENNIAL UPDATE

Cllr Goodman-Bradbury is unable to attend so the biennial report on Communities will be deferred

Cllr Buscombe provided his biennial update on T100, Homes and housing as the 'Homes' element has now moved to his area of responsibility

- Homeless applications increasing
- Upward trend in Homelessness
- Cost of Temporary accommodation increasing and is demand led e.g. B&B increased by 50% since 2022/23 with some central budget support
- Rough Sleepers (defined as sleeping out overnight) can be reported on www.streetlink.org.uk. Funding ends March 2026.
- Private Rented Homes in short supply
- Delays in assessment being experienced
- Reasons for social housing being in demand includes affordability and security of tenure
- Disabled Facilities Grants
- Improving Homes

- Affordable Houses including Rural exception sites
- Demand for 1 bed accommodation

A number of questions were raised and answered where appropriate

- How many in temporary accommodation are placed out of District? Where possible Albany and Luscombe (our own accommodations) are used or local Bed & Breakfast establishments (Room only). *Officers to provide a response*
- What is the process for bring potentially appropriate premises to the attention of the council? *Inform Graham Davey*
- Regarding underoccupancy – ‘downsizing’ is given a higher priority category to encourage move to a smaller property. The Council is not a major stakeholder so we have to work with the large providers to influence rather than direct action
- What can we do about empty flats above shops? We have an ‘Empty Homes Team’. Some are legitimately empty e.g. no separate access and/or used for stock storage
- Devon Home Choice operate 4 categories of need for Teignbridge which are supported by legislation.
 - A Highest – emergency placements
 - B Urgent housing need
 - C Medium health & wellbeing
 - D Low health & wellbeing
 - E *No housing need N/A for Teignbridge*

In addition, there are reciprocal arrangements and the right to mutual exchange

- Why don't we build new homes at cheaper costs or provide more from the open-market? External grant funding is more generous for certain standard of build and we would require capital funding to purchase on the open-market (being explored – business case must make a 1% return on investment)
- How many private rental properties are available in the District? Numbers are not held but *estimated numbers can be provided by officers*
- Are certain group included in the numbers e.g. Afghan/Ukrainian/ Unaccompanied Minors? Not at the stage that they are classified as refugees/asylum seekers etc.
- We are reliant on the private market and concerns around the potential impact of the Renters Reform Bill is shared by members and officers

The full presentation can be seen at the link below:-

[Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 12 November 2024](#)

Following a short break, Cllr Williams gave some verbal feedback on his areas of responsibility ((i) and (ii) below and responded to questions:

- (i) Recycling and Household Waste

- Recycling rates were 55% - aiming for 60% and looking at changing frequencies of black/green bins etc. This was generally understood by members but with some concerns for town centre properties and high density living and tourist areas who would struggle with storage and increased risks of fly-tipping or rats
- New quieter machines which had been reconfigured to store more food and less paper
- There had recently been a popular fun competition to name the vehicles
- The electric vehicles arriving by Christmas and the recharging points have been installed in the Yard
- The yard/Depot is currently uncovered and there is a need to do something. New drainage costs are prohibitive so it will have to be roofed. *A written response will be given regarding the funding arrangements for this – including opportunities for grant funding or the possibility of support from Devon County Council [if any]*
- Any developments are 'future-proofed' as well as can be
- 'Green bins' take-up increased
- 5,000 houses trial on tetrapaks collection being funded by grants
- Soft plastics collection by 2026 – awaiting information from DEFRA
- Chewing gum removal machine equipment has been retained and an article will be appearing in the members newsletter in due course
- It was noted that Primary Schools should be involved in improving recycling rates – they can influence parents
- Regarding street cleaning in rural areas – an IT solution is being worked on with STRATA

(ii) Environmental Health

- This included responsibilities relating to Hackney Carriages and the Gambling Act
- Regarding Pavement Licences, an officer is visiting establishments
- Comments were noted over the flat fee being charged for such licences as it disadvantages small businesses e.g. Coffee vans. Potential issue in Newton Abbot with 5 cafes in Queen Street potentially using the newly created pavement spaces.
- Funeral Directors are not licenced but have all been reviewed
- Pest control are now charging for the service provided
- Residential caravan sites are being licenced
- A question was raised about who is responsible for people who appear to be living in vans – they can be referred to Housing or to Devon County Council if on the public Highway

Cllr Nutley presented his biannual report on Open Spaces, Leisure, Sport, Resorts & Tourism and areas where he represented the Council on outside organisations

- Out and About and Active Programme overview – Teignbridge Ten
- Conservation volunteer task days
- Education and learning
- Green spaces and community engagement (5 informative slides)

- Refurbishment for Broadmeadow and Dawlish Leisure Centres. Broadmeadow due to reopen in May 2025
- Sports pitches and open spaces play areas now 9 Tennis courts, support for approximately 23 clubs to regularly play football & rugby and 3 Bowling Clubs
- Performance indicators show membership growth and a strong range of community programmes
- Ridgetop Park is well worth a visit, particularly at sunrise or sunset but it was recognised that signage in the local area could be improved

Questions were asked and comments made which would be responded to in due course as appropriate

- Regarding the Playing Pitch Strategy in 2018 – what changes have taken place since then? E.g. All-weather hockey pitch and the extra lane in Dawlish Pool
- There is a demand for allotments which are taking a very long time to progress – how many are there?
- What was the cost of the recent TV campaign and how many new members did we gain as a result?
- How are we meeting the needs of elderly people? Are we offering appropriate classes etc?
- Recognise the Voluntary Sector Provision
- Other options should be benchmarked when presenting options
- Potential safeguarding issues in Buckland Play Park as it is apparently not visible from outside

Annual Review of Dartmoor National Park 2023/24 document was referred to and some statistics briefly mentioned and the full document would be made available to members.

Torbay and South Devon and NHS Foundation Trust

The One Devon Bulletin was referred to and would be made available to members

Exe Estuary Management Partnership

The presentation would be made available to members

The full presentation can be seen at the link below:-

[Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 12 November 2024](#)

62. FEEDBACK ON TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

The 3 working groups were discussed and it was noted that the Terms of Reference may be further refined at the meetings of the working groups.

Cllr Radford will join all 3 groups

Leisure:

Chair Cllr Steemson and Vice-chair Cllr Hall

Housing:

Cllr Sanders will chair the Pre-Scrutiny meeting in December to consider this as a Spotlight review. Suggestions for additional witnesses included Registered Providers, CVS & CAB

Planning:

Chair Cllr Bullivant and a vice-chair will be appointed in due course. Cllr Steemson will not be joining this group

Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP):

Chair Cllr Thorne this group will continue to meet as appropriate

The work for all of the new groups would commence by the end of January 2025

The recommendation outlined in the report was proposed by Cllr Bullivant and seconded by Cllr C Parker and agreed unanimously

63. NOTICE OF MOTION REFERRED FROM COUNCIL 29TH OCTOBER

The Chair explained that the scope of this Notice of Motion requires a professional skillset outside of this chamber, as it is broad-ranging and will take considerable time for any working party to be established.

The current position is that the Council is and will continue to act lawfully. The Notice of Motion and work arising from it will be considered when prioritising the work programme of this committee.

As the Notice of Motion was referred from full Council it was now a Council matter rather than that of the initial proposer, Cllr J Taylor.

Cllr Sanders thanked Cllr J Taylor for bringing this matter forward and asked if the Committee wished to add it to the current forward plan for future action or should it take precedence over those agreed earlier in this meeting.

It was proposed by Cllr Bullivant, seconded by Cllr Radford that as it was a high priority it should take precedence. Following a vote by show of hands, it was agreed (7 votes for with 4 abstentions) that this item should have a higher priority and be progressed accordingly.

The Chair closed the meeting by saying it was agreed as a priority but noting that due to the complexities of the issues outlined above and the necessity to have external witnesses, it was not possible to specify a deadline at this stage.

Chairman

