

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Corporate Overview Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 20 March 2008

Present:

Councillors:

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

R Bloxham
R Boote
P Bowden
G P Brown
M Florey

C Gibbings
G S Godbeer
B Ingham
Mrs P A Stott
T J R Wood

Also Present:

Councillors:

Miss V Ash
T A Cope
A J Dinnis
P A Diviani
Miss J M Elson
J P Halse

G K Liverton
A T Moulding
Mrs F Newth
Mrs H E Parr
A W J Reed
P Skinner

Officers:

Mark Williams - Chief Executive
Karime Hassan - Corporate Director
Peter Jeffs - Corporate Director
Chris Lane - Democratic Services Officers
Oliver Wood - Planning Officer
Matthew Morris - GVA Grimley LLP

Apologies:

Councillors:

G P Chamberlain
T A Cope
Mrs P A Graham
K D Nicholas
C Tratt
S C Wragg

The meeting started at 6.30 pm and ended at 8.45 pm

***31 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Overview Committee held on 21 February 2008, were confirmed and signed as a true record.

***32 Public speaking at Committee and Council meetings**

(Minute 25 of 21 February refers)

Members considered the report of the Chief Executive regarding the rights of the public to speak at Committees and Council meetings. At its meeting on 21 February 2008, the Committee had considered a report recommending changes to Standing Orders with effect from the Annual Meeting in May 2008 to allow public speaking at Committee and Council meetings.

Public speaking at Committee and Council meetings (Cont)

All Councillors present at the meeting had confirmed that they supported the principle of public speaking but had resolved that the Chief Executive, together with two Councillors, should make a fact finding visit to other local authorities who currently had public speaking and report back to the Committee. Councillor Bloxham and Godbeer, together with the Chief Executive visited both Taunton Deane Borough Council and South Somerset District Council on 5 March 2008 and reported to the Committee on their experiences.

During discussions the following points were noted:

- the importance of the quality of the Chairmanship in controlling public speaking and the need to introduce a simplified system so that Chairmen could easily understand and control public speaking;
- the implications on the change for Members declaring pecuniary interests. A Councillor with a prejudicial interest could speak at a meeting where the public also had the right to speak, but then would have to withdraw;
- that Exmouth Town Council had 15 minutes public speaking before each of its meetings;
- this was an opportunity for the public to talk to and question Councillors and Portfolio Holders and for the Council to have better communication with the public.
- that public speaking would re-inforce the importance of the views of listening to the public;

- RECOMMENDED**
1. that at the Annual Meeting on 14 May 2008, the Council amends its Standing Orders so as to allow the following:
 - a. a 15 minute period of public question time at the commencement of all Council and Committee meetings with the exception of the Licensing Committee and the Planning Inspection Committee. Each individual questioner exercising a right during the public question time to be restricted to speaking for a total of 3 minutes.
 - b. the opportunity for Councillors at each Council meeting to ask verbal questions of the Leader and/or Portfolio Holders during the 15 minute period of public question time should it not otherwise be utilised by members of the public.
 - c. the rights of Councillors to submit written questions to Council in accordance with Procedure Rule No. 8.2 with this being extended to include putting questions to specific Portfolio Holders in addition to the Leader.
 - d. at all meetings of the Executive Board, the Corporate Overview Committee, the Scrutiny Committee, the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee members of the public to have a general right to make statements and/or ask questions in respect of all agenda items that are not to be considered in Part B. The normal procedure to be that after a report has been introduced by the relevant Portfolio Holder and/or officer the Chairman to enquire of any member of the public whether they wish to speak in respect of the matter and/or ask questions. In each case, contributions from members of the public to be limited to a period of 3 minutes.

***32 Public speaking at Committee and Council meetings (Cont)**

- RECOMMENDED** 2 that it be noted that public speaking rights already exist in respect of the Licensing & Enforcement Committee and the Planning Inspection Committee and that no changes are proposed to be made to these rights.
- 3.. that in respect of the Council's Development Control Committee it be confirmed that it is intended to introduce public speaking at the earliest possible opportunity at the discretion of the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman of the Development Control Committee at such time that the Council has considered its current review of systems and procedures in respect of the determination of all planning and related applications.
4. that the right and discretion of the Chairman to control question time to avoid disruption, repetition and wasting of the meetings time be confirmed.

***33 East Devon Retail Needs and Town Centre Health Check Report**

Consideration was given to the report of Oliver Gibbins, Planning Officer on the final draft of the East Devon Retail Needs & Town Centre Health Check report. Members noted that the District Council had commissioned GVA Grimley LLP in 2007 to prepare a Retail Needs Study and Town Centre Health Check within the District. The report provided an overview of trends within the retail sector; identified expenditure generated within the district and provided a quantitative assessment of future retail demand and additional retail floor space requirements for convenience and comparison goods up to 2021.

Matthew Morris from the consultants GVA Grimley gave a comprehensive presentation on their work to the Committee.

The Retail Needs Study and Town Centre Health Check provided a detailed assessment of the vitality, attractiveness and viability of the main town centres and village centres of East Devon. The work conducted a review of data and empirical research in the form of a household telephone survey study. It provided an evidence base to inform the Local Development Framework. A copy would be put on the Council's website for all interested persons to read.

During discussions the following points were noted:

- that tourism expenditure was taken into account when reaching the figures contained in the report;
- that many residents in Exmouth shopped in Exeter;
- that many of East Devon's towns had charity shops within their town centres;
- that a number of East Devon's towns needed more retail space;
- the low level of rental per square foot for shops in Exmouth compared with centres such as Exeter and Taunton;
- the need to provide a range of shopping retail units in Exmouth that were more attractive to retailers;
- that Members were satisfied with the way that the findings had been arrived at;
- the perception of Street Markets was important for town centre retailing;
- that the effects of internet shopping had been included in the survey.

***33 East Devon Retail Needs and Town Centre Health Check Report (Cont)**

Matthew Morris was thanked for his valuable and informative presentation on the East Devon Retail Needs & Town Centre Health Check report.

- RESOLVED**
1. that the receipt of the final East Devon Retail Needs Study and Town Centre Health check be noted and its findings endorsed;
 2. that the report and the household survey questions be sent to all Town Councils for their information.

34 Draft climate change strategy

Members considered the report of Karime Hassan, Corporate Director on the Draft Climate Change Strategy which set out the means for achieving carbon reduction within the District. This would be measured by new performance indicators comprising CO₂ reductions from the Council's operations and per capita reduction in CO₂ emissions in the District. It was emphasised that the draft strategy was very much a work in progress and should be treated as such by Members.

Members were advised that the Government target for national carbon dioxide emissions was 26-32% lower than 1990 levels by 2020 and 60% lower by 2050. The Council's aim was to reduce East Devon's total carbon dioxide emissions by 2020 by the same 26% to 32% of 1990 levels. This would require a reduction of 272 kilo tonnes per annum by 2020 using East Devon's baseline at 2005 of 1,045 kilo tonnes per annum. Members noted that nearly all CO₂ emissions in Devon were from burning fossil fuel for energy use. In East Devon the largest source of CO₂ emissions came from road transport.

It was confirmed that there was a real challenge to meet the Government targets and a strategy was essential to achieve these targets. Karime Hassan highlighted a number of key actions and a Prioritised Climate Change Action Plan that would need to be in place in order to meet the carbon reduction strategy..

During discussions the following points were noted:

- the problem of the additional dwellings planned for Cranbrook and the other new community, which would increase the carbon outputs in East Devon;
- the Council's role as community leader in meeting the CO₂ reduction targets for East Devon;
- the importance of providing a Service Manager to drive East Devon's Draft climate Change Strategy forward;
- that Council's contractors be requested to consider reducing their carbon emissions as part of the Council's procurement procedures;
- that the Council's Local Agenda 21 Committee considered carbon reduction issues in 1996 and the matters discussed in the report vindicated the work of this Committee;
- that transport was a big part of for CO₂ emissions in East Devon;
- that the Council's housing stock had now reached a Decent Homes Standard;
- the need to fully cost the plan for the Draft Climate Change Strategy and find funding to meet the costs;
- that fuel poverty was now a real issue for many residents of East Devon.

Members wished to express their thanks for the work of the Council's Green Team.

34 **Draft climate change strategy (Cont)****RESOLVED**

1. that the comments made on the draft Climate Change Strategy be referred to the Executive Board for consideration;
2. that the following be noted:-
 - The draft strategy was very much work in progress
 - Expert advice was required to produce a fully costed action plan and programme to achieve the required CO2 reduction targets
 - The Council was embarking on the Carbon Trusts Carbon Management Programme from the 1 April 2008 and this would be the mechanism to address the management of the Council's use of energy and own operations
 - The Green Team was a voluntary grouping of staffing working to take forward the climate change agenda but the Council does not have an specific resource identified for climate change or energy management.
3. that the Proposed Climate Change Action Plan be supported.

RECOMMENDED

that energy consultants be instructed to carry out an assessment of the draft strategy with the aim of producing a fully costed action plan identifying the expected carbon savings arising from the Climate Change Strategy and for the findings to be reported to back to the Overview Committee. The study would need to identify the current carbon footprint for East Devon, and the potential best practice energy measures that can make to the reduction of CO2 emissions.

35 **Hiring of the Council's community venues**

Members considered the report of Peter Jeffs, Corporate Director on the hiring of the Council's community venues.

RECOMMENDED

that the policy on the hiring of the Council's community venues be adopted, subject to:

1. the addition of a comment that there was a responsibility to make a premises fit for hiring and that there was a suitable procedure in place to make it fit for hiring;
2. that the second paragraph in the section on Hire Terms be clarified.

*36 **Forward Plan**

Members received a copy of the draft Forward Plan for the work of the Corporate Overview Committee for the 2008/09 financial year.

*36 **Forward Plan** (Cont)

RESOLVED

- 1. that the Draft Forward Plan for the work of the Corporate Overview Committee for 2008/09 be noted;
- 2. that the item on Strategic Asset Management for January 2009, be removed as it was a matter being investigated by the Scrutiny Committee.

Chairman

Date