

# EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

## Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on Wednesday, 25 January 2006

### Present:

Councillors:

P W Burrows (Chairman)  
A R Giles (Vice-Chairman)

Mrs K J Bamsey  
D J Cox  
D R A Key  
Mrs A E Liverton  
Mrs F I Newth

Mrs L A Roden  
Mrs M A Rogers  
Dr H W Waterworth  
Mrs E E Wragg

### Also Present

Councillors:

Mrs M Boote  
D G Button  
P A Diviani  
Miss J M Elson  
R G Franklin  
S Hughes

G K Liverton  
Ms S Merritt  
A T Moulding  
Mrs F I Newth  
A J Wilkinson

### Apologies:

Councillors:

Mrs C E Drew  
H J Jeffery  
A J Toye

The meeting started at 6.30pm and ended at 8.55pm

### \*13 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 23 November 2005 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

### 14 Draft Revenue and Capital Estimates 2006/07

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Finance in respect of the draft Revenue and Capital Estimates for 2006/07 which had been circulated within the agenda for the Executive Board meeting on 18 January 2006. Members noted that the Board had adopted the draft estimates at that meeting and had asked this committee to consider the estimates, bearing in mind the need to set a balanced budget. The recommendations made would be considered by the Board at its meeting on 15 February 2006. The Board would then recommend to the Council the 2006/07 Council Tax requirement and the Housing Revenue Account budget.

### 14 Draft Revenue and Capital Estimates 2006/07

Members suggested that in future years consideration be given to holding two joint meetings of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The first meeting to look at the Service Plans and the following meeting used to consider the estimates.

The estimates presented included items already approved by the Executive Board. Members considered in depth a schedule of service enhancements requested by Officers but not included within the estimates. The total cost of the enhancements requested came

14 **Draft Revenue and Capital Estimates 2006/07 (Cont.)**

to £625,550. Members were advised that a council tax increase of 4.9% would allow enhancements of up to £309,000 within a balanced budget.

Members noted that as a result of the difficult budget and service decisions taken during the past two years the Council was in a better financial position than in previous years and was now able to invest in its priority areas. The following points were raised with regard to the enhancements requested:

1. Enabling Officer (affordable housing)

Enabling affordable housing was the Council's top priority. This proposed enhancement received total support.

2. Affordable housing – EDDC contribution re: second homes monies

The additional council tax collected from the owners of second homes had been allocated to affordable housing in previous years. This had levered in additional funding from Devon County Council. Members agreed that this should continue.

3. Car Parks – Assistant Car Park Supervisor

Members agreed that this could not be considered a priority at the present time.

4. Street Cleaning – Additional resources for service provision/improvements

This enhancement was for a second 'hit man' needed to target street cleansing issues in rural areas, including the increasing problem of fly tipping. Members advised that street cleansing was a growing concern among residents. This enhancement was supported.

5. Additional Play Area Inspector

Members agreed that this could not be considered a priority at the present time.

6. Anti-social Behaviour response coordination

Members were advised that when the Crime and Disorder Act was passed the Council was duty bound to help promote community safety and to work in partnership with other organisations to prevent crime and disorder. The Community Safety Coordinator was currently funded by the Home Office, administered by the Council on behalf of the Community Safety Partnership. This enhancement was requested to protect the post as the Home Office funding was in question. If the Home Office continued to provide funding any monies agreed would be spent on community safety initiatives.

Members deferred this request. It was felt that more information was required setting out how any funding would be spent.

7. Additional resources to meet LPSA2 agreement – Local Public Service Agreement 2 "improving the quality of our urban environment"

Annual surveys undertaken for BVPI 199 had revealed that for 2003/04 the cleanliness of 32% of the sampled sites across the District was considered less than satisfactory. This was the highest percentage amongst Devon authorities. To bring about a step change improvement in performance across the whole District an additional mechanical sweeper and four more employees were required. There was an expectation that performance in Exmouth would be particularly under review. The Local Public Service Agreement would be a commitment to an 8% improvement in performance over a three year period. If the Council achieved this performance it would be entitled to draw down funding from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. The amount would be in the region of £245,000. The actual grant received would be subject to the agreement held with Devon County Council. Members were advised that further details could not be provided at their meeting but would be available at the meeting of the Corporate Overview Committee on 2 February 2006.

14 **Draft Revenue and Capital Estimates 2006/07 (Cont.)**

Members agreed to make no decision regarding this item due to the shortage of information available.

8. Free town car parking for the two Saturdays leading up to Christmas

Free car parking had been granted to Ottery St Mary for the two Saturdays before Christmas as compensation to the towns traders for the flooding and associated problems they faced in 2005. Members agreed that although the free parking had been appreciated it should not be repeated in 2006.

9. Additional duties relating to stray dogs and light/noise nuisance

Members agreed that it was necessary to include this item within the budget due to new legislation that transferred additional duties to the Council.

10. Seafront decorative lighting – Seaton

Devon County Council was intending to replace lighting columns along East Walk. Additional funding was required to reinstate the decorative lighting following this replacement. Members agreed that this work was not a priority. The Chief Executive agreed to look into whether the reinstatement could be included within budget for replacing the lighting columns.

11. Seafront decorative lighting – Exmouth

Members comments were the same as for the Seaton lighting (see 10 above).

12. Reinstate capital grant funding for cemeteries

Members were advised that although the Council continued to provide revenue funding for cemeteries in East Devon it no longer provided capital grants. Open cemeteries were not the responsibility of the Council. However, if the current holders opted to close them the Council would be required to take over their maintenance. Members considered that this was not a priority area and agreed not to support the bid.

13. Community Fund

The draft estimates included a sum of £12,000 for Community Funding, Members were asked to raise this by £88,000 to allow further assistance to be given. Members agreed that provision of the Community Fund was important and agreed to increase the fund by £8,000 to a total of £20,000.

14. Exmouth/Seaton Gateway Towns

Members supported the bid for £15,000 to match fund the amounts pledged for 2006/07 by Devon County Council, Exmouth Town Council and Seaton Town Council for continued work by consultants on taking forward the two visitor centre projects.

15. Cultural Strategy Delivery Manager

Members were advised that following the transfer of amenities to the Leisure Trust there was no capacity within the Council to ensure delivery of a wider Cultural Strategy. This post was requested to enable work to be carried out across the Councils services to help deliver the Cultural Strategy and to maximise funding. Members spoke highly of the Funding Coordinator who would be able to co-ordinate funding issues. As a consequence Members agreed not to support this bid.

16. Local Development Framework

Members were advised that additional funding was required as a result of the introduction of the Local Development Framework. The Framework required a Sustainability Appraisal, a Strategic Environmental Assessment and an Employment Needs Assessment for the District, to be produced for Core Strategy documents. Consultants would need to be employed to carry out this work as insufficient Officer capacity and expertise were available in house. Members agreed to support this bid.

14 **Draft Revenue and Capital Estimates 2006/07** (Cont.)

17. Implementation of e-procurement module on Cedar

Members agreed not to support the bid for the provision of a temporary post to implement the e-procurement module of the new financial system though out the Council.

18. Communications and Consultation Assistant

Members agreed on the importance of communications and noted that the Communications Officer was doing a very good job but had increasing demands on his time. Full support was given for this bid.

**RECOMMENDED** that the Special Item bids numbered 1, 2, 4, 9, 14, 16, and 18 be included, as printed in the report, in the Revenue and Capital Estimates 2006/07 and that the bid numbered 13 be included at the lower amount of £8,000.

(Councillor Mrs Rogers declared a personal interest in the discussions on the Community Fund as a member of a village hall committee.)

\*15 **Draft Housing Revenue Account Estimates 2006/07**

Members received and noted the report of the Head of Finance with regard to the draft Housing Revenue Account Estimates 2006/07.

\*16 **Service Plans**

Members considered the report of the Policy Manager with regard to the draft Services Plans drawn up for the next three years for each service. The plans reviewed performance for the year ending 31 March 2006 as well as setting service improvement plans for 2006/09. Members noted the amount of work which had gone into preparing the plans.

**RECOMMENDED** that the draft Service Plans be adopted.

\*17 **Topics for discussion at future meetings**

Members were encouraged to suggest topics to consider at future meetings. The following suggestions were made:

- How the Quality Parish schemes were progressing.
- Public toilets – whether to retain them and charge for use.
- Rural deprivation and the difference between how we treat towns and rural areas.
- The work of the Community Safety Officer – it was noted that this would be looked at in due course by the Anti Social Behaviour Task and Finish Forum.

The Chairman invited Members to bring additional suggestions to the next meeting of the Committee.

Chairman ..... Date.....