

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 14 February 2007

Present:

Councillors:

P W Burrows (Chairman)
A R Giles (Vice-Chairman)
R W Boote
D J Cox
Mrs C E Drew
Mrs A E Liverton
Mrs F I Newth
Mrs M A Rogers

Apologies:

Councillors:

H J Jeffery
Mrs L A Roden
P J Skinner
Dr H W Waterworth

Also Present:

Councillors:

T A Cope
P A Diviani
Miss J M Elson
A T Moulding
Mrs P A Stott

Gerry Moore Community Safety and Anti Social Behaviour
 Coordinator
Alan Payne Chairman, Poltimore House Trust
Keith Wheeden Chairman, Friends of Poltimore House Trust

The meeting started at 6.30pm and ended at 9.22pm

*46 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 24 January 2007, were confirmed and signed as a true record.

*47 **Exempt Information**

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

48 Quarterly monitoring of performance – third quarter 2006/07

Consideration was given to the report of the Policy Manager with regard to performance information for the period 1 October to 31 December 2006.

Members noted that the performance relating to BV12 'working days lost due to sickness absence' had significantly improved. The Corporate Director – Central Services advised that because this had previously been an area of concern, an action plan had been introduced. The plan had been in place for 12 months and the results were beginning to be seen. Officers were concerned that this indicator could be negatively affected by the Job Evaluation Appeals process as unhappy staff could show less commitment to their work. The target for this indicator was set at above average performance. If actual performance reached that of the top 25% of authorities the target would be to remain in that quartile.

Performance Indicator L55b 'percentage of staff completing ICT new skills course', was categorised as an area of concern. Members were advised that the ICT trainer was unable to provide training as he was fulfilling the duties of his manager who had been seconded to work on the Customer Service Centre. The Service Centre had been given priority but the ICT trainer would return to his work in due course.

Discussion took place on Performance Indicator BV204 'planning appeals allowed'. The notes included in the report stated that more detailed information could be provided to Members on this indicator if required. It was noted that the Corporate Director – Environment and the Head of Planning and Countryside Services had already agreed to present a detailed report to the Executive Board and the Development Control Committee respectively.

RECOMMENDED that more detailed information be provided to the Scrutiny Committee with regard to Performance Indicator BV204 'Planning appeals allowed'

***49 Quarterly monitoring of Service Plans – third quarter 2006/07**

Consideration was given to the report of the Policy Manager with regard to progress on actions included in the Service Plans for the period 1 October to 31 December 2006.

Members were advised that the European Computer Driving Licence qualification was available for all staff and Councillors. The Corporate Director – Central Services was keen to stress that any Member wishing to study for this qualification would be made most welcome.

Members noted that a significant number of the areas categorised as areas of concern or variation were attributable to the performance of the ICT section. This included targets within the Finance Service which had not been met because ICT resources had not been allocated. Members recognised that the Customer Service Centre was a priority area of work for the ICT section but agreed that the Committee should be scrutinising areas where targets had not been achieved.

RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder – Communications and the Head of ICT be invited to the next meeting to explain why ICT resources had not been allocated to the three finance actions detailed in the report.

Anti Social Behaviour Task and Finish Forum report

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director – Communities and the accompanying end report of the Anti Social Behaviour Task and Finish Forum which had been circulated with the agenda for the previous meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Giles, Chairman of the Task and Finish Forum, explained the general themes which ran through the report. The Forum reached several conclusions including that the Council should consider being more proactive, be more aware of the costs which could arise from not being proactive and should work more closely with outside bodies.

The work of the Forum had focussed on dog control, vehicle related anti social behaviour, fear of crime, intimidation, harassment, littering and fly tipping. These areas were all matters of concern put forward by Town and Parish Councils. A series of recommendations were included in the report relating to each of these areas. The recommendations, which were mainly based around enforcement and new legislation, had not been prioritised as the Task and Finish Forum wanted them all to be recommended to the Executive Board.

Dog fouling was no longer seen as one of the major forms of anti social behaviour although it was still a significant problem in some locations. Fear of crime was considered to be an important area which needed to be tackled. Discussion took place on the perception of young people and how inappropriate stereotyping led to an increase in the fear of crime. Members recollected the Chairman's Reception for Talented Young People which had been held in previous years and suggested the introduction of a similar event or youth achievement awards. Steps should be taken not to only recognise high achieving young people but also to reward harder to reach young people with something to offer their local community. It was suggested that the Council could work with the Princes Trust or the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

Members discussed the use of CCTV and the police CCTV vehicle. Gerry Moore, Community Safety and Anti Social Behaviour Coordinator, advised that although the CCTV vehicle had not been frequently used in the past due to problems relating to manpower and the size of the vehicle it was now being more widely used.

Consideration was given to the valuable work carried out by Local Action Groups and how this could be built on. In addition Members also considered the problems associated with flytipping, abandoned vehicles and the suggestion that the removal of litter bins could reduce the problem of litter in specific areas.

- RECOMMENDED**
1. that the Executive Board agree the suggested actions and any indicative budget implications of the Anti Social Behaviour Task and Finish Forum, as contained in their end report, which the exclusion of recommendation 3.6;
 2. that the Council introduce an achievement award scheme for young people

51 **Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan**

Members considered the Forward Plan for the Scrutiny Committee and suggested additions to it.

- RESOLVED**
1. that the action taken after the Council's computer system was infected by a virus be considered at the meeting on 21 March together with the performance detailed in the resolution to minute 49;
 2. that scrutiny of progress made with regard to the Play Strategy action plan be included in the Forward Plan;
 3. that the Chairman of the Devon Primary Care Trust be invited to a meeting after May 3 to update Members on the progress made in running the new Trust;

- RECOMMENDED**
1. that a Profit and Loss Account be produced for the sports grounds not handed over to Leisure East Devon, for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee;
 2. that a Service Planning and Budget Task and Finish Forum be included in the annual calendar of meetings.

*52 **Task and Finish Forum Status Report**

Members noted the Task and Finish Forum Status Report.

*53 **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 on the agenda, is likely to be disclosed and on balance the public interest is in discussing this item in private session (Part B).

54 **Progress report on Poltimore House**

Members considered the report of the Principal Conservation Officer with regard to the future of Poltimore House. Alan Payne, Chairman of the Poltimore House Trust, and Keith Wheeden, Chairman of the Friends of the Poltimore House Trust, were welcomed to the meeting. It was noted that The Manor House Trust had also been invited to send representatives to the meeting but had declined to do so. In addition the representative invited to attend from English Heritage had sent his apologies as he was unable to make the meeting. However, he had advised that the English Heritage was an advisory organisation that would be happy to work with who ever owned the property.

Members were advised of the history of the property, the current condition of the house and garden and the intentions of the Poltimore House Trust. The Trust believed that Poltimore House should be conserved for the benefit of the public. They were opposed to the idea that some of the grounds could be used for the construction of dwellings as they believed that this would strongly detract from the property and its grounds. Members were advised of the series of fund raising initiatives which the Trust were considering and the current financial arrangements of the Trust.

54 **Progress report on Poltimore House** (Cont.)

Members were advised that the Trust anticipated the receipt of the Poltimore House Trust Feasibility Study within the following 4 to 6 weeks.

- RECOMMENDED**
1. that members of the Scrutiny Committee be provided with a copy of the Poltimore House Trust feasibility study as soon as practical after publication;
 2. that the Scrutiny Committee be provided with the Poltimore House Trust Management Plan and Business Plan to scrutinise before the end of 2007

(Councillor Cope declared a personal interest in this item as a member of the Friends of Poltimore House Trust)

Chairman Date.....