

LARGER COUNCILS COMMITTEE



Date: Thursday 11 February
Time: 2.00pm
Location: Zoom

MINUTES

Present:

Bideford	Cllr Ruth Craigie
Bovey Tracey	Mark Wells
Brixham	Tracey Hallet
Budleigh Salterton	Jo Vanstone
Cranbrook	Cllr Barry Rogers
Crediton	Cllr Liz Brookes-Hocking, Rachel Avery
Cullompton	Cllr Lloyd Knight, Maria Weston
Dartmouth	Charlie Pritchard-Williams
Dawlish	Andrew McKenzie
Exmouth	Tim Dumper
Fremington	Carol McCormack-Hole
Honiton	Stephen Hill
Ivybridge	Jonathan, Cllr Phillip Dredge
Kingsteignton	Carol Lakin
Newton Abbot	Phil Rowe, David Howe, Mike Hocking
Northam	Jane Mills, Cllr David Chalmers
Okehampton	Emma James, Cllr Bob Tolley
Ottery St Mary	Dean Stewart
South Molton	Andrew Coates, Cllr Marc Cornelli
Tavistock	Carl Hearn, Cllr Graham Parker
Teignmouth	Tracy Rowe
Tiverton	John Vanderwolfe
Totnes	Catherine Marlton

In attendance: DALC Cara Stobart (County Officer)

1. Apologies

Budleigh Salterton	Cllr Graham Turner
Brixham	Cllr Richard Haddock
Dawlish	Cllr Alison Foden
Sidmouth	Christopher Holland

2. Minutes of the meeting held 12 November 2020

The minutes of the previous meeting were noted.

3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Financial Impact of Coronavirus: Budgets and Precepts

4.1. Approx. half of participating councils indicated they were significantly increasing their precept, the other half only a small raise. Several were utilising reserves to reduce impact on residents. Some councils shared details:

- Exmouth – 2% reduction.
- Newton Abbot - 5.6% increase per Band D, largely influenced by reduction in council tax base. No income other than precept.
- Honiton – council tax base decrease. no market income, increased grant budget.
- Budleigh Salterton - 35% increase in precept. Lost £25k income from hall this year and hall facing significant repair costs.
- Crediton – 24.2% increase in precept.
- Dartmouth – 39% increase – taken on new assets this year, new projects and did not want to use reserves.
- Ivybridge – 0.69% increase in precept, precept maintained but impact from council tax reduction.
- South Molton - £40k loss in income this year. Band D is remaining the same, but precept will drop due to reduction in council tax base.
- Okehampton – 4.83% due to tax base reduction, some use of reserves.
- Totnes – 2% increase. 4.14% with reduced council tax base.

ACTION: Ask District Councils if tax base change will be communicated alongside council tax increases for 2021/22.

The meeting also reflected on Lobby Day discussions and welcomed proposals to collate key financial data from larger councils to share with MP's annually.

ACTION: Check what data is already available from District Councils to avoid duplication. Survey for additional data, all larger councils to complete.

5. Remote Meetings

5.1. Approx. three quarters of participants want to keep remote meeting regulations permanently, to be used at the council's discretion. All participants want at least a temporary extension till later in the year – six months? Thanks was given to DALC newsletter highlighting issues to consider in advance. Noted that not all councillors were recognising the importance of planning ahead.

ACTION: Councils significantly impacted by the regulations ending to email the County Officer with details to support further lobbying.

6. Supporting recovery post COVID-19

6.1. Participants shared their activities to support their communities to recover post COVID-19.

- Dawlish have already drafted a tourism strategy which will likely inform a recovery strategy. Through volunteers they have set up mental health and suicide working group.
- Cullompton has community resilience working group meeting fortnightly. Supporting those experiencing loneliness (coffee mornings), working to keep parks and toilets open.
- Tavistock is growing its partnerships to keep the town centre open. Working on heritage tourism.
- Northam has been working closely with Torridge to address things like parking, and outdoor seating to support businesses.
- Ivybridge – working on active travel plans

Consideration was given to the possibility of increased hate crime as a result of high volumes of domestic travel to the region.

ACTION: Lobby Police and Crime Commissioner for street warden scheme to be continued.

7. To receive representative reports

- 7.1. NALC Larger Councils, Carl Hearn (Tavistock). NALC still in response mode to COVID-19. NALC working well remotely, seen more engagement. The Local Council Award Scheme has been updated.
- 7.2. Heart of the South West Joint Committee, Cllr Liz Brookes-Hocking (Crediton). Provided a brief report on the Build Back Better report and involvement in the committee and democratic involvement in projects. Pushing for more town/council involvement.
- 7.3. NALC Lobby Day, Cllr David Chalmers (Northam). Met with 3 MP's, all supportive of the sector and there is a willingness to work more closely. Want to know more about us.
- 7.4. DALC, Cara Stobart. Still here to support you. Wanted to ensure you were getting the support you needed as larger councils as your needs are different to smaller councils. Praise for existing service. Specialist training re finance welcome and more discussion opportunities.

ACTION: Councils to email their thoughts on how DALC can further support larger councils.

8. Member items for discussion

- 8.1. Snow Warden Scheme, Cllr Graham Parker (Tavistock). A number of members sought to advise Graham about their involvement in the scheme including: Exmouth, Northam, Newton Abbot, Cullompton and Sidmouth.
- 8.2. Accounting systems, Maria Weston (Cullompton). Technical issues with accounting systems and getting the reports needed.

ACTION: arrange a discussion group for clerks/RFO's.

9. Items for the next meeting

There were no items were suggested for the next meeting.

10. Dates of future meetings

To note dates as: 17 June and 11 November. To be held remotely via Zoom.

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