

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the special Meeting of the East Devon Business Forum held at East Devon Business Centre, Honiton on Tuesday 20 May 2008

Present:	Councillor Graham Brown	Chairman
	Donovan Galling	Vice-Chairman
	Nigel Harrison	Economic Development Manager, EDDC
	Roy Stuart	A E Stuart & Son
	Tim Ford	Fords of Sidmouth
	Angela Wright	Crealy Park
	Chris Lane	EDDC
	Councillor Peter Halse	Halse of Honiton
	Councillor Bob Buxton	Honiton Development Trust
	Councillor Philip Skinner	Worldwide Trading
	Madeleine Simms	Cooper Simms
	Steve Gerry	Cooper Simms
Apologies:	Lynne Del-Greco	SWRDA
	Ian Thompson	SWRDA
	Noreen Haskin	Parsons Nationwide
	Sue Payne	Woodbury Park
	Nick Agg Manning	Land Rover Experience
	William Casely	Otter Nurseries
	John Ward	Cranford Nursing Home
	Councillor Mrs Pat Graham	EDDC

The meeting started at 6.05 pm and ended at 8.00 pm

36 Welcome

Graham Brown Chairman of the East Devon Business Forum welcomed those members present to an informal meeting of the Business Forum to discuss the review of the sub-region's economic development strategy.

37 Sub Regional Economic Development Strategy

Councillor Graham Brown, Chairman welcomed Madeleine Simms and Steve Gerry from Cooper Simms Limited to the meeting. Members noted that the Exeter and Heart of Devon Economic Partnership was undertaking a review of the sub-region's economic development strategy. The consultants, Cooper Simms Limited had been appointed to undertake this work. They were keen to hear the views of the East Devon Business Forum members on the issues they thought the Exeter and Heart of Devon Economic Development Strategy should address in the period to 2013.

The outcome of the review would inform the work of economic development agencies including that of East Devon District Council. It was acknowledged that the Business Forum's contribution to the review process was an important way of ensuring that the revised strategy was sensitive to issues affecting business and employment in East Devon. This was the Business Forum's opportunity to take part in the shaping of the revised economic development strategy for the sub region.

37 **Sub Regional Economic Development Strategy (Cont)**

Members noted that the Exeter & Heart of Devon partnership was an economic area consisting of East Devon, Exeter City, Teignbridge and Mid Devon. Three years ago the partners had commissioned an economic development strategy.

The purpose of the work Cooper Simms had been given was to: update the 2005-08 strategy and review progress since the last strategy, take stock of the present situation, propose new actions for 2008 – 2013 and review the indicators to be monitored. Cooper Simms had been appointed in mid March and interviewees had been contacted and meetings arranged in April to May. Three workshops had been set up in recent weeks. Draft strategies would be produced at the end of May, with wide consultation in June.

Members were advised that there was a strong emphasis in the last strategy on creating knowledge based industries and members went through all the target outcomes that the 2005 – 08 economic development strategy had produced. They came to conclusion that most of these had not been achieved.

The meeting was arranged as an informal workshop, led by Madeline Simms. Members noted that Cooper Simms would produce full notes of the workshop.

During discussions the following points were noted:

- That the Exeter & the Heart of Devon (EHOD) partnership area had done well compared with other regions and had a well skilled and qualified population, albeit many of them were of retirement age;
- That East Devon's housing completions were running ahead of plan at 2,100 per annum, but only 17% of these were affordable homes;
- That there was the need to drive for more economic regeneration in East Devon to boost enterprise;
- Concerns were expressed over when the new community at Cranbrook and also the Science Park and Sky Park would be built, particularly with the current economic slow down in the housing market;
- The need for houses to be connected to jobs in East Devon, job creation should go hand in hand with house building;
- That there was a real problem with enterprise and growth in East Devon, partly due to the difficulty in obtaining planning permissions;
- The need to think through the Local Development Framework, where housing and economic development should take place and it was hoped that progress would be seen on this issue within the next 12 months;
- That the Science Park and Sky Park were regional issues, but there was the need to determine local issues for East Devon, such as the demand for the provision of lower value employment development land;
- That the draft RSS did not have housing and jobs in balance, which produced rising commuting;
- That the infrastructure proposed for Cranbrook may not be able to cope with the proposed rise in number of houses;
- The best way to get more skills and training for businesses in East Devon was to improve profitability;
- The importance of seeing if the target outcomes from the last survey were the right ones and who had ownership of these targets;
- The importance of picking targets that were achievable;
- That the professional retired well organised lobby element in East Devon hindered businesses obtaining essential planning permissions;
- That it had been shown that East Devon had not hit the target outcomes produced from the 2005-2008 sub-region's economic development strategy;

37 **Sub Regional Economic Development Strategy** (Cont)

- The new planning system was an opportunity to start again;
- That the lack of high quality tourism accommodation in East Devon was a reason behind the decline of tourism in the area in recent years.

Madeleine Simms and Steve Gerry were thanked for their presentation.

Chairman Date.....