

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held at the Civic Centre, Barnstaple on Thursday 15th January 2015 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT: Members representing North Devon Council:

Councillor Biederman (Chairman)

Councillors Chesters, Haywood, Hockin, Lane, Luggar, Moores Tucker and White.

Officers:

Chief Executive, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer, Acting Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer (JT), Head of Environmental Health and Housing Services (JM), Community Development Officer (HH) and Democratic Services Officer (JG).

57 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brown, Clark and Gurney.

58 MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the meeting held on 4th December 2014 (circulated previously) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

59 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest announced.

60 ORDER OF AGENDA

RESOLVED, that item 10 be considered prior to item 6 on the agenda and item 8 be considered after item 11 on the agenda.

61 NORTH DEVON RECORD OFFICE CLOSURE

The Committee considered an update on the proposed changes to the North Devon Record Officer (tabled) and expressed its disappointment that a more suitable relocation site had not been found locally.

RESOLVED, that a representative from Devon County Council be invited to attend the next meeting of the Committee to respond to concerns expressed by the Committee and provide clarity on the types of documents proposed to be transferred to the Heritage Centre in Exeter.

62 CRIME AND DISORDER SUB-COMMITTEE

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting of the Crime and Disorder Sub-Committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 4 December 2015 (circulated previously).

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Crime and Disorder Sub-Committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 4 December 2015 be noted and adopted.

63 SERVICE PLANS

The Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer referred to the Service Plans (circulated separately by e:mail and tabled). He informed Members that the Plans would be linked into a performance report to be considered by the Committee each quarter. Heads of Service had produced the plans having regard to the corporate objectives of the Council and relevant portfolio holders to establish a number of actions accordingly.

He summarised the format of the plans and advised that the purpose of the meeting, was to raise questions, consider whether further actions should be included/deleted or resources directed elsewhere.

The following questions and answers were considered by the Committee.

Economic Development	<p>What is the overall Economic Development strategy and do all the projects contribute to it?</p> <p>A Northern Devon Economic Strategy was written and published in late 2013. It was developed jointly with Torridge District Council (TDC) and is available on our website. (As it was published 12 months ago an imminent action is to update the timings in the action plan.) All the actions within the Economic Development basket of service plans contribute to the delivery of the strategy's objectives.</p> <p>Which projects are priorities/achievable or have the biggest impact?</p> <p>In my opinion the activities that have the biggest impacts are those relating to employment land, employment sites, innovation, encouraging private sector investment etc. These activities enable firms to grow and employ more people, and for new ventures to start up or locate here in North Devon. As an example, assistance was given to a large Barnstaple manufacturer in 2013/2014 to alert them to the Regional Growth Funding (RGF) opportunity, network them into Business Innovation Skills (BIS)</p>
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contacts, and to help them navigate the (rather bureaucratic) process of securing the funding. They secured the RGF funding, plus a big investment from their US head office to provide the match funding, and there is now a multi-million £ project to expand the Barnstaple plant.

Regeneration based projects in Ilfracombe and Barnstaple (related more specifically to the retail and/or leisure economies) also have big impacts in terms of influence on footfall numbers, new retail/food/leisure investment from the private sector etc. As an example, the unemployment levels in Ilfracombe have fallen hugely between 2011 and 2014 due to the Verity effect – Verity has prompted other investment in the town including Wetherspoons.

Most economic development projects involve a variety of partners (whether internally, i.e. other service area, or externally, e.g. Devon County Council (DCC), the Environment Agency etc). As soon as any initiative involves more than one player it becomes a little harder to deliver.

I would like to think there is a fair chance of achieving most of the projects, although some will take time. There is a process to follow which includes developing a concept into a project and ensuring it becomes embedded into the wider strategies (DCC, Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) etc). There will always be obstacles that can't be foreseen that may prevent projects being delivered – Government can change policy in a second (and has done – e.g. energy tariffs) and suddenly there may be no need for intervention, or no support for certain activities. This sort of risk probably applies more to economic development than any other set of activity North Devon Council undertakes.

The Chief Executive shared concern that North Devon was not adequately represented on the LEP and those concerns were being articulated directly.

Where there are large dependencies on other departments, how are you liaising (Roundswell New Employment Land for example)?

We tend to liaise on a project by project basis – we primarily work with the planning teams and the working relationship is good.

Would any of these put pressure on our budget going forward, what are the ongoing revenue liabilities for the Council?

The main revenue liabilities relate to the economic development team staff. Some projects will have some revenue implications – e.g. Ilfracombe Fish Stores will require maintenance etc but in cases such as this the project is seeking to generate income to at least cover any revenue liabilities.

The CCTV review is looking at this issue specifically in relation to the CCTV service.

What evidence is there to support the projects?

The economic strategy is built on locally specific evidence about North Devon's economic conditions – these are often quite different from other parts of the south west/Devon. The initiatives within the economic strategy are designed to fill gaps where the private sector fails (for example employment land) or where other public bodies do not fund activity in North Devon because our population is too small/we are too peripheral to matter (broadband, business support). Our relationship with the local business community, whether small businesses or large ones, is excellent, and overall the initiatives are generally driven by the needs of our local employers. There are some projects which are more policy driven, such as the tidal demo zone, where there is a unique opportunity for North Devon based on a Crown Estates designation and BIS support.

What is the overall Economic Development strategy?

In very overall terms our strategy is to ensure we have the appropriate infrastructure for businesses to thrive (employment sites, connectivity, grants etc) and a sufficiently skilled pool of local labour.

Are there any plans for improved cycle links into the Town Centre?

Yes, DCC have bid to a LEP fund for monies to create cycle links across several areas of the southern parts of Barnstaple – Roundswell around to Whiddon Valley via the centre. I have helped DCC make the case for this investment and enlisted Actavis to lobby, as well as the town centre businesses. The funding pot is competitive.

	<p>The Committee considered that secure cycle parking and explicit signage/interpretation maps should be sought through the encouragement of developer contributions and requested that this be included as an action within the Service Plan.</p> <p>Do any of the projects produce ongoing income generation?</p> <p>Fish Stores – rental income Innovation Centre – it will do but we will be unlikely to run it. Woodlands – yes and has scope for more. Prudence – yes but we will be unlikely to run it CCTV – income from external contracts. Pannier Market – yes Most importantly, any new employment sites or expanded employment sites will result in an increase in business rates and NDC will receive a proportion of this through the county-wide pooling system.</p> <p>How important is income generation when prioritising projects?</p> <p>The objective of economic development is to encourage the private sector to be more productive and more profitable, and to intervene where the market fails, so income generation should not be the primary objective when prioritising projects (because otherwise the public sector simply ends up competing with the private sector). However, there is a balance to be struck to ensure economic development can be delivered sustainably and that involves some consideration as to income generation. The key considerations are around jobs created, businesses assisted, floor space delivered, footfall created (towns centres/coastal towns), and match funding drawn down. Income generation may be achieved through a variety of means – car parking income (from town centre initiatives), and business rates as mentioned for example.</p> <p>Has a business plan been prepared for the Pannier Market?</p> <p>Yes – an item is already included within the Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme for the Pannier Market Business Plan to be presented to the Committee in March.</p>
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	<p>Councillors Chesters and White declared prejudicial interests in the above matter and were not present during the discussions in relation to the Pannier Market.</p>
<p>Waste and Recycling</p>	<p>What are the likely savings for charging for green waste?</p> <p>Income levels will be dependant on the charge that is made. Until a full business assessment is undertaken it is not possible to provide estimated income figures, however dependant on the level of charge a significant sum could be achieved (when looking at the success of other authorities that have introduced a charge).</p> <p>How achievable are the remodelled rounds?</p> <p>New vehicles with increased capacity have been purchased. Round remodelling software has been purchased (following visits to other authorities that have used the software for several years) to plan the revised routes and staff have been involved in the project throughout. The key to getting the new rounds to work was by proper engagement with crews. The new rounds will start to go live over the next two months and officers are confident that the new collection routes are achievable. A further update will be provided to members' once all new routes have been implemented.</p> <p>What is the process/method used to remodel the rounds? Bearing in mind the experience in Mid Devon.</p> <p>See above.</p> <p>How do you propose to attract more trade waste customers?</p> <p>Active marketing; mail shots; cold calling; customer visits; provision of a complete service including waste audits. Dedicated officer used to promote and market the service.</p> <p>Are we competitive price wise?</p> <p>Yes</p>

	<p>How confident are you that the review of missed collections will reduce the number of complaints made to the authority?</p> <p>Officers monitor complaints on a monthly basis and have seen a reduction in the number and type of complaints across the board since changes have been implemented. Further service changes are planned which will drive further improvements.</p> <p>Is there capacity within the workforce to deploy staff to assist communities in cases of severe weather?</p> <p>Yes – as and when appropriate provided the safety of the workforce and service delivery is not compromised. The issue formed part of the overall business resilience plan.</p>
Chief Executive	<p>What is being done corporately to investigate alternative methods of service delivery?</p> <p>All Heads of Service are plugged into regular network meetings with their equivalents and bring back alternative service delivery methods to SMT. There is a particular focus at present on the value to be derived from combined authorities. These do not impact on political models but do explore the value of combined and semi privatised service delivery. This latter model does give a wider market place for service delivery, the nearest model to us at present is the recently announced model based on Exeter/East Devon/Teignbridge.</p> <p>Are you confident that the Medium Term Financial Plan is robust enough in advance of 2017?</p> <p>Yes. The model demonstrates an ability to achieve a balanced budget but is also, deliberately, based on a pessimistic outlook. The main risk to the model is if a new Government decides to shift the goal post and we have to make short term savings in excess of the £1.6m we are currently budgeting for.</p> <p>What is the authority doing to generate further income?</p> <p>Fee increases have been effectively capped in all service areas for the period of the recent economic slump. This is not a sustainable model for the future and any new administration (post May) will need to address this issue. The investment in pay on foot technology, if it is to be more extensively rolled out, may need a review of the</p>

future car park charging structure. Housing services are looking at the mechanisms available for more cost recovery on some of the statutory work completed and also the potential to trade professional services in the wider market place. Building control are investigating different service delivery models that could lead to the ability to operate on a fee paying basis for some areas of work. Planning have begun the process of creating a regime for charging for pre-application work on larger applications.

Given the substantial challenges going forward, is now the time to review the Council's Corporate Objectives?

The Council's corporate objectives should be owned by the political leadership, post the May election is the appropriate time to review the objectives.

What are the actions needed to support the current Corporate Objective "To ensure that North Devon Council remains a viable and effective local authority into the future"?

A clear understanding of the changed environment. North Devon will remain viable provided all parties acknowledge and accept that reduced resources means less capacity to deliver peripheral activities. Once we have reduced staffing to deliver only core services we will not have capacity to deliver papers to committee at the drop of a hat just to chase one individual's particular agenda or to carry out detailed work on someone's personal project outside of the agreed corporate priorities.

Are the proposals described to increase income generation potential as set out in the Building Control Service Plan being carried out in isolation and if so, why? No - see response to third question above.

What are the current blockers to joint working with TDC?

Primarily lack of an agreed common strategic goal. Without this there is no common purpose or single strategic direction and this weakness allows individuals to follow their own agenda based on local perceptions rather than the greater good.

	<p>Electronic transactions.</p> <p>An aspiration of the authority is that all transactions should go through electronic systems within two years.</p>
<p>Elections/Land Charges</p>	<p>Why will there be a likely increase in cost to elections following the move out of the Civic Centre and into Lynton House?</p> <p>Additional hire of Rooms will be required to use at Election time as we will not have the space that has been available at the Civic Centre.</p> <p>For example Preparation of Postal Votes (In the region of 10,000) which includes storage of 30,000 envelopes. Preparation of Postal votes and issue and opening takes place up to 3 weeks before the Election.</p> <p>Secure storage of 75,000 Ballot Papers for a single Election around 10 days before an Election.</p> <p>Space the size of the Taw Room for the preparation of 110 ballot boxes for preparation at least 10 days before the Election.</p> <p>Off site working will be required to take place, this will increase core staff hours as it will take longer to do the same job due to having to build in working off site. At present staff literally run up and downstairs to committee rooms to deal with issues and grab a quick 15 minutes here and there to fill ballot boxes etc.</p> <p>All additional staff used at Election time currently work in one place, this will not be able to happen therefore additional time will need to be built in for them to meet with Core staff and vice versa.</p> <p>The Chief Executive reported that the election team would continue to work from the Civic Centre through to the major elections in May. The proposed plan for works at the Brynsworthy Environment Centre provided for a Council owned meeting room roughly to the same capacity as the Torridge Room in the Civic Centre.</p> <p>In 2016 the Elections Team currently only have the Police and Crime Commissioner elections and therefore 2016 is a quiet electoral year giving time to review ongoing arrangements.</p>

	<p>Are we confident that the register of electors is adequate given the changes to household registration?</p> <p>Yes. The percentage of people registered to vote is similar to that at this stage of previous elections. Further publicity would be undertaken such as lamppost publicity and the invitation for people to check their details online. An additional letter would be sent in respect of empty properties and the authority is tentatively optimistic that the percentage of those on the register may slightly improve.</p>
<p>Human Resources</p>	<p>How are we planning to increase employment opportunities for young people, what is the target?</p> <p>We intend to maintain & develop links with schools & colleges (e.g. work experience, careers conventions, mock interviews). Our current service area structures do not specifically encourage employment of young people. As vacancies arise managers will be asked to consider whether structure could be amended at all to enable employment of a young person, Senior Management Team can support this by questioning business cases in that vein. Certain Teams (e.g. Housing and Health, & doubtless others, have been looking to develop apprenticeship type schemes, these could be considered "grow your own"). We are unable to set a specific target.</p> <p>How are we going to ensure that there will be ongoing employment opportunities for those taking up apprenticeship schemes?</p> <p>Unfortunately we cannot guarantee this, however, what we can do in ensure that when decisions are being considered in relation to a possible apprentice posts that there is where ever possible an appropriate position at the end of the apprenticeship.</p> <p>This can be achieved by managers carefully looking as vacancies arise to consider whether structure could be amended at all to enable employment of a young person, again as detailed above Senior Management Team (SMT) can support this by questioning business cases in that vein.</p> <p>The Council works very closely with the local college to provide training opportunities and had a good in-house training programme.</p> <p>Appropriate safeguards are built into external training provision.</p>

ICT	<p>What is the status in respect of joint working with Mid Devon?</p> <p>A Business Case for a single ICT service and a Joint Working Strategy are being developed. Handover of the management of the NDC ICT service to the joint NDC & Mid Devon District Council (MDDC) Head of Business Information Services is in progress. The current arrangement is temporary and subject to review in June.</p> <p>How well are our IT systems performing?</p> <p>The IT infrastructure is very reliable and provides a secure and robust network on which most of the core business applications run very well. Some business systems such as Planning and Building Control are past their sell by date and are highlighted in their service plans as inefficient and problematic for the users.</p> <p>What is the priority order of the actions set out in the plan?</p> <p>Actions 1-5 are all highest priority and are ongoing in parallel with target completion dates Summer 2015. Action 8, Lagan system review, is next priority with work commencing very soon in order to achieve completion prior to April 2016. The remaining actions all need Business Cases which will determine their priority within the work plan.</p> <p>Will all Council sites have future WIFI access?</p> <p>This will be decided following the Business Case which will evaluate the requirements and delivery options. Is there an overall strategy to ensure we can get to a place where people can work from home, what is the ideal objective and how much will it cost to get there? The Mobile and Flexible Working Strategy is currently being written as part of a work stream within the 21:21 programme. The technical solution to enable people to work from home is available now and a few people are using this as required. There is no defined ideal objective regarding working from home and all staff are currently provided with office accommodation and a workstation.</p> <p>Which objectives are acting as a sticking plaster?</p> <p>None - but actions 1, 2 & 4 are all part of the planned and ongoing replacement or upgrade of ICT as hardware and systems reach end of life. They are essential to ensure</p>
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	<p>that the infrastructure and website remain viable and need to be completed within target timescales in order to ensure that we continue to provide secure and reliable ICT.</p>
<p>Community Protection</p>	<p>Are all staff adequately trained?</p> <p>Proposed developments in the fields of emergency planning, safeguarding and business continuity will need to be supported by appropriate staff development programmes not only within the Community Protection team but across the Council.</p> <p>Staff within the team are highly competent in the delivery of our ASB work. They have led working groups across Devon in the new legislation.</p>
<p>Housing</p>	<p>In respect of action H3 – has a bid been submitted?</p> <p>A paper will be presented to the Executive in February 2015 regarding the use of the commuted sum in Ilfracombe.</p> <p>What is our capability for an increase in the level of homelessness?</p> <p>An increase in homelessness would require the Council to procure more temporary accommodation.</p> <p>At present the Council runs 11 Private Sector Landlords (PSL's) and spot purchases B&B to meet this need.</p> <p>There is current pressure on this service and it is increasingly difficult for the Council to procure suitable B&B accommodation for this client group. This situation is of concern.</p> <p>How will the provision of temporary accommodation be delivered whilst making savings into the future given the uncertain financial climate and savings required in the revenue budget?</p> <p>Officers believe that the provision of more 'hostel' type accommodation could address the need for temporary accommodation in a more cost-effective way. This is because of the circulars on Housing Benefit which provide an opportunity for greater cost recovery. Officers are currently modelling the best way to provide temporary accommodation in light of this guidance.</p>

<p>Regulatory Services</p>	<p>Please provide more detail in respect of action R4.</p> <p>There have been a number of recent cases where the licence fees set by Councils have been contested. Some of these challenges have been successful and have resulted in the Council returning fees to the trade (>£1 m in the case of Cardiff CC).</p> <p>How confident are you those fees across the board stand up to scrutiny?</p> <p>Any revised fee structure presented to Council will have the full support of the Council's finance and legal teams. I am entirely confident it would be resilient to any challenge. Financial modelling has been undertaken to ensure that fees would break even over a three year period.</p> <p>Why will it take nine months from start date to completion date?</p> <p>The programme of work is designed to fit in line with next year's budgetary setting round.</p> <p>It is very involved, as it relates to every area of the Council's licensing responsibility. We have learned that other similar reviews undertaken by Councils are taking this length of time.</p>
<p>Financial Services Finance</p>	<p>Are you content that I.T. systems can adequately support the proposed actions?</p> <p>Yes, the suite of financial systems annually receive software upgrades that develop what we currently use and enable us to access modules that can improve what we can offer, for example: electronically sending sundry debtor invoices via email rather than posting manually.</p> <p>What will you do if I.T. can not support them?</p> <p>We require our own ICT team to help to facilitate any financial system development which they have always been able to support and both finance and ICT work closely together. Regular meetings take place between Finance & ICT to discuss finance system projects and to prioritise system development and schedule into workloads. The finance team drive the system changes and liaise directly with the external software suppliers on system development and are heavily involved in testing improvements. External consultancy from suppliers is often used due to the specialist nature of the software changes.</p>

<p>Financial Services Finance</p>	<p>What are the financial savings from billing electronically?</p> <p>Savings are unknown at this stage until further work (costs & benefits) has taken place and is dependent on customer take up. Savings will materialise from reduction in telephone calls, printing & postage and will benefit customers receiving bills quicker which in turn we hope will improve cash flow coming into the Council more efficiently.</p> <p>What is being done to be able to achieve e-billing?</p> <p>Online forms for Housing Benefit, Council Tax and Business Rates are being developed which will improve customer service and improve the flow of information coming into the Council. E-billing of sundry debtor invoices has been discussed with Civica (supplier); this could aid areas such as e-billing of trade waste invoices to companies. E-billing for Council Tax and Business Rates requires a meeting with our software supplier to develop further.</p> <p>The long term aim is to enable customers to log into their own accounts, pay bills etc.</p> <p>£100k is spent overall in the authority on postage costs which continue to rise and the Council is therefore looking at ways of improving and satisfying electronic means of delivery whilst continuing to provide manual billing for those that still want it.</p> <p>What is happening in respect of transferring fraud staff to the Department of Work and Pensions (DWT)?</p> <p>Staff from the Benefit Fraud Team will be transferred to the DWP in May. Work is being undertaken to determine what level of resource needs to be retained to support the remainder of fraud detection. This information will be reported to the Audit Committee in due course.</p> <p>Any further information on the business retention rate and what is NDC implementing?</p> <p>The Head of Financial Services referred to the Member Briefing presented to Councillors on 14.01.15 and advised that a copy of the presentation had been circulated. He advised that the scheme began in 2013/14. North Devon was part of a Devon Wide Pool and this information was not therefore included in the Service Plan. He outlined the risks and rewards of being in the scheme. The following information was provided in summary:</p>
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	<p>Included draft budget (above baseline funding) £0.439m</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LG future funding model estimate £0.891m • Medium term financial strategy £0.591m • 2013/14 actual (inc. Devon pool benefit £0.064m) £0.320m • 2014/15 forecast (inc. Devon pool benefit £0.145m) £0.583m • 2015/16 forecast (inc. Devon pool benefit £0.172m) £0.665m <p>2015/16 prudent to budget £0.450m to £0.500m growth</p>
<p>Corporate and Community Support</p>	<p>How robust is the plan for moving out of the Civic Centre?</p> <p>This might be answered by others under the 21/21 heading but from the point of view of project managing the move, there are still significant challenges. These have been reported to members through the regular updates and include issues such as the purchase of the modular building, a legal exit from the Civic Centre and issues around parking. There are clearly risks associated with the move, but there are also significant benefits through savings made.</p> <p>How is the move out of the Civic Centre likely to impact on the support provided to Members, particularly on new Members in respect of the elections in May?</p> <p>It is planned that the relocation of the team will take place prior to the District Council elections to minimise disruption and therefore ensure that the team can effectively support Members following the Election. A programme of induction and training events are planned post election to introduce new Members to the Council and also to give them the skills and knowledge necessary for the role. Day to day support will still be provided by the team and it is hoped that support for community Councillors will be increased.</p>

Can staffing opportunities and roles of officers be fed into the work carried out during the Local Democracy Campaign in schools?

Due to the current financial position there are minimal staffing opportunities available. The Council has appointed some apprentices who have then gone on to being successful in securing full time employment. We can provide information on types of services and roles of officers at the events, in conjunction with HR. Whilst a number of events are held during the national Local Democracy Campaign week, we also offer schools the opportunity to hold events at times which are convenient to them to support their students in learning about democracy.

What channels are used for youth and other engagement in respect of online consultation?

The Council subscribes to an online e-survey system (consultation finder) which is used for all consultations. Research shows that young people are one of the groups who respond best to online methods. Consultations are currently promoted through the website and press releases, there is an opportunity to further promote consultations through social media e.g. facebook and twitter, and if resources allow to investigate the use of other online tools e.g. budget simulators.

Can further details be provided in respect of the Council's Grants Policy?

The current policy is valid for the period 2011 – 2015 and a review will be carried out prior to the opening of the next funding round (June 2015). The grants offered by NDC are very popular with local community groups as they are easy to access and are one of the few that offer essential core funding. Our funding commitment often allows organisations to access other sources for the delivery of larger projects, and can be vital in evidencing local authority support. In 2013/14 91 Community Councillor Grants were awarded totaling £42,468 which enabled a further £214,173 to be drawn down from other funding sources.

The purpose of the review is therefore to look at the systems in place to ensure they remain as efficient as possible, not necessarily to change the criteria for awarding grants. The review will however also look at what other support we can provide applicants as this an area of work for which demand is increasing. For example, the

	<p>team regularly advise external funding solutions and have recently supported 3 lottery applications all of which have been successful and drawn down the maximum funding of £10,000 each from Awards for All for a range of projects.</p>
<p>Legal</p>	<p>In respect of action L4 – why have you not thought bigger and decided to sell your knowledge further afield?</p> <p>Action L4 – At present, it is not clear whether there will be a market for the services of the Legal team and so a limited income budget has been set. The team can only carry out work for other public bodies and so this is likely to be limited to Town and Parish Councils. In reality, it is mainly the larger Town Councils that are likely to use the services as smaller Parish Councils use the services of solicitors infrequently. It is also fair to say that some work will not be capable of being carried out by the team due to conflicts of interest with the District Council.</p> <p>There are also current issues with capacity to take on more work due to a long term sickness issue and care also needs to be taken that the “core business” of the team, ie advising the District Council is not affected. In effect, this is a bit of a trial to see how successful we are.</p>
<p>Planning</p>	<p>How robust is the local plan in terms of meeting the deadline for submission?</p> <p>The timetable anticipates a resolution from Full Council 25th. February 2015 to consult on main changes and thereafter to formally submit to the Secretary of State once the representations have been evaluated.</p> <p>How confident are you that it won't be rejected by the Secretary of State?</p> <p>The Joint Local Plan team is presently assessing any potential risks to the soundness of the Plan and are recommending appropriate amendments to address these (for example, updating of evidence base), deleting sites where their achievability is uncertain (for example, Ilfracombe Bus Station), undertaking further survey work (in response to Natural England re. Habitat Regulations) and resolving the over-provision of employment land in relation to proposed housing growth. The team is also undertaking a formal soundness self-assessment as recommended by the Planning Advisory Service.</p>

	<p>What is the status in respect of joint working?</p> <p>A Joint Local Plan is being progressed on the basis of a joint evidence base consistent with the Duty to Co-Operate.</p> <p>What is the overall aim of the service?</p> <p>To deliver sustainable development supported by key infrastructure as required by the coalition's growth agenda.</p> <p>How are you performing in terms of percentage in respect of determining applications within eight weeks?</p> <p>The most recent DCLG quarterly returns (1 October 2014 to 31 December 2014) confirms that 81% of 'minor applications' and 89% of 'all other' applications were determined within the Government's 8 week targets (which are 65% and 80% respectively).</p> <p>Do you have the appropriate I.T. systems in place to support your service adequately?</p> <p>The FastPlanning IT database is increasingly dated and requires review.</p> <p>What are the outcomes of the service review recently undertaken?</p> <p>These are being reviewed as a priority following the departure of the shared Head of Service and a draft structure and outcomes are to be discussed with the Chief Executive 23rd. January 2015.</p> <p>Do the Planning pages on our website adequately assist the public in accessing services and information?</p> <p>Yes, pending a corporate review of the Council's website.</p> <p>What work is being undertaken in consultation with the Corporate and Community Support service in respect of available budgets to support action PLG1 (facilitate town and parish councils to receive, and respond to, application consultations electronically)?</p> <p>This work remains outstanding.</p>
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	<p>Enforcement - can you explain why it might be unreasonable to issue 'stop notices' on breaches of planning. If it is unreasonable, it is possible to rapidly withdraw the notice of enforcement without the Council incurring costs? Is the definition of taking action 'where necessary' unclear leading to uncertainty?</p> <p>Service Plans are not about the day to day running of a particular service. The Council must comply with legislation and Government Guidance when considering taking enforcement action. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee may wish to consider including the matter in its work programme.</p>
<p>Building Control</p>	<p>Please provide more detail in respect of objective 3 of action BC1. What are the advantages that this may bring and what are the barriers of it being successful?</p> <p>BC1 Action 3 - Examine arms length trading and/or partnership with another Council options</p> <p>Advantages</p> <p>Building Control has made significant resource savings in recent years. To make further efficiencies and ensure greater resilience joint working /partnership will be required with other building control bodies.</p> <p>Reduction costs could then be achieved through, Centralisation of administration which would increase resilience by providing holiday and sickness cover in admin as we currently have only one FTE member of staff.</p> <p>Reducing subscription costs such software licences through economies of scale, by sharing costs of on-line technical reference material and structural calculation software.</p> <p>Reduction in overhead costs - each local authority is currently individually providing IT, finance and legal support . Existing partnerships between Local Authorities have often failed to make real savings due to each partner continuing to charge disproportionate overheads. The formation of a trading company would enable the procurement of support services on a best value basis from the partners (or external organisations).</p> <p>Where multiple authorities are working in partnership a trading company enables simplified accounting procedures with a single set of company accounts rather than meeting the individual needs of each participating authority.</p>

	<p>The formation of a company provides a clearly defined mechanism for control and leadership through a board of directors.</p> <p>The skills base in Building Control has the potential to be used for the generation of income through the sale of ancillary services. Potential areas include, Fire Risk Assessments Accoustic testing Preparation of Disability Access Statements Air leakage testing Disability Audits SAP and SBEM Calculations</p> <p>The formation of a trading company would provide the opportunity to explore solely for profit enterprises either using internal resources or developing partnerships with other companies/organizations.</p> <p>Barriers Lack of agreement from suitable partner organisations Political agreement Risk of financial failure of the trading company Potential staff /Union opposition</p> <p>How is I.T. impacting on efficiency and services provided to customers?</p> <p>BC1 Action 1 - Upgrade or replace IT database which is currently not fit for purpose. Create system to monitor and manage workflow</p> <p>An increasing number of submissions are received electronically but our systems are not designed to cater for this. Building Control is administered using the Fast Control database based on Microsoft Access and has no electronic document management system. We are receiving design drawings and supporting information by e-mail and saving it in folders in Windows File Manager. This results in a high risk to data security due to miss filing or accidental deletion with no effective method of recovery. It is also inefficient due to the need to label documents via the file name in order to identify them.</p> <p>Acrobat Reader is used to view documents received by e-mail . A more suitable viewer is required that enables more flexible layering of multiple images, display of multiple file formats and batch printing when necessary.</p> <p>Submission of applications via the website is required using webforms integrated with the Building Control Database in order to reduce administration and link submitted documents to the job files.</p> <p>The existing database has limited functionality and has a number of bugs /features that result in inefficient work</p>
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	<p>rounds. Examples include, Random failure to generate correspondence despite all relevant fields being populated. Existing inspection records vanishing when further entries are made resulting in the need to exit and re-enter the software. Poorly designed correspondence making management and changes difficult and time consuming. Limited reporting functionality Limited ability to manage and use contact information</p> <p>With fewer resources available there is a need to be able to target resources where they are most needed by monitoring and redistribution of work and ensuring that officers are able to work flexibly. Work flow management tools are needed to provide the necessary oversight and managerial control. This would become essential if working in partnership over a larger geographic area with multiple offices or home based officers. Further efficiencies and greater flexibility in working could be achieved with the use of hand held devices for recording of information on site.</p> <p>When benchmarking our Quality Management System against East Devon Building Control Richard Hewitt (Senior Surveyor) fed back that he was” amazed at the difference in efficiency the computer systems used made”.</p> <p>It is an accumulation of multiple inefficiencies built into our current systems that result in a significant impact.</p>
Cemetery	<p>Are there two fees in respect of burial prices?</p> <p>The prices for burial are the cheapest around this area. They are broken down to enable customers to choose exactly what they need. There are not two fees.</p>
Customer and Corporate Communications	<p>What are the major blockers identified to achieve channel shift?</p> <p>It is anticipated that the major blockage will be the investment needed in ICT services and resources to develop the systems needed to streamline our back office processes and to integrate different systems so that they can talk to each other, avoiding duplication and double handling of information.</p>

How can we improve back office processes and communication with the Council as a whole more efficiently?

We need to process map common back office processes to see where we can improve the process and analyse where we can provide digital or online self service. This will help us get a handle on the level of resources needed to bring about the improvements needed. This is phase two of the channel shift project. We are also looking at reviewing our customer relationship management system to see if there are any opportunities to integrate our first point of contact with our back office systems.

Is there an opportunity for joint working with DCC?

No but there have been helpful discussions with Torridge and Mid Devon about sharing best practice and information about how we deal with customers which have helped us plan improvements and flag up opportunities for working more closely together.

The communications strategy is similar to those of other authorities and therefore more formal arrangements are being explored. There is potential to share fee work in terms of working with Parish Councils.

What is IVR?

IVR - short for Interactive Voice Response - is a technology that automates interactions with telephone callers. Enterprises are increasingly turning to IVR to reduce the cost of common sales, service, collections, inquiry and support calls to and from their company.

What is meant by 'suitable' in respect of objection 2, action 2?

A structure that meets the needs of the council and our customers delivered within budget.

What do you want to achieve from the service into the future that is pushing a new structure?

Service needs to be flexible and more proactive than has been the case in the past. We need to encourage more effective (and realistically cheaper) methods of communication which many of our customers want while ensuring we retain a service which is usable by all groups (ie including those for whom IT/ mobile apps etc are never going to be an option) we also need to build capacity in the

	<p>teams to work in a different way and ensure supply mirrors as far as possible demand.</p>
Crematorium	<p>Please provide information in respect of the Crematorium extension.</p> <p>The Crematorium extension is a new 254 seat chapel and is funded from crematorium accounts. This is in addition to the existing chapel which is no longer suitable for purpose.</p> <p>This project will not be achieved as a single contract.</p> <p>Why is this not included in the service plan?</p> <p>Because its in the Technical Services service plan – we were anxious to avoid duplication.</p> <p>What problems are occurring resulting in the need to improve the reliability of the I.T. system?</p> <p>We have a new electronic booking system which has improved service to the customer. The line speeds to the internet are very slow and need to be improved.</p>
Valuation and Estates Management	<p>Do we have any surplus assets?</p> <p>We believe we have and are currently in the process of assessing them. We will be working with ward members in this process and will be seeking to dispose of assets by auction.</p> <p>What is the potential for buyers of the Civic Centre?</p> <p>The Civic Centre site is leased to DCC for the remainder of 199 years. NDC is therefore not in the driving seat in terms of disposal.</p>
Parking	<p>In respect of objective 1 of action CP05 - Is phase II only going ahead if phase I is proven to be successful and if so, how will the success be measured?</p> <p>The Executive report for this phase 1 states that after 12 months the results of usage and profit/loss will be reported back for Executive to decide on this subject.</p> <p>What will happen if there is a loss of income?</p> <p>Executive will need to decide on the results of the 12 month trial.</p>

	<p>What controls are in place to prevent people abusing their parking permits?</p> <p>The issue of permits is fully auditable giving sufficient detail for the Civil Enforcement Officers to recognise abuse of any permit through their electronic system. If abuse is found then a PCN is issued. Our NDC system is now completely separate to DCC system with different permits and audit checks.</p> <p>Is there an opportunity to share back office services?</p> <p>Yes but it depends on systems used. Our obvious partner is TDC who have the same back office systems and we have discussed the opportunity in the past but this has not been pursued by them due to the wider political issues of partnership working between our 2 authorities. The opportunity is now better than ever for TDC back office to be absorbed into our service since their dedicated manager has been redeployed.</p> <p>Enforcement of Parking Restrictions</p> <p>The Committee expressed concern regarding the lack of discretion and courtesy reported in the Journal about DCC wardens and local businesses. Councillor Greenslade advised that an Officer from DCC had been invited to attend a future meeting of the Barnstaple Town Centre Management Team to discuss the issues raised.</p> <p>Agricultural Inn, Braunton</p> <p>The Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer agreed to investigate the reasons for installing paymeters in the car park belonging to the Agricultural Inn, Braunton and circulate a briefing note to Members of the Committee accordingly.</p> <p>Sale of Coronation Street Car Park – Has the authority appointed a commercial valuer?</p> <p>The Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer advised that the Business Case was at a very early stage and would be presented to a future meeting of the Executive to include the valuation.</p>
<p>Parks, Leisure and Culture</p>	<p>What is the future of the Leisure Centre?</p> <p>Life limited (The centre was built in 1974 and the expected life of buildings of this nature is approx 40yrs. If we are to</p>

	<p>try and keep the existing building going beyond the end of the current Parkwood contract (expiring in 2020) we need to invest heavily (approx £3.5 million just to keep it functional.) This investment is needed imminently. Even with this investment, the management fee paid to a contractor to manage a building of this age and condition is likely to escalate to over three times the current cost. The only other options for the swimming pool are to build a new pool onto the side of Tarka tennis centre or take the decision to no longer provide a leisure centre.</p> <p>What contingencies are being set aside to replace the facility?</p> <p>Draft business plan has been produced. The report demonstrates that building a new pool onto the side of Tarka Tennis Centre is probably (from a financial point of view) the best long term option for NDC in terms of sustainability but will rely on borrowing and will result in a smaller pool.</p> <p>Are we at a critical point where we need to take a decision?</p> <p>We are very close to it. The longer we delay our decision, the more the existing building will deteriorate. As the current building deteriorates, we will soon only have the option of building a new pool or having no pool in Barnstaple.</p> <p>Should all future S106 contributions from major developments be set aside with a strategic view of building the pot to replace the facility?</p> <p>This is a political decision dependent in part on the nature of any application BUT only 5 contributions can be pooled together for the same project (under 106 regulations.) The Parks, Leisure & Culture Team has already tried to identify the most likely development projects from which contributions could be taken. CIL (when adopted) may provide a better opportunity for the Council to set up a “savings” pot for this project. Ultimately, it will be a political decision as to how 106 or CIL contributions are spent.</p>
Procurement	<p>Do our procurement systems currently support local businesses in tendering for our services for example?</p> <p>We whenever possible use local suppliers. The exception is when we use a larger Devon wide framework, such as stationary when we have managed to achieve significant savings. The electronic system is also soon to be made to have one local supplier, selected by post code, when we</p>

	<p>are looking for 3 prices. This success will depend on all staff using the system.</p> <p>How do we make it accessible?</p> <p>All staff can use the electronic system where we can control who we ask to tender. We also allow all suppliers to register on our portal. We have worked with ND+ and have held open events for local suppliers to help explain how to do business with NDC. This is complimented by our web site.</p> <p>Appointment of Commercial Companies to value Council Assets before disposal.</p> <p>Councillor Luggar suggested that independent valuers should be appointed to value council assets before they are disposed of. It was suggested that the Head of Property and Technical Services be invited to a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny to explain the processes undertaken when considering the disposal of council assets.</p>
<p>21:21 programme</p>	<p>Is there going to be an impact re staff parking once staff have relocated from the Civic Centre in terms of blocking spaces and income generation?</p> <p>The majority of staff will be located at BEC leaving a far smaller number in Barnstaple to be accommodated than at present bearing in mind not all staff have parking rights (only contractual or essential users do). We believe we can manage the situation in such a way as to minimise any impact on our customers. We are looking at using spaces at the Rugby Club, Leisure centre and Fairview for those with contractual parking rights and essential users. The use of boards will be time limited on other short stay car parks (for essential users) to enable quick access for files etc.</p>
<p>Cllr Lane</p>	<p>What business plan is in place to support the service plans?</p> <p>Business Plans will be developed to support actions within the service plan as appropriate, presented to the Executive and it will be for Councillors to determine whether or not Business Plan will be approved. If the Business Plan is not supported then the relevant service plan will be amended accordingly.</p>

<p>Legal</p>	<p>Are all the service plans complete for the Council?</p> <p>Yes</p>
<p>Economic Development</p>	<p>Economic, with the closure of so many Tourist Information centres, why is an office being planned in Fremington quay. The location doesn't seem ideal, as footfall probably is higher in urban areas?</p> <p>Not aware of a proposal for a tourist info centre? There is a visitor centre there already which has interpretation and heritage info, but it is not staffed and no TIC service is or is planned to be provided.</p> <p>Pannier Market, it's realistic to expect some savings to be made by the end of June 2015 and to show a downward trend in costs. But the real issue is when is the Pannier market going to break even? There doesn't seem to be a target date nor explanation for this event.</p> <p>It has not broken even for years, but I am very aware it cannot continue in that vein. A business plan is being developed to address this.</p>
<p>Crematorium</p>	<p>Crematorium target for the extension to be built is 31/03/16. An extension like this should take a short time to complete (months). Why if the business case is approved and the budget is in place, is the build taking so long to finish?</p> <p>When this was put in the service plan the budget and concept was complete. The final architect drawings, physical surveys and services have to be designed and completed before the planning and procurement exercise commence. Once the contractor is appointed we then need to proceed on a very sensitive site and have the build work around a fully operational facility dealing with bereaved. The build time scale is therefore extended. However the build timescale for the project, regardless of the extra consideration is 40 weeks as given by 2 independent quantity surveyors. This is a significant extension which doubles the existing footprint of the building as well as a major extension to the existing car park.</p>

	<p>When is memorial safety testing carried out?</p> <p>Safety testing is carried out as and when considered appropriate, after prolonged periods of bad weather for example.</p>
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RESOLVED, that the 2015/16 Service Plans be noted and the actions incorporated accordingly.

64 ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

RESOLVED, that the meeting be adjourned to enable a comfort break.

RESOLVED, that the meeting be reconvened to consider the remaining business to be transacted.

65 CONTINUATION OF MEETING

RESOLVED, in accordance with Standing Order 20 and it being 1:00 p.m. the meeting continue in order for the remaining business to be transacted.

66 WAIVING OF CONTRACT PROCEDURE RULES

The Committee considered the reason of the Executive (circulated previously) to waive contract procedure rules in respect of South Molton Central Regeneration Area and the appointment of an agent.

RESOLVED, that the decision of the Executive taken on 2 December 2014 (circulated previously) to waive contract procedure rules in respect of the appointment of an agent for the South Molton Central Regeneration Area be noted.

67 INFORMAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Community Development Officer referred to an informal meeting of the Committee held in October 2014 and provided a brief update on the actions undertaken to date, future actions to be completed and actions to be fed into the training and development programme following the May elections with particular regard to the call-in procedure.

68 CCTV REVIEW

The Committee considered a resource pack (tabled) by the Head of Environmental Health and Housing Services and circulated separately by e:mail in respect of the CCTV Review which set out the budgetary overview, description of infrastructure, resources, performance management information and review methodology.

The Head of Environmental Health and Housing Services advised that the review had generated a significant amount of information and he had gained a tremendous amount of knowledge throughout the process. A further piece of work needed to be undertaken in respect of meeting the principle supplier prior to reporting back fully to the Committee with a set of expectations and review findings.

The Committee thanked the Head of Environmental Health and Housing Service for the information provided in advance and requested that the review findings be presented to the Committee in February.

69 **WORK PROGRAMME/FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee considered the work programme (circulated previously).

RESOLVED, that the work programme be noted.

Chairman

The meeting ended at 1.30 p.m.

NOTE: These minutes will be confirmed as a correct record at the next meeting of the Committee.