

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the East Devon Business Forum held at East Devon Business Centre, Honiton on Thursday 19 April 2007

Present:	Graham Brown Donovan Galling	Chairman Vice-Chairman/Martha Mockford Ltd
	Bob Buxton Alec Carter Rowan Carter William Casely Councillor Paul Diviani Chris Down Tammy Down Tim Ford Nigel Harrison Noreen Hoskin Claire James Chris Taylor Roy Stuart John Ward	Honiton Development Trust & C of C F W S Carter & Sons Ltd F W S Carter & Sons Ltd Otter Nurseries EDDC Crealy Park East Devon Business Centre Fords of Sidmouth Economic Development Manager, EDDC Parsons Nationwide Dist Ltd Clinton Devon Estates C & C Electrical & C of C, East Devon A E Stuart & Sons Cranford Nursing Home
Apologies:	Nick Agg-Manning Ivor Bull Graham Godbeer Peter Halse Karime Hassan Louise Mayor Cllr Ron Mudge Mark Sheppherd Tim Spores	Land Rover Experience Express & Echo Coombefield Veterinary Practice, Axminster Halse of Honiton Corporate Director – Environment Skinners Construction East Devon District Council Waitrose Fields of Sidmouth

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.10 pm

12 **Welcome**

Graham Brown, Chairman of the East Devon Business Forum welcomed everyone to the meeting.

13 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the East Devon Business Forum held on Thursday, 25 January 2007, were confirmed and signed as a true record.

14 **Matters Arising**

New growth point – Exeter and East Devon (Minute 7)

Graham Brown confirmed that the minutes of the East of Exeter Steering Board would be circulated to members of the Forum when available.

Matters Arising (cont)..

Local Government Reorganisation – White Paper (Minute 9)

Nigel up-dated members on the current situation with Exeter's bid now going through to the next stage. There would be a period of consultation which would enable the Forum to make further representations.

15 Reports of the Employment Land Supply Sub-Committee

The Chairman thanked the Sub-Committee for the good work they had carried out. He also appreciated John Maidment's (EDDC) frank contribution and Nigel's valued input.

The first meeting of the Sub-Committee had determined the approach that would be adopted in looking at the link between residential development and the provision of employment land to achieve sustainable communities.

The Chairman advised that he had read the Atkins report. The report, commissioned by EDDC, determined the employment land requirements until 2026 as 140 hectares. This figure had been calculated using historical data, going back 20 years. However, the Chairman felt that due to significant changing economic trends in recent years, it would have been more helpful to have used data from the last three years only. He said that Atkins had inaccurately included land within the report which it identified as being available for economic development or as land with potential economic opportunity. It had also included scraps on land which were too small to be viably developed. Members of the Forum were concerned that Atkins did not appear to have canvassed local business opinion and had certainly not approached the Forum for input or feedback.

Nigel advised that Atkins had been tasked to provide an assessment of land need until 2026 and had included the Science Park, Sky Park and Inter-modal freight facility within the calculation. Atkins believed that there was an adequate supply of land available for development within East Devon and supported this by identifying land within the district's existing stock of employment sites where they felt there was scope for more intensive use. Nigel acknowledged inaccuracies within the report and that East Devon businesses needed more B class land than Atkins had identified.

The Forum supported comments made to the Chairman by Ralph Collinson, Alder King Property Consultants who wrote that there was a need for an adequate and mixed supply of employment land to enable local businesses to expand and to generate new business opportunities locally.

Councillor Diviani, Portfolio Holder for Economy and Regeneration, EDDC advised that Axminster should be acknowledged as an area with development needs. Communities needed to be given the opportunity to grow and to be sustainable. Infrastructure was key to development. For example economic growth of Heathpark, Honiton, had been slow and almost stagnant with sites available until the new A30 was built. Now the industrial estate had reached full capacity.

The Sub Committee, at its second meeting had examined the Atkins report in depth and looked particularly at the site plans included which identified employment sites, opportunity land, vacant floor space and vacant land. The Forum discussed the maps site by site and supported their concerns with examples of land identified for economic development which were unavailable, had already had applications refused and where access arrangements meant that large scale development would be impossible. This evidence based on local knowledge would be reported back to East Devon District Council.

15 **Reports of the Employment Land Supply Sub-Committee (cont)..**

- RESOLVED**
- (1) that Atkins be invited to a meeting of the Sub-Committee, to allow them to explain the East Devon Employment Land Review, to hear the Forum's concerns and respond to questions.
 - (2) that the outcome of this meeting be reported to an additional meeting of the Forum (before the scheduled meeting in July), called to formulate the Forum's report to EDDC in response to the Atkins report.
 - (2) that Ralph Collinson, Alder King Property Consultants, be invited to the next meeting of the Forum as it was felt that his insight into the local position would be useful.

16 **Exeter and East Devon Growth Area**

The Chairman confirmed that he had attended the second meeting of the East of Exeter Steering Board in April where he had raised concerns over the significant inaccuracies in the Atkins report. He outlined the debate at that meeting in respect of delays due to the delivery of road improvements at Junction 29. He had raised concerns at the meeting in respect of Devon County Council's proposal to 'drip feed' land release at Sky Park as a means of making sure that the businesses were of high quality. The Chairman had advised the Board that such an approach would stifle business and that the release of land for development should be market driven. He felt that the approach being adopted was more about attracting new business into the area rather than increasing the capacity to enable existing businesses to expand.

At the Steering Board meeting, Clive Coleman, Balfour Beatty, the new owners of Exeter Airport, had given a presentation setting out plans for the airport and acknowledging that the growth of the airport was fundamental to the economic development of the area. Concerns over the potential conflict between housing development as a result of the growth of Cranbrook and airport activity had been raised.

- RESOLVED** that Clive Coleman of Balfour Beatty be invited to a future meeting of the Forum to give a presentation on Exeter Airport and the plans for its further development.

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

East Devon Association of Chambers of Commerce

Chris Taylor of the East Devon Association of Chambers of Commerce reported that The Association currently did not have a Chairman. There were concerns over the loss of PCSOs and how this could adversely impact on town centre businesses. Some were being trained as traffic wardens, which could reduce the threat of this service being put out to private tender. He also advised that the Chamber felt that some of the recent planning decisions had not been good and that as a result business potential was being stifled. He also said that the high turnover of planners at EDDC was making useful dialogue difficult.

Although EDDC had given tourism a low priority in its resource allocation, this was a major business within the South West and Devon in particular.

18 **Reports on the activities of constituent business organisations (cont)..**

East Devon Association of Chambers of Commerce (cont)..

Some businesses had concerns about the no smoking ban. Chris advised that some businesses had not realised that the ban covered company vehicles as well, with businesses potentially being fined £2,000.

RESOLVED

- (1) that Chris Taylor write to the Chairman of the Forum on behalf of the Chamber expressing concerns about recent planning decisions, with the Chairman then forwarding the letter on to EDDC,
- (2) that businesses be encouraged to access the EDDC web site: **www.eastdevon.gov.uk** for advice on the smoking ban which included regulations in respect of business vehicles.

Chairman Date.....