

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Corporate Overview Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 13 June 2006

Present: Councillors:
G K Liverton (Chairman)
Mrs K J Bamsey
G P Chamberlain
J E D Falby
C Gibbings
J A Knight
Ms S M Merritt
A W J Reed
T G Reeves
Mrs B O Taylor
S C Wragg
C H Wale

Also Present: Councillors:
P A Diviani
Mrs C E Drew
Miss J M Elson
A R Giles
S Hughes
A T Moulding
Mrs F I Newth
B Nicholson
Mrs L Roden
Mrs M A Rogers
Mrs P A Stott
A J Wilkinson
Mrs E E Wragg

Apology Councillor R C Peachey

The meeting started at 6.30 pm and ended at 8.05 pm

*1 **Welcome and introductions**

The Chairman welcomed new members to the Corporate Overview Committee and reported that consideration would be given at the next meeting to an item on the Big Lottery bid for funding for the Jurassic Coast project for both Exmouth and Seaton. It was confirmed that representatives of both Exmouth and Seaton Town Councils would be invited to the meeting on 6 July 2006.

*2 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Overview Committee held on 30 March 2006, were confirmed and signed as a true record.

*3 **Cultural Services in East Devon after the Leisure Trust transfer**

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director – Communities in respect of the residual cultural and community development role left with the Council following the transfer of 'Leisure' to a Trust. The Council still retained the responsibility for cultural development and strategic direction and acknowledged the valuable role of culture in supporting quality of life within communities. Culture also contributed significantly to the local economy.

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Cultural Services in East Devon after the Leisure Trust transfer (cont)..

The Executive Board at its meeting on 10 May 2006 (Minute no. *216 refers) had requested the Corporate Overview Committee to review the following options for progressing the Cultural Services in East Devon with a view to establishing a Task and Finish Forum:

- a) To retain the present minimal staff quota and focus on a few key activities;
- b) To combine teams across a 'Cultural Services agenda' to create mass (the most obvious link suggested could be with the Countryside team and the residual tourism function to provide a consistent management of the cultural services across the Council. Such a combination would support the Council's priorities for community development and well-being and was likely to attract external grants and funding).

Concern was expressed that culture and the arts had taken a back seat at the Council and it was questioned whether this could be included in the Council's future activities. It was however recognised that any increase in funding for arts and culture would have to work within the existing budget. Members were reminded that the prioritisation process had placed arts and culture as a low priority.

RESOLVED that a Task and Finish Forum be established to investigate a suitable way forward for cultural services in East Devon, consisting of four members of the Conservative Group, two members of the Liberal Democrats and one member of the Independent Group, the membership to be confirmed to the Chief Executive.

4

East Devon Concessionary Fares Scheme

Members considered the report of the Corporate Director – Economy in respect of a proposal to offer additional destinations to residents of East Devon under the Concessionary Fares Scheme when funding becomes available. The proposal was to extend the scheme at the earliest opportunity in the event of an under-spend of the concessionary fares budget being identified during the course of the financial year.

The Executive Board at its meeting on 10 May 2006 (Minute no. *215 refers) had requested the Corporate Overview Committee to look in detail at the proposed phased extension of the East Devon Concessionary Fares Scheme beyond the boundaries of the district, should funding become available

The possibility of introducing a 50% scheme was suggested as a way of extending services if the budget available was limited. Concern was also expressed that destinations such as Dorchester and Weymouth should be covered by any extension of the scheme. The ability to extend the scheme was dependent on the take up of the current scheme as if take-up was extensive this would reduce the budget available for its extension.

4 **East Devon Concessionary Fares Scheme (cont)..**

RECOMMENDED 1) that the following phased extension of the East Devon Concessionary Fares Scheme be supported:

Phase 1- Routes to significant settlements outside of East Devon to which residents would travel in order to visit the doctor, dentist, hospital, bank or post office which would also provide access to shops and other town centre facilities. Destinations could include Crediton, Tiverton, Cullompton, Wellington, Taunton, Chard and other towns outside the borders of East Devon.

Phase 2 – Exeter park and ride facilities.

Phase 3 – Other destinations within Devon.

2) that the possibility of introducing a 50% scheme be considered as a way of extending the scheme if the budget available was limited.

5 **Customer Service Strategy**

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director – Central Services introducing the customer service strategy. The aim was for a consistent customer service led culture to be achieved within the Council. It included standards and targets for all services which reflected best practices agreed nationally. The importance of effective line management and team work was acknowledged.

Members acknowledged that this was a key policy for the Council in the coming year. The Corporate Director – Central Services reported that the officer group had made a decision not to have 0845 numbers for the Customer Service Centre, as these numbers were more expensive for the customer and it was felt that this took away from the localness of the service.

RECOMMENDED 1) that the Customer Service Strategy be agreed.

2) that the decision of the Officer Group not to have 0845 numbers be confirmed.

6 **Review of Warden Services for Sheltered Housing Schemes**

Members considered the report of the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion setting out a review of the existing Warden Service for older persons. The report also considered the areas where modernisation of the service was required to meet future demands and aspirations of service users. Regard was also made to the pressures for change generated by the Supporting People programme. This paid towards the cost of providing the service, changing service user aspirations and the need to deliver support services with regard to client needs rather than a 'one size fits all' approach.

The report proposed a vision for future service delivery and explored some of the implications for Service Users, the staff involved and the Council as service provider. This would involve changing Resident and Traveling Wardens' job descriptions to enable them to be more flexible and responsive to clients' needs. In response to a question from a Councillor, the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion confirmed that he was keen to preserve the "good neighbour" aspect of the existing scheme, whilst delivering a more comprehensive and professional support service.

6 Review of Warden Services for Sheltered Housing Schemes (cont)..

Consultation on these proposed changes had been made through the Customer and Leasehold Panel, who had been very supportive, as had staff. It was proposed to consult with individual Warden controlled housing schemes where specific changes were proposed. The importance of proper training for staff was emphasized.

RESOLVED that the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion and his staff be thanked for the excellent report.

- RECOMMENDED**
- (1) that the changes in service provision to modernise the Warden Service contained in the report be supported;
 - (2) that the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion take up with the Head of Planning and Countryside the possibility of establishing Section 106 agreements with firms who develop Retirement Homes, in view of the strain these put on care services in the District, particularly for the County Council.

(Councillor Mrs P A Stott declared a personal interest as a worker in a care home)

***7 Corporate Overview Draft Forward Plan 2006/07**

Members considered the Corporate Overview Draft Forward Plan for 2006/07.

RESOLVED that the Draft Forward Plan 2006/07 be adopted.

***8 Membership of Task and Finish Forums**

Consideration was given to the membership of the Exmouth Gateway Visitors Centre TaFF and the Seaton Gateway Visitors Centre TaFF as well as their terms of reference. These included how the projects are to be taken forward, detailed management and resources implications, particularly to the Council as landowner.

RESOLVED that Task and Finish Forums be established for Exmouth Gateway Visitors Centre and the Seaton Gateway Visitors Centre, consisting four members of the Conservative Group, two members of the Liberal Democrats and one member of the Independents Group, the membership to be confirmed to the Chief Executive .

Chairman

Date