

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Board held at Knowle, Sidmouth on Wednesday, 13 September 2006

Present:

Councillors:

Miss S M Randall Johnson (Chairman)
R G Franklin (Vice Chairman)

Miss J M Elson
S Hughes
S C Luxton
A T Moulding
J B Nicholson
Mrs P A Stott

Also Present

Councillors:

Miss V Ash
PW Burrows
T A Cope
K W George
R Giles
C F A Gibbings
J A Knight
Mrs A E Liverton

G K Liverton
R Mudge
Mrs F I Newth
Mrs H E Parr
A W J Reed
Mrs M A Rogers
Dr H W Waterworth

Apologies

Councillors:

P A Diviani
A J Wilkinson

The meeting started at 5.30 pm and ended at 6.35 pm.

***57 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Board held on 16 August 2006 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

***58 Exclusion of the Public**

RESOLVED

that the classification given to the documents to be submitted to the Board be confirmed and that the reports relating to exempt information be dealt with under Part B of the agenda.

***59 Forward Plan**

The contents of the Forward Plan for the period 1 September 2006 to 31 December 2006 were noted.

***60 Matters referred to the Executive Board**

There were no matters referred to the Executive Board by the Scrutiny or Corporate Overview Committees or the Council.

***61 Meeting of the Corporate Overview Committees**

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Overview, held on 31 August 2006, were noted.

RESOLVED (1) that the following decision be noted:

- Minute 17
- that the financial information section of the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Annual Report be expanded to include a section showing what income had been brought in, compared with expenditure.
 - that Councillor P Diviani and the Blackdown Hills AONB team be congratulated on the success of the project.

(2) that the following decision be actioned by the Executive Board

- Minute 18
- that the Local Government Association and the two local MPs be requested to make representations to the Government stating that the Local Development Framework process was too complicated and inflexible and a simpler, more flexible and less centralised system was required, with the role of elected members representing the views of the community needing to be given greater recognition.

***62 Revenue and Capital monitoring report 2006 – month four**

Members considered the report of the Financial Services Manager summarising the Council's overall financial position for 2006/07. Members noted the budget variations within the month, how these would continue to the end of the financial year and the effect on the Council's overall Reserves and Balances. At the October meeting, Members would consider the half yearly accounts which would give a clearer indication of financial trends.

It was noted that Investec, the Council's external fund manager, had only generated 3.81% return at month four. It was acknowledged that investment rates did fluctuate through the year but if the low return continued into month six, discussions would be held with Investec.

RESOLVED that the variances identified as part of the Revenue and Capital Monitoring process for month four of 2006/07 be noted, including the effect on the Council's Reserves and Balances.

***63 Performance Monitoring report – July 2006**

Members considered the report of the Policy Manager setting out performance information for July 2006. This gave the Executive Board the opportunity to monitor performance of selected the Performance Indicators and identify areas where improvement was necessary.

There had been significant improvement to the speed of processing new benefits claims (BV78A). It was noted that some performance fluctuated due to seasonal variations.

The number of planning appeals allowed (BV204) was an area of concern but no specific reason could be given to explain why the target had not been met this month. Members were reminded that the Scrutiny Committee at its next meeting on 20 September would be looking specifically at the current situation regarding planning appeals. It was hoped that Development Control Members in particular would attend that meeting and contribute to the debate.

*63 **Performance Monitoring report – July 2006 (cont)..**

It was noted that there was a shortage of planning officers which had affected performance in determining planning applications within 8 weeks (BV109C). The flow of staff within the planning section reflected a national trend.

The Portfolio Holder – Resources congratulated Officers on the efforts made to improve performance. He also welcomed the Councillor debates on performance which had increased awareness and the importance of monitoring key areas.

RESOLVED that performance and proposed remedial action against key performance indicators for July 2006 be noted.

64 **Employment policies**

Members considered the report of the Head of Organisational Development which introduced three employment policies – the Retirement Policy, in accordance with new legislation, the new Dress and Appearance Policy to replace the existing policy and include clearer guidance, and the Drugs and Alcohol Policy which was a new policy for the Council.

RECOMMENDED that the Retirement Policy, the Dress and Appearance Policy and the Drugs and Alcohol Policy be agreed.

*65 **Cranbrook Design Panel**

Members considered the report of the Corporate Director – Environment in response to a request from the Vice Chairman of the Cranbrook Design Panel for members of the Panel to be paid an honorarium for their work. He had suggested a figure of £500 per day.

The membership of the Panel was detailed in the report. Not all members of the Panel attended as paid officers of organisations. When members were invited to join the Panel it was on the basis that there would be three to four meetings per year and that the Council would meet travel expenses and provide secretarial support to the Panel. It was now apparent that the number of meetings would be greater than expected due to the scale of the project and the approach adopted by the Panel.

However, Members were reminded that the Panel had been set up to provide an independent voice to the Council, with the broad remit of promoting quality design. The Panel had not been appointed to provide professional design advice.

The Council was keen to support the Panel and recognised its valuable contribution but the suggested remuneration would be difficult to justify in the circumstances.

RESOLVED that the request for paying members of the Cranbrook Design Panel an honorarium for their work be refused as the suggested remuneration would be difficult to justify in the circumstances.

66 **University of Exeter Innovation Centre**

Members considered the report of the Corporate Director – Environment seeking authority to enter into a Partnering Agreement and to appoint Councillor Paul Diviani, Portfolio Holder – Economy and Regeneration, as the East Devon District Council representative to the University of Exeter's Innovation Centre's Strategy Board.

The South West Regional Development Agency had agreed its funding of the second phase of the Innovation Centre. This was subject to a Strategy Board being convened to offer advice to the University on essential stages, including the tendering process, to advance the project. Each of the partner organisations would have one representative on the Board.

66 **University of Exeter Innovation Centre (cont)..**

The Innovation Centre would be on the University campus and was a key element of the sub-regional economic development strategy. The main benefit to East Devon would be the development of the University of Exeter's Science Park.

- RECOMMENDED**
- (1) that the Council enter into the University of Exeter's Innovation Centre's Partnering Agreement,
 - (2) that the Economy and Regeneration Portfolio Holder be appointed as the Council's representative on the University of Exeter's Innovation Centre's Strategy Board.

*67 **The Exmouth and Seaton Gateway Projects Action Plan**

Members considered the report of the Corporate Director – Environment which up-dated Members on the progress of the Exmouth and Seaton Gateway Projects. Members were advised that the Big Lottery Fund Evolution Bid had not been successful for reasons relating to the initiative's lack of strategic overview and over-arching theme.

It was assumed that all the partners to the memorandum of understanding for the Gateway Projects remained committed to progressing the projects despite the failed bid. The report set out the scope of work required to take the projects forward and the cash flow implications. The aim was for this world class initiative to be self-funding. The Rural Development Agency would need to be presented with a business case before it would support any application for funding.

However, the Corporate Director – Environment advised that it would be wise to wait until a detailed report of the reasons why the Big Lottery Fund Evolution Bid had been unsuccessful was available and for there to be a face to face meeting with the assessors to see what lessons could be learnt before any further action was progressed.

The Council was still committed to taking the project forward and the proposed delay to seek information would assist with this intention.

- RESOLVED**
- (1) that it be noted that Evolution Bid for funding to the Big Lottery was unsuccessful,
 - (2) that no further action be taken in progressing the Exmouth and Seaton Gateway Projects until the detailed reasons for the unsuccessful Big Lottery bid were known and a meeting had been held with the assessors,
 - (3) that the lessons learnt as a result of (2) above be referred to a future meeting of the Executive Board and recommendations presented on the most effective way to progress these Projects.

(Councillor R Mudge declared a personal interest in this item as the Town Council representative and a trustee in respect of the Exmouth Gateway Centre)

68 **Sandbag deliveries to Town and Parish Councils**

Members considered the report of the Head of Street Scene Services in respect of the provision of sandbags to Town and Parish Councils each year. For reasons given in the report and to keep the cost of provision within budget, it was proposed that the Council supplies only empty sandbags in response to requests from town and parish councils.

RECOMMENDED that the policy for the annual delivery of empty sandbags to Parish/Town Councils be approved subject to the words 'during an emergency' being deleted from the Policy Statement.

*69 **Exclusion of the Public**

RESOLVED that under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting as exempt information, of the description set out in the agenda is likely to be disclosed.

70 **Disposal of Assets to Leisure East Devon under the General Disposal Consent (England) 2003 – Key decision**

Members considered the report of the Head of Economic Development and Property in respect of the arrangements regarding the disposal of assets to Leisure East Devon and the need to comply with the General Disposal Consent (England) 2003. This legislation allowed a local authority to dispose of assets at less than best consideration, subject to conditions including that the disposal was likely to contribute to the promotion or improvement of social well-being.

Members were assured that there was an 'option to terminate' clause within the lease agreements for specified circumstances.

The District Valuer had been asked to report on the proposed disposals to the Leisure Trust and this information was included for Members' information. The individual properties and values were shown in the schedule attached to the report.

The Manor Pavilion had not been included and would be the subject of a supplementary report to be issued by the District Valuer.

- RECOMMENDED**
- (1) that the valuations detailed in this report, and contained within the full report of the District Valuer and Valuation Officer dated 30 August 2006, be agreed, and the disposal of the assets to the Leisure Trust be at less than best consideration.
 - (2) that the assets contained within the schedule attached to the report be transferred to the Leisure Trust on the basis of 30 year leases, the terms of which have been agreed by the Chief Executive and the Portfolio Holder- Economy and Regeneration in accordance with Executive Board minute 120 (4) of 14 December 2005.

*71 **GIS Systems Options – Key decision**

Members considered the report of the Head of ICT setting out the case to replace the existing GIS system currently used which was now unable to sustain the business demands put upon it. A review had been carried out to assess the other products in the market and those used by other Councils.

RESOLVED that, the business case for a move to corporate Georgraphic Information Systems (GIS) be approved with Contract Standing Order 1.30 being waived to allow negotiation with a single supplier as set out in the report (Option 3).

*72 **Sidbury Cemetery Extension**

Members considered the report of the Licensing Officer which set out the current position in respect of the Sidbury Cemetery. Members were asked to decide whether it should be extended or closed when it becomes full in a few years' time.

RESOLVED that Officers be asked to investigate the acquisition of further land to facilitate the extension of the Sidbury Cemetery.

*73 **Standing Order Exemptions – Central Heating and Electrical Upgrading Programmes 2006/09**

Members considered the report of the Housing Services Manager seeking agreement to an exception of Standing Order 1.12 to award contracts for Consultancy services in respect of the Central Heating and Electrical Upgrading Programmes 2006/09 for the reasons given in the report.

RESOLVED that the exemption from Standing Order 1.12 be accepted for the reasons set out in the report.

Chairman Date