

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Corporate Overview Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 18 October 2007

Present:

Councillors:

D R A Key (Chairman)
R C Peachey (Vice Chairman)

R Boote
P Bowden
G P Brown
M Florey
C Gibbings

G S Godbeer
Mrs P A Stott
T J R Wood
S C Wragg

Also Present:

Councillors:

Miss V Ash
P A Diviani
Miss J M Elson
J P Halse
S Hughes

Mrs A E Liverton
G K Liverton
A T Moulding
A W J Reed
P J Skinner

Apologies

Councillors:

R Bloxham
D J Cox
Mrs P A Graham
B O Ingham

The meeting started at 6.30 pm and ended at 8.55 pm

***15 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Overview Committee held on 20 September 2007, were confirmed and signed as a true record.

***16 Exmouth: Rolle College Campus**

Councillor Jill Elson reported that a number of developments had occurred since the last meeting with regard to the Rolle College campus. These included, Ken Turner meeting with Councillor Brian Greenslade, Leader of Devon County Council and asking to make a presentation to a County Council Committee; Karime Hassan trying to arrange a meeting with South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA); Ken Turner speaking to both County Councillors for Exmouth on the issue; Councillor Jill Elson speaking to County Councillor Christine Channon; Ken Turner and Councillor Jill Elson meeting with Hugo Swire; the Governors of Exmouth Community College writing to Devon County Council explaining the situation and how the purchase of part of the Rolle College site would achieve value for money.

Members noted that no planning development brief had been presented for the Rolle College site as yet. A degree of urgency was needed to bring this issue to a conclusion. The Executive Board had agreed the recommendation made at the last meeting that a meeting be held with SWRDA to discuss the purchase of part of the Rolle College site for use by Exmouth Community College and this issue was being pursued.

***16 Exmouth: Rolle College (Cont)**

Karime Hassan reported that he was still trying to meet with Ian Thompson, Director of SWRDA and appraise him of the situation. He would ask his secretary to continue to chase a meeting. The University of Plymouth had refused his requests to speak to him on the Rolle College campus issue. The most important thing was to obtain a price from the University of Plymouth, that they would accept for the site.

RESOLVED that the Devon County Councillor Mrs E E Wragg, representative for the area in which Rolle College was situated, be contacted and asked to do what she can to progress this matter at Devon County Council level.

17 Housing in East Devon for 2006 to 2026 period

Members received a report from Matt Dickins, Principal Planning Officer regarding Housing in East Devon for the 2006 to 2026 period and in particular the issue of Affordable Housing. The report set out an overview of some of the key themes suggested for inclusion in the East Devon Local Development Framework – Core Strategy – Issues and Options Paper in respect to housing and particularly affordable housing provision. It followed on from discussion at the previous Corporate Overview Committee meeting and reflected the work undertaken in visioning workshops.

Members noted that in the past housing windfall sites (with only limited land allocations) had met the need for housing in the District. There was now, however, a need to allocate sufficient land to meet at least the first ten years worth of housing provision (as set out in the RSS). There were currently 4,500 people on the Council's housing waiting list and also a housing needs survey and the recently completed Exeter and Torbay Housing Market Assessment had shown the need for more affordable housing in the District. The housing figures presented in table 1 to the report were a radical solution to addressing Housing provision and affordable housing in the District.

Karime Hassan, Corporate Director – Environment reported that it was anticipated that upon adoption the housing numbers in the South West Regional Spatial Strategy would be significantly higher than those set out in the consultation draft of the document. It had been suggested that the requirements may rise by an additional 30% (Table 1 in the report was based on a much bigger increase). The report highlighted a number of questions on which debate was invited and sought.

Does the scale and general distribution of development set out in the table in the report accord with expectations of, or aspirations for, future development?

During discussions and questions the following points were noted:

- The greater need for more housing in some villages compared with others;
- The requirement to completely change the way we look at the situation to meet need. If we don't do something then the government would allocate housing land within the District for us;
- The importance of moving the development lines around communities;
- That Councillors needed to provide guidance and direction;
- That a number of villages in the District were not mentioned in the report;
- The need for a "bottom up" approach to the problem, whereas the report presented a top down approach;
- The concern was expressed that inward migration to East Devon would continue and the housing problem would worsen;
- The planning system needed to change to address the housing problem and deliver a solution;

Housing in East Devon for 2006 to 2026 period (Cont)

- Should we deliver affordable housing on the back of open market housing development only or were there other ways of securing provision?;
- Should we be over allocating land for housing development in a similar way proposed for economic development land;
- Sustainability was an important issue for many communities in East Devon;
- The need to link the provision of affordable housing with the needs of the community;
- The need to provide infrastructure for new housing developments, including the provision of employment land.

RECOMMENDED that it be noted that table 1 in the report was not an accurate reflection of the scale and general distribution of development needed.

Are there alternative percentages or thresholds that you would identify as appropriate for affordable housing provision?

During discussions the following points were noted:

- If the affordable housing threshold was increased, it may reduce the number of houses built;
- The possibility of aiming for 50% provision on some big housing sites;
- The need for provision of a variable figure for the affordable housing threshold and looking at each site individually;
- The need to deal with land owners for the provision of land for housing;
- The problem of overburdening developers with affordable housing and Section 106 agreements, which may mean land is not developed;
- Some land owners would be happy in some circumstances, such as exception sites, to give more than 40% affordable housing;
- That currently the District Council was delivering 60-100 affordable houses per annum, there was the need to increase this to 200-300 per annum. The means to do this, in the vast majority of cases, will be through the planning system;
- Many housing developments were currently under the threshold limits for affordable housing of 15 in towns and 5 in rural areas;
- That Development Control policies were there for guidance only.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee's support of imposing the provision of 40% affordable housing on housing developments as the right approach, be noted.

Should we seek to adopt a different approach to where development boundaries are defined or how much land they incorporate?

RECOMMENDED that a different approach be adopted to where development boundaries are defined or how much land they incorporate.

Should we seek to vary our policy approach to the mix of affordable houses to be provided or encourage non-subsidy based approaches?

During discussions the following points were noted:

- The need to have a different approach to this issue for different areas;
- The aspiration was that affordable property should remain affordable in perpetuity but housing legislation means that this is not always possible;
- That shared ownership was not affordable to many people in East Devon;

Housing in East Devon for 2006 to 2026 period (Cont)

- That the Government was making money available through Housing Associations for affordable housing developments;
- That social rented housing was expensive to provide and there was the need to secure sufficient Housing Corporation funding, for its provision. This funding could be ring fenced;
- The importance of providing social rented housing as many people on low incomes could not even afford intermediate housing, such as provided through shared equity housing. Provision of social rented housing could help create the right social mix for communities.

RECOMMENDED that the Council seek to vary its policy approach to achieve an appropriate the mix of affordable house provision, with private sector homes providing a means to help subsidise affordable housing.

Are there alternative approaches to encouraging or promoting exceptions site affordable housing that could increase affordable housing provision? Or should we perhaps just regard it as a desirable but minor way of securing some affordable housing provision?

During discussions the following points were noted:

- That many farmers would give up land for affordable housing for local people, if they could get one or two preferential sites (market dwellings/dwellings for their own/family occupancy) in return;
- That the policy for barns needed investigating as in some cases this could help with affordable housing provision in the rural areas.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee would wish to support alternative approaches to encouraging or promoting exceptions site affordable housing that could increase affordable housing provision, such as private sector cross subsidy.

Are there any other approaches to affordable housing that we have not explored/questioned that you think may help secure affordable housing and therefore that we should address through production of the core Strategy?

During discussions the following points were noted:

- That a roof tax would help contribute where there was a smaller housing development;
- That the Council should not forget the different design and build possibilities for affordable housing;
- That the Council should not seek to introduce occupancy restrictions in AONB's as it was very difficult to enforce this;
- The possibility of allowing park homes to expand;
- Investigate the possibility of self build homes that only required a plot of land.

- RECOMMENDED**
1. that the issues of a roof tax tariff and park homes be investigated;
 2. that the Council should not seek to introduce occupancy restrictions in AONB's.

Chairman

Date