

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the East Devon Business Forum held at East Devon Business Centre, Honiton on Thursday 10 April 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	FWS Carter & Sons
	Alec Carter	FWS Carter & Sons
	Councillor Philip Skinner	Worldwide Trading
	Peter Halse	Halse of Honiton
	David Lockwood	Stags
	Councillor A W J Reed	EDDC
	Jamie Christon	Exeter Airport
	William Casely	Otter Nurseries
	Tim Spores	Fields of Sidmouth
	Simon Witts	Flybe
	Bill Murray	Michael Thorne Construction Ltd
	Noreen Haskins	Parsons Nationwide Distribution
	John Ward	Cranford Nursing Home
	Councillor Paul Diviani	EDDC
	Councillor Bob Buxton	Honiton Development Trust
	Graham Pateman	May Gurney Ltd
	Zoe House	Ladram Bay
Apologies:	Graham Sindle	Thomas Westcott
	Tony Collins	Exmouth Town Council
	Nick Agg Manning	Land Rover Experience
	Mark Shepherd	Waitrose
	Councillor Pat Graham	East Devon District Council
	Karime Hassan	Corporate Director
	Richard Harris	Honiton Garage
	Val Baker	Blackdown Hills Business Association
	Councillor Sara Randall	EDDC
	Johnson	
	Sue Payne	Woodbury Park
	Terry Kingdon	Allwood Ltd
	Councillor C Tratt	EDDC

The meeting started at 6.05 pm and ended at 8.05 pm

21 **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.

22 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the East Devon Business Forum held on Thursday 6 March 2008, were confirmed and signed as a true record. Members wished it to be recorded that they had agreed to the three resolutions resolved under minute 16 Local Government Reorganisation.

23 **Matters Arising**

Report of the activities of constituent business organisations (Min No 18 refers)

The Chairman expressed his concern that the Business Forum was not receiving regular reports from the East Devon Association of Chambers of Commerce.

Items for future meetings (Min no. 20 refers)

The Chairman reported that he would hold a meeting shortly with Nigel Harrison and Karime Hassan to discuss items for future agendas (See also minute 28 below).

24 **Flybe and the Government's skills pledge**

Members received a presentation from Simon Witts, Flybe's Director of Safety, Quality and Training on Flybe and the Government's skills pledge. Members noted that Flybe was Europe's largest regional airline, and also had Europe's largest regional aircraft maintenance facility at Exeter Airport.

Flybe proposed to build a training academy at Exeter Airport in the next 2 years. As a business they were committed to training a developing their staff. The Development Plan for the Training Academy had started on the 10 May 2007 and an agreement had been signed with both Exeter College and Exeter University to help with its development. Flybe now had awarding body/qualification credit framework status.

Simon Witts reported that Flybe employed 1,000 staff at its Exeter Headquarters and were looking to recruit 750 additional staff in the next year. He advised that the company needed to work on recruiting the right sort of people to join the organisation. It was anticipated that the planning application for the Training Academy would be submitted in May 2008, with construction commencing in February 2009. The facility was programmed to be completed by March 2010.

Flybe was keen to commit to supplying training for other employers in all sectors of business. The qualifications gained by students at the Flybe Training Academy would be accepted by other organisations as the standards would be set by the Sector Skills Council. The customer care development courses would translate well to other sectors of business across the region and members of the Business Forum expressed an interest in using some of the courses once the Training Academy was operational.

Simon Witts extended an invitation to all members of the Business Forum to attend the Flybe facility and suggested that a meeting of the Business Forum could be held there.

Simon Witts was thanked for his presentation.

25 **Rural Enterprise Development**

The Chairman welcomed David Hinshelwood and Petra Davis from West Devon Business Information Point (Bip) to the meeting to discuss Rural Enterprise Development. The West Devon Bip, dealt with consultancy and business training for businesses in East Devon. They had grown out of the Enterprise Agency in West Devon and Heart of Devon

25 **Rural Enterprise Development (Cont)**

Enterprise Agency and employed ten people, five and half of whom worked directly with businesses. They also worked closely with the Learning Skills Council, Business Link, Government Office of the South West, Natural England, Devon Renaissance and local Councils.

David Hinshelwood confirmed that he was looking to work with 200 businesses in East Devon, with 40 of these being intensive, as well as working with Chambers of Commerce and Federations of Small Business. The average size of business they worked with had 5 employees and they provided training for various business activities to gain Level 2 standard.

The Forum noted that the West Devon Bip was a non profit organisation with funding coming from District Councils (East Devon District Council provided £40,000 per annum), users and clients. Tim Ford reported that he had looked for basic IT training for his staff in the past year but could not find a suitable trainer. This was the sort of thing that West Devon Bip could provide to Fords and other business in East Devon if they required it. However, training often needed to be tailored specifically to an individual employer's needs. The West Devon Bip also tried to make applying for training as easy as possible.

Members noted that there were 5,000 VAT registered businesses in East Devon, with 80-100 businesses starting every year. However, there were also 80 businesses lost each year, with the difficult years being years 3, 4 and 5. It was West Devon Bip's job to help support businesses through this period. Peter Halse reported that he had been encouraged by what he had heard at the meeting from West Devon Bip and noted that from July 2007 to 31 March 2008, West Devon Bip had helped 24 businesses intensively and 104 businesses less intensively in East Devon.

David Hinshelwood and Petra Davis were thanked for their presentation

26 **Reports on the activities of constituent business organisations**

a) East Devon Association of Chambers of Commerce

There was nothing further to report.

b) East Devon Branch of the Federation of Small Businesses

There was nothing further to report.

c) East Devon Branch of the National Farmers Union

Graham Brown representing the NFU reported that there was nothing further to report.

d) Blackdown Hills Business Association

Members noted that there were now over 300 businesses in the Blackdown Hills.

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

Nigel Harrison reported 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 noted the matters for discussion form which had been included at the back of the agenda and encouraged members to fill it in and give their views on what they would like to be discussed at future

28 **The East Devon Business Forum in 2008/09 (Cont)**

meetings. Members advised that they were pleased with the amount of liaison being achieved with the council and that the Business Forum was an important consultee on business matters and its views were being listened too.

Willam Casely reported that he would like the Business Forum to have the ability to deal with more mundane matters that affected businesses, such as environmental issues, recycling, energy costs, planning of roadworks. He asked members to list their top 3 problems that their business had at the moment.

Members considered that a topic should be chosen for each meeting and discussed. It was proposed that at the next meeting the topics to be discussed should be recycling and commercial waste. Tim Ford suggested that Rick Aldritch from SITA and that Mark Reilly Head of Streetscene Services be invited to attend a meeting to discuss recycling. Councillor Philip Skinner also suggested the issue of Tourism and the low level of funding by the District Council as a topic of discussion for a future meeting. Members were again encouraged to highlight the top 3 issues that affected their business and send it in to Nigel Harrison, either through the form attached to the agenda or by email.

RESOLVED that the subjects of recycling and commercial waste be discussed at the next meeting of the Business Forum.

29 **East Devon Planning process**

Tim Ford raised the issue of the East Devon Planning process. He pointed out that the granting of planning permission created capital in the community. He requested that the planning department at East Devon District Council be more lenient in the way it granted planning permission as this assisted the economic well being of the community.

Members noted the change in attitude amongst the planning department, but the change in policy took longer. The Forum were advised that 92% of applications were dealt with under the delegated system of these 80% were approved. 68% of the applications taken to appeal were upheld.

Councillor Tony Reed, Chairman of the Development Control Committee reported that the planning department had reintroduced preplanning meetings with applicants. East Devon had recognised that the applicant was the most important part of the planning process and all planning applicants had the facility for a pre application meeting if required.

30 **Other issues**

East Devon Local Development Framework

Members received a letter from East Devon District Council's planning department asking for their comments of the Pre-submission Draft Statement of Community Involvement on the Local Development Framework.

RESOLVED that a meeting of the Local Development Framework Sub Committee be held to discuss this issue.

Improvements to the A303/A30

Members acknowledged the letter received from the Highways Agency attached to the agenda.

31 **Dates of Future Meetings**

Members were reminded of the following dates for future meetings:

- Thursday 10 July 2008
- Thursday 11 September 2008
- Thursday 11 December 2008
- Thursday 5 February 2009

Chairman Date.....