

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Corporate Overview Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 22 November 2007

Present:

Councillors:

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

R Bloxham
P Bowden
G P Brown
G P Chamberlain
C Gibbings

G S Godbeer
Mrs P Graham
B Ingham
Mrs P A Stott
S C Wragg

Also Present:

Councillors:

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

Mrs F Newth
A W J Reed
P J Skinner
C Tratt

Apologies

Councillors:

R Boote
T A Cope
M Florey
T J R Wood

The meeting started at 6.30 pm and ended at 8.30 pm

*18 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Overview Committee held on 18 October 2007, were confirmed and signed as a true record.

*19 **Exmouth Town Centre Management**

Tony Collins, Exmouth Town Centre Manager gave a presentation on the Exmouth Town Management Business and Action Plan 2007 – 2010.

He reported that he had been in post since July 2006 and until his appointment there had been no Town Manager for 14 months. His remit for Exmouth Town Council was in particular to focus on business in the town, and he had already visited 140 businesses. Members noted that there was a need to pursue funding from business, as at present only £1,200 was provided by business towards the costs of Exmouth Town Centre Management. Funding from the District Council could not necessarily be relied on in the longer term. More funding from business would help to ensure the future success of the role.

Members noted that the vision for Exmouth Town Management was “To create an interesting, dynamic and vibrant heart, catering for all with an appropriate mix of modern uses, amenities and shops that maximise the town’s advantages of its seafront, estuary side, environmental assets and level town centre”.

*19 **Exmouth Town Centre Management (Cont)**

There were five strategic objectives that flowed from this:

1. To target high quality retailers to invest in the town, including specialist retailers and to improve the quality of the retail on offer;
2. To make access improvements to the town centre for the benefit of all users;
3. To raise the profile and image of Exmouth Town through effective marketing to target customers, existing businesses and potential investors;
4. To achieve a quality environment for the benefit of those who live, work, shop and spend their leisure time in the town centre;
5. To work with local business organisations on business initiatives which will benefit the town

The Exmouth Champion congratulated Tony Collins on the amount he had achieved in the short time he had been in post and looked forward to further projects coming forward.

During discussions the following points were noted:

- The possibility of other towns in East Devon having a Town Centre Manager;
- Bringing people in the town together was the key function of the role of Town Centre Manager;
- The need to continue to support Exmouth Town Centre Management;
- That reports on the progress made by Exmouth Town Centre Management would be made to future meetings of the Committee;
- That “Thriving Economies” were an important part of the District Council’s new Corporate Strategy.

Tony Collins was thanked for his short, sharp and informative presentation.

20 **Shelly Beach Bylaws**

Karime Hassan, Corporate Director reported on the problems at Shelly Beach where there was some conflict between users of the slipway and local residents. The issue of bylaws at Shelly Beach had previously been considered by the Bylaws Task and Finish Forum (TaFF). It was not proposed to reconvene the Bylaws TaFF, but instead to deal with the issue by way of report to the Executive Board.

RECOMMENDED that a report be presented to the Executive Board on bylaws at Shelly Beach, in order to overcome problems experienced at the slipway.

*21 **Exe Estuary Navigation Authority**

Members receive an update on the current situation from Exeter City Council on progress made by the Exe Estuary Navigation Authority to revise the proposals for a new harbour authority.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

*23 **Motion from Cllr Miss V Ash**

Members considered the following motion presented by Councillor Miss V Ash:

“That a TaFF be set up to investigate and bring about implementation of a pilot of smaller scale housing projects that encompass all, or some, of the following criteria:
- they use alternative materials, such as wood.
-they promote the use of sustainable materials and services in a comprehensive way.

***23 Motion from Cllr Miss V Ash (Cont)**

- they promote the use of reclaimed and recycled materials.
- they use a different approach such as use of a "park home" style development for affordable housing".

Members noted that Officers were preparing a climate change strategy and that a report on this issue would be available to Members shortly. The proposed TaFF would sit well with this work. Karime Hassan, Corporate Director confirmed that the Committee already had a number of TaFFs at work. It was felt that another TaFF should not be started until one of those already in existence had finished its work.

RESOLVED

1. that a Task and Finish Forum be set up to consider the issues in Councillor Miss Ash's motion in the new year, once one of the Committee's existing TaFF's had finished its work;
2. that the membership and terms of reference be agreed at a future meeting of the Committee, the membership to include the Council's Design Champion.

22 Employment Land Issues Task and Finish Forum

Councillor Graham Brown introduced the report of the Principal Local Planning Officer on the work so far undertaken by the Employment Land Issues Task and Finish Forum. The report highlighted key issues and themes that had been addressed and examined to date by the TaFF. Members noted that the TaFF would help set an agenda to inform future employment land provision in respect to future planning policy and development decisions (particularly in respect to meeting land supply shortfalls).

Members were reminded that the Task and Finish Forum had been established to;

1. Review the Atkins Employment Land Study (particularly in respect to site evaluation work) and propose changes appropriate to ensure the Atkins report could be signed off as complete;
2. Undertake an objective review of currently available employment sites.

During discussions the following points were noted:

- That the TaFF had found there were actually 6.05 hectares of employment land in the District, compared with the 88 hectares claimed in the Atkins Report;
- That the TaFF still had further scrutiny work to do on the availability of employment land in the District ;
- That in many of the towns in East Devon, there was no employment land available;
- With the development of Sky Park and the Science Park being delayed, there was a minimum of three years where there was a large gap in the availability of employment land;
- That there was a need to take short term action to overcome the lack of useable employment land;
- That the TaFF in its work had aimed to give an evidence based, with a site by site analysis of what employment land was available;
- That the District Council did not actively market its available employment land, due to lack of a budget and staffing;
- That local Members had a good knowledge of what land was available in their area;
- The need for the Council to be more positive in its outlook;
- That a departure from policy by the Development Control Committee could be a solution to solving the short term problems of producing more employment land;
- The importance of Members taking the opportunities to change policies;
- Was the Council using its own land assets in the right way?

Employment Land Issues Task and Finish Forum (Cont)

- The possibility of looking to use parts of the land within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to solve the employment land problem;
- The importance of protecting the environment within the District;
- The Government had indicated that East Devon would be expected to create 11,000 jobs within the next 10 years and also accommodate 28,000 people within the next 20 years;
- The Employment Land Issues TaFF needed to go back to land owners and find out if employment land was genuinely available or not;
- Some towns in East Devon needed active intervention by the District Council to bring jobs to the town;
- The hope that Planning Officers could be “freed up” from policy constraints so they could recommend approval for appropriate planning applications;
- That Councillors were often influenced by lobby groups to recommend refusal for a planning application.

Councillor Brown, embers of the Employment Land Issues TaFF, East Devon Business Forum and the relevant Officers were thanked for the work they had done in preparing this report.

RESOLVED that the report prepared by the Employment Land Issues Task and Finish Forum be endorsed;

RECOMMENDED that the report and more detailed evidence be used to:

- a) help inform production of the issues and options report for the East Devon Core Strategy and also;
- b) that the Development Control Committee take full account of employment land availability issues when considering planning applications.

Chairman

Date