

Eden District Council

Executive Minutes

Date: 21 July 2020 Venue: This meeting was a virtual meeting and therefore did not take place in a physical location

Time: 6.00 pm

Present:

Chairman: Councillor V Taylor

Vice Chairman: Councillor M Robinson

Councillors: J Derbyshire L Sharp
K Greenwood M Tonkin
M Rudhall

Officers Present: Rose Rouse, Chief Executive
Les Clark, Director of People and Place
Paul Sutton, Interim Director of Corporate Services
Ben Wright, IT Shared Services Manager
Amanda Yellowley, Strategic Lead - Policy, Performance and Customers
Lisa Tremble, Assistant Director Governance
Amanda Yellowley, Strategic Lead Policy, Performance and Customer Services
Ben Wright, It Shared Services Manager

Democratic Services Officer: Nichola Baker, Vivien Little and Karen Wyeth

E/14/7/20 Apologies for Absence

At the start of the meeting, the Assistant Director Governance advised that this meeting was being hosted remotely using conferencing software which allowed Members, Officers and public attendance whilst being able to protect themselves and others, whilst observing the Government's lockdown measures.

The Assistant Director Governance also stated that all votes during this meeting would be taken through an informal recorded vote, though would not be noted as such in the minutes.

A Roll Call of all those Members in attendance remotely was then taken.

There were no apologies for absence received at this meeting.

E/15/7/20 Minutes

RESOLVED that the:

1. public minutes E/1/6/20 to E/12/6/20; and

2. confidential minutes E/13/6/20

of the meeting of the Executive held on 16 June 2020 be confirmed and approved by the Chairman as a correct record of those proceedings.

E/16/7/20 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interests were made at this meeting.

E/17/7/20 Questions and Representations from the Public

No questions or representations from the public had been received under Rules 3 and 4 of the Executive Procedure Rules of the Constitution.

E/18/7/20 Questions from Members

The following questions were received from Members under rule 12 of the Constitution:

1. Councillor K Beaty asked the following question of the Leader:

“I asked you in February about the ongoing discussions on Devolution which I believed had been going on for a quite a few months Your answer was that there were no meaningful discussions taking place. This was around the time that the Government Minister visited Penrith for discussions on devolution and local government reorganisation. We now find ourselves having member briefings on the proposals, after a second Government Minister has had negotiations with you and the Government is taking a bill through parliament to help Councils to reorganise and become more financially efficient. These proposals include abolishing Eden District Council and even splitting the district in two with our friends in Appleby and Kirkby Stephen being run from Barrow or Kendal. Can the Leader let me know why Elected members of this Council and the people of Eden have been kept in the dark on this topic by you and could you let me know what your preference is and that of the Executive for Local Government reorganisation which seems likely to go ahead in a matter of months?

P.S you can't blame Covid as these discussions pre date the Coronavirus outbreak by as much as a year.”

The Leader responded as follows:

“Thank you, Councillor Beaty. My reply to your question in February was correct. There was nothing to report as nothing was happening. Your belief that there were ‘ongoing discussions on Devolution’ was unfounded, as there were no negotiations between the Council and the Government on devolution and local government reorganisation. A short single meeting with Jake Berry MP concluded with a promise that civil servants would get back to us with details of the proposals he preferred. They did not, so no discussions were possible as a result of Jake Berry’s visit. There was no one to talk to and nothing to talk about.

A panel of civil servants came to address us subsequently presenting a very different picture from Jake Berry’s: but again made no definite proposals to be responded to.

Simon Clarke MP is now the responsible Minister. He visited on July 9, meeting with all Leaders and Chief Executives, and set out the Government’s intentions on these

matters, described alternative timetables for implementation depending on whether a consensus can be reached between the Cumbrian authorities (Spring 2022) or imposed through the forthcoming Recovery and Devolution Bill (Spring 2023). This time responses from Leaders were invited.

This is the first moment when a dialogue has been possible between Government and the Cumbrian authorities and so negotiations only commenced on July 9. The various options open to Eden District Council, on behalf of the place we currently represent, have been discussed with the political groups willing. We have taken into account economic and demographic research, and the conclusion will be announced at the Member Briefing on Tuesday. It is presently embargoed.

Since that has been superseded, the preferred model for Eden, which I conveyed to the Minister last week, is a Unitary of Eden, Carlisle and Allerdale.

Geographical detail was not discussed in the meeting with the Minister. I cannot enlighten you on plans to abandon our friends in Kirkby Stephen and Appleby as I do not hold such plans and the Minister did not suggest it. Perhaps the proposals are current in Conservative party circles? I do hope you will make sure Council is not kept in the dark about plans for EDC made by individuals outside it; and perhaps since you do not agree with splitting the current geographical footprint of Eden District Council, you can yourself endeavour to suppress such ideas.”

Councillor Beaty then asked a supplementary question asking if major spending on items such as reorganisation with the Council and the purchase of a redundant building could be suspended whilst devolution is being negotiated.

Given that these discussion are taking place, given that you have given a preference to the minister can you let me know whether the you will suspend the spending of large amounts of money within the Council on purchasing a redundant building and reorganisation in the Council which is costing a lot of money at a time when the Council doesn't have a lot of money. Could you offer to suspend that for a few month's whilst you are negotiating the devolution deal.

The Leader responded that she could make no such offer.

2. The Assistant Director Governance asked the following question of the Resources Portfolio Holder on behalf of Councillor J Lynch:

“What stage has the council reached in its proposed purchase of Voreda House?”

The Resources Portfolio Holder responded as follows:

“The purchase of Voreda House from the NHS is progressing towards conclusion. All the necessary searches and surveys have been completed and the purchase is expected to complete within the next month. With the support of the One Public Estate programme, potential partners with whom we could co-locate to create a model for integrated public services in the area have been contacted to determine their views and requirements and are coming together in August to discuss putting this into practice.”

Councillor Lynch subsequently submitted a secondary question asking whether, in light of the corona virus and its likely impact on the number of office places required and the uncertainty around the Unitary Authority, how can the Council justify spending £2.3 million of public money on the purchase of Voreda House?

A written response will be provided to Councillor Lynch's supplementary question.

E/19/7/20 Provisional Outturn 2019/20

Members considered report F22/20 from the Interim Director of Corporate Services which summarised the Council's Revenue and Capital Performance for the financial year 2019/20. The figures in the report are still subject to finalisation and external audit.

Proposed by Councillor K Greenwood
Seconded by Councillor M Tonkin

and **RESOLVED** that the Executive:

1. noted the Revenue and Outturn position for 2019/20;
2. noted the capital out-turn position for 2019/20 was noted;
3. agreed the balances on capital schemes which had slipped in 2019/20 be carried forward into the 2020/21 capital programme as set out in Appendix 2;
4. allocated the current revenue underspend to create an earmarked revenue reserve to support Covid10 of £200k, the remaining £156k to be transferred to the transformation programme reserve; and
5. delegated responsibility to the Interim Director of Corporate Services in consultation with the Resources Portfolio Holder to consider and implement further changes relating to all aspects of the closedown of accounts for 2019/20 including realigning reserves; the transfer of costs from revenue capital; amendments of the revenue and capital budgets, and implementation of a minimum revenue provision accordingly.

Reason: To keep Members update on the work of the External Auditor.

E/20/7/20 Quarter 1 - Budget Monitoring 2020/21

Members considered report F21/20 from the Interim Director of Corporate Services which summarised the Council's Revenue and Capital position and full year projections for the first Quarter 2020/21.

Proposed by Councillor K Greenwood
Seconded by Councillor M Rudhall

and **RESOLVED** that the project revenue and capital position at June 2020 was noted.

Reason: To keep Members update on the work of the External Auditor.

E/21/7/20 Medium Term Financial Plan Review

Members considered report F20/20 from the Interim Director of Corporate Services which reviewed the implications of the Covid 19 pandemic on the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and any actions that needed or ought to be taken.

Proposed by Councillor K Greenwood
Seconded by Councillor L Sharp

and **RESOLVED** that the report was noted.

Reason: For the contents of the report to be noted by members of the Executive.

E/22/7/20 Recovery Plan & Corporate Plan Update Report

Members considered report CE6/20 from the Chief Executive which sought approval for the strategic priorities for the year 2020-21 and included the Recovery Plan Initiatives developed in response to the global pandemic.

Proposed by Councillor V Taylor
Seconded by Councillor M Rudhall

and **RESOLVED** that:

1. the revised strategic priorities were approved and will form the basis of the quarterly performance management reports; and
2. the operational initiatives in the recovery plane were noted.

Reason: To ensure that the Corporate Plan and Recovery Plan Initiatives are in alignment with the Medium Term Financial Plan and support the delivery of the Council's ambitions and priorities to help Eden's recovery from Covid 19, with a strategic framework within which the Council operates.

E/23/7/20 Corporate Performance Report: April - June 2020

Members considered report CE7/20 from the Chief Executive which sought to:

1. Provide a summary of progress against the revised corporate performance targets for the period April – June 2020; and
2. Inform the Executive of any areas of concern or issues requiring attention and the remedial activity in place to deal with this.

Proposed by Councillor V Taylor
Seconded by Councillor M Rudhall

and **RESOLVED** that the Executive noted the progress to date.

Reason: To advise Members of progress against outcomes.

E/24/7/20 Cumbria Choice Based Lettings Allocation Policy

Members considered report PP26/20 from the Assistant Director Community Services which sought approval of the Cumbria Choice Based Lettings Allocation Policy, to ensure there is greater clarity for households in Eden who are currently registered for social housing or who may register in the future.

Proposed by Councillor J Derbyshire
Seconded by Councillor L Sharp

and **RESOLVED** that:

1. the Cumbria Choice Based Lettings Policy was approved for publication in July 2020; and
2. that delegated authority was given to the Assistant Director Community Services in consultation with the Housing and Health Portfolio Holder, to approve any minor amendments identified during the approval process of the Partner Organisations.

Reason: The proposed policy will help to ensure that there is a consistent and fair approach amongst Registered Providers (Housing Associations) with regard to letting homes in Eden to meet the greatest housing needs. The revisions will meet legislative changes relating to the homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and resultant Statutory Guidance. It is expected that the proposed changes will simplify the operation of the policy to the benefit of all who use it and to customers across the whole of Cumbria.

E/25/7/20 Eden Community Fund Recommendations

Members considered report PP25/20 from the Assistant Director Community Services which sought approval for the award from the Eden Community Fund of Grants to five projects.

Proposed by Councillor L Sharp
Seconded by Councillor J Derbyshire

and **RESOLVED** that a grant from the Eden Community Fund was agreed for each of the five projects.

Reason: The applications are recommended for support as the Council has historically supported community groups and organisations that meet both the Eden Community Fund criteria and Council plan priorities.

E/26/7/20 ICT, Digital, Development Management and Finance Systems

Members considered report F19/20 from the Interim Director Corporate Services, which sought to:

1. incorporate appropriate budgets for the development of the Digital Platform, purchase and implement the new Development Management System and new Financial Management System; and

2. award a contract for the provision of a replacement IT system covering the following Council functions: planning, Building Control, Land Charges, CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy), Planning Policy and Section 106 Agreements.

Proposed by Councillor K Greenwood

Seconded by Councillor L Sharp

and **RESOLVED** that the Executive:

1. recommended to Council that the additional budget requirements set out in the report and detailed in the part II appendix, Development of the Digital Platform and support purchase and implement a new Development Management System and Finance System; and
2. recommended to Council that subject to the approval of the budget at recommendation 2.1 to award the contract for Development Management and associated software to DEF Software Limited.

Reasons:

1. Development of the Digital Platform
To enable additional functionality to be delivered, this functionality will support new ways of working and digital processes which will be implemented as part of the One Eden transformation programme.
2. Development Management System
The existing system is not being developed and is not configurable in the way we need to support new ways of working which will be introduced as part of the One Eden transformation program.
3. Finance System
The existing finance system is not being developed and is not configurable in the way we need to support new ways of working which will be introduced as part of the One Eden transformation programme.

E/27/7/20 Any Other Items which the Chairman decides are urgent

No items of urgent business were raised at this meeting.

E/28/7/20 Date of Next Scheduled Meeting

The date of the next scheduled meeting was confirmed as 15 September 2020.

The meeting closed at 7.31 pm

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