

**Minutes of the Meeting of the East Devon Business Forum held
at East Devon Business Centre, Honiton on
Thursday 8 July 2008**

Present:	Councillor Graham Brown	Chairman
	Donovan Galling	Vice-Chairman
	Nigel Harrison	Economic Development Manager, EDDC
	Roy Stuart	A E Stuart & Son
	Tim Ford	Fords of Sidmouth
	Chris Down	Crealy Park
	Chris Lane	EDDC
	Rowan Carter	Greendale Industries
	Janine Banks	South West Planning
	Councillor Philip Skinner	Worldwide Trading
	Mark Williams	Chief Executive, EDDC
	Councillor Peter Halse	Halse of Honiton
	Karime Hassan	Corporate Director, EDDC
	David Lockwood	Stags
	Keith Annett	Tru homes
	Mark Shepherd	Waitrose
	Michael Dart	Darts Farm
	William Casely	Otter Nurseries
	Bill Murray	Michael Thorne Construction
	Alec Carter	Greendale Industries
Robin Carter	Ladram Bay Caravan Site	
Dr Jo Kinder	Sidmouth Health Centre	
Graham Pateman	May Gurney	
Val Baker	Blackdown Hills Business Association	
Apologies:	Councillor Paul Diviani	EDDC
	John Ward	Cranford Nursing Home
	Angela Wright	Crealy Great Adventure Park
	Ivor Bull	Express and Echo
	Terry Kingdon	Allwood Buildings Ltd
	Councillor Chris Tratt	EDDC
	Councillor Pat Graham	EDDC
	Councillor Sara Randall Johnson	EDDC

The meeting started at 6.05 pm and ended at 8.05 pm

1 Sandra Feast

Members stood for a minutes silence in memory of Sandra Feast the Administrative Officer at the Business Centre, who had passed away the previous day.

2 Welcome

Graham Brown, Chairman of the East Devon Business Forum welcomed everyone to the meeting, expressed his delight at the number of business people present and thanked members for their time.

3 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings of the East Devon Business Forum held on 10 April, 8 May and 20 May 2008, were confirmed and signed as a true record.

4 **Matters Arising**

The Way Ahead (Min No 35 refers)

The Vice Chairman advised that he had now received a response from the Leader of the District Council to the letter he had sent to her regarding Graham Brown losing his position as Member Champion for Business.

Sub Regional Economic Development Strategy (Minutes No 37 refers)

The Chairman reported that Cooper Simms had now prepared a draft report on the Sub Regional Economic Development Strategy for consideration. Exeter International Airport had also released their Draft Master Plan. Members noted that there was a need to consider these two documents and prepare a response.

RESOLVED that a Sub Committee consisting of Graham Brown, Roy Stuart, Donovan Galling, Tim Ford, Peter Halse, Janine Banks, Robin Carter and Chris Down be formed to consider the Cooper Simms report on the Sub Regional Economic Development Strategy and Exeter International Airport Master Plan and report back to the next meeting of the Business Forum.

5 **Escalating Energy Costs**

Members discussed an item raised from Tim Ford on the escalating energy costs both for business and private households. He reported that with the price of energy expected to rise by 40% in the year, he had looked into providing wind turbines to power Sidmouth and outlined his vision for Sidmouth or another East Devon town. Four wind turbines would be needed to power the whole of Sidmouth at an initial cost of £10 million or £1,200 for each household. He had estimated that this investment could pay for itself within three years.

Tim Ford reported that the energy companies were keen to support the provision of green energy and confirmed that they were willing to give financial support to the provision of wind turbines in Sidmouth.

The following observations were voiced during discussions:

- The problem with wind turbines was that they did not produce electricity all the time and needed a back up system for energy production during these periods;
- That the idea for wind turbines for Sidmouth or another East Devon town was an idea worth pursuing;
- The problems associated with obtaining planning permission for wind turbines in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- That diversifying into different a number of different forms of energy production was the best way forward to ensure continuity of provision;
- That it would be a requirement of the development industry to produce carbon neutral buildings by 2016;
- That East Devon District Council would welcome discussions with Tim Ford and other members of the Business Forum on the development of carbon neutral energy production in East Devon;

5 **Escalating Energy Costs** (cont'd)

- That both the Government and energy companies were looking for a solution to green energy provision;
- That the Isle of Wight were producing 25% of their electricity production by wind turbines and were looking to increase this figure to 100% in due course;
- Support was expressed for the concept of the energy production community project for Sidmouth.

Members wished to congratulate Tim Ford on the work he has done so far on this project.

RESOLVED that an Energy Sub Committee be established consisting of Mark Shepherd, Tim Ford, Val Baker, Philip Skinner, Karime Hassan, Chris Down, Alec Carter to discuss the effect on energy costs on business and the proposals for alternative energy provision made by Tim Ford.

6 **Local Government Structures in Devon**

The Chairman welcomed Mark Williams, Chief Executive to the meeting. He explained to members of the Forum the recommendations of the Boundary Committee made on 7 July 2008, and asked that the Business Forum give their views on these recommendations.

Members noted that the Boundary Committee of the Electoral Commission is carrying out a structural review of local government in Devon with the intention of formulating a recommendation for a structure of unitary local government within Devon by the end of the calendar year. The draft recommendations was that there should be the establishment of a unitary Devon (with an alternative idea of an Exeter and Exmouth Unitary Council and a residual County Council for the rest of Devon). This meant that the concept submitted by East Devon District Council to the boundary commission had been rejected.

There would now be a 12 week consultation period ending on 26 September 2008, during which the Boundary Committee would welcome any views on the draft proposals. After the 26 September 2008, all representations received would be considered and the Boundary Committee would start to formulate its final advice, which would be submitted to the Secretary of State by 31 December 2008.

The Business Forum were reminded that at their meeting on 6 March 2008 (Minute no 16 refers) they had resolved "that the East Devon Business Forum would wish to support a unitary Eastern Devon Council taking in Exeter, Crediton, Cullompton, Dawlish and East Devon based on the Exeter Travel to Work Area as the best solution for business in East Devon".

The following observations were voiced:

- That better unitary models were available to the Boundary Committee for Devon than that presented;
- Concern expressed that the Devon unitary model would be too large and unresponsive and not interact with local communities;
- Members expressed a fear of a stalemate within the constituent local authorities;
- Uncertainty could mean the loss of the best officers;
- The importance of making the Business Forum's views known.

6 **Local Government Structures in Devon** (Cont'd)

RESOLVED

1. that the Forum unanimously indicated that they did not support the proposal of the Boundary Committee to establish a Unitary Devon;
2. that the Business Forum support a necessary enlargement of the existing Plymouth and Torbay unitary authorities and the establishment of a new unitary authority broadly based on Exeter and Exmouth, with the rest of Devon in a separate unitary authority and the chairman write an appropriate letter to the Boundary Commission as the Business Forum's formal response.

7 **The East Devon Business Forum in 2008/09**

Members noted that the purpose of the Business Forum was to obtain the practical experience and views of the business community throughout the District. It was an opportunity to discuss first hand what went on in business in East Devon. The driving aim was to hear the views of the business community. Members confirmed that economic growth issues and planning were crucial to the Business Forum.

Tim Ford expressed the view that it was time the Business Forum stepped forward and stood up for itself. Members considered that to help this process there was the need for a Press Officer to raise the profile of the Business Forum and liaise with the press. It was suggested that Angela Wright would be the best person to undertake this role. The Business Forum had grown and was continuing to grow and becoming more influential, it was now the time for it to develop further.

It was hoped that more Members could be encouraged to attend and the Business Forum would go from strength to strength and help business obtain proper recognition in the area.

Nigel Harrison agreed to arrange a visit to Flybe, now that that the Master Plan for the Airport had been released.

8 **Dates of Future Meetings**

Members were reminded of the following dates for future meetings:

- Thursday 11 September 2008
- Thursday 11 December 2008
- Thursday 5 February 2009

Chairman Date.....