

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 25 January 2007

Present:	Graham Brown	Chairman
	Donovan Galling	Vice-Chairman
	Councillor Paul Diviani	EDDC
	Nigel Harrison	Economic Development Manager, EDDC
	Councillor Sara Randall	EDDC
	Johnson	
	Chris Taylor	C & C Electrical, Sidmouth
	Alf Allen	Concorde Copiers
	Roy Stuart	A E Stuart & Son
	Mark Shepherd	Waitrose
	Mrs Noreen Hoskin	Parsons Haulage
	Val Baker	Blackdown Hills Business Association
	Louise Maypr	Skinner Construction
	William Casely	Otter Nurseries
	John Ward	Cranford Nursing Home
	Tim Ford	Fords of Sidmouth
	Chris Down	Crealy Park
	Roly Fairclough	East Devon Federation of Small Business
Apologies:	Claire James	Clinton Devon Estates
	Graham Godbeer	Coombefield Veterinary Practice, Axminster
	Clare James	Clinton Devon Estates
	Ian Page	Head of Property & Economic Development, EDDC
	Peter Halse	Halse of Honiton
	Les Christianson	Heart of Devon Enterprise
	Matt Sherry	East Devon chamber of Commerce
	Karime Hassan	Corporate Director - Environment
	Diccon Pearse	Corporate Director – Economy
	Ron Mudge	East Devon District Council

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.15 pm

1 Welcome

Graham Brown, Chairman of the East Devon Business Forum welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked members for their time. He wished to thank the District Council for the way senior councilors and officers had supported the Business Forum so far.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the East Devon Business Forum held on Thursday 9 November 2006, were confirmed and signed as a true record.

3 **Matters Arising**

Atkins Report

Graham Brown reported that he had attended a meeting with the Corporate Director – Environment to discuss the preliminary findings of the Atkins Report. The findings included the conclusion that East Devon did not need as much employment land as East Devon Business Forum had recommended. Forum members discussed how the findings of the Atkins Report would be amended as they were not in step with East Devon's needs.

The issue of the employment land availability and the Atkins Report would be considered at the meeting of the Business Forum on 19 April 2007. A Sub Committee of the Business Forum would need to investigate employment land availability, where there was potential for growth and where the business community would like to see development take place. There was also debate around whether the employment land identified in the Atkins Report was 'fit for purpose'. The first redrafted report would shortly be available for members to see.

RESOLVED that a Sub Committee consisting Graham Brown, Donovan Galling, Nigel Harrison, Tim Ford, Roy Stuart and Claire James or Louise Mayor be established to discuss the issue of availability of employment land in East Devon.

4 **Election of Chairman**

Graham Brown was elected Chairman of the Forum.

5 **Appointment of Vice-Chairman**

Donovan Galling was elected Vice-Chairman of the Forum.

6 **Appointment of Secretary**

Nigel Harrison was elected Honorary Secretary of the Forum.

7 **New growth point – Exeter and East Devon – update on proposals to deliver the new community 'Cranbrook' and the strategic employment sites close to the M5/A30 intersection**

Graham Brown reported that in his capacity as Chairman of the East Devon Business Forum, he was now a member of the East of Exeter Steering Group. The Group had received a £967,000 grant, of which £860,000 would be spent on a community hall, library and police station for Cranbrook.

Members noted that it was important to look at the opportunities the new community at Cranbrook would bring to the business community. The first meeting of the East of Exeter Steering Group had been held on 9 January 2007 and Graham Brown agreed to circulate the minutes once they had been made available. This was the opportunity for the Business Forum to be involved in a very proactive way and influence the development of Cranbrook. The Business Forum noted that East Devon was established as an area of economic growth and was therefore on an equal footing with Exeter City in this respect.

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

a) East Devon Association of Chambers of Commerce

Chris Taylor of the East Devon Association of Chambers of Commerce reported that his organisation had discussed the provision of CCTV in towns, which the Devon & Cornwall Constabulary were keen to pursue. The towns of Honiton and Sidmouth were taking the lead on this issue and looking for funding and contributions from business.

Members of the East Devon Association of Chambers of Commerce were concerned about the consequences of the grounding of the MSC Napoli off the coast at Branscombe, particularly if it was scrapped off the coast. The most important immediate aim was to get the beaches at Branscombe secured and available for public use.

Members noted that Traffic Warden service was likely to be moved from the control of Devon & Cornwall Constabulary and run by private sector companies. Concern was expressed over the impact that this could have on businesses in town centres.

RESOLVED that Nigel Harrison write a letter to the Minister Stephen Ladyman MP, expressing East Devon Business Forum's concerns over the impact the grounding of the MSC Napoli would have on tourism in East Devon and the business community in general and requesting an environmental impact assessment to be undertaken.

b) East Devon Branch of the Federation of Small Businesses

Roly Fairclough Chairman of the East Devon Branch of the Federation of Small Businesses reported that he represented 1200 local business members. He hoped to be able to give a short report on activities at the next meeting.

c) East Devon Branch of the National Farmers Union

Graham Brown representing the NFU, reported that there was huge frustration amongst his members that single farm payments had not been made in England. Concern was expressed that there could be a huge change in the British landscape as farming was facing a financial crisis. He was keen to take members of the Business Forum on site visits, with up to 3 possible visits lined up.

d) Blackdown Hills Business Association

Val Baker of the Blackdown Hills Business Association reported that the Association was active and progressing well. She circulated a copy of the Associations latest newsletter. Members noted that all the events she organised on behalf of the Association were run at her own commercial risk.

e) Heart of Devon Enterprise Agency

Nigel Harrison reported that there had been a meeting of the HoDEA Board that evening. Difficulties had been experienced with the operations of HoDEA as funding had been reduced. Ways were being sought to ensure that the advice available to small businesses in East Devon continued to be available and was not lost. It was hoped that through the RDA Rural Renaissance Project this advice could continue. Nigel Harrison agreed to keep the Chairman and Vice Chairman updated on progress on this matter on the Business Forum's behalf.

8 **Reports on the activities of constituent business organisations (Cont)**

Members expressed some concerns whether or not HoDEA had achieved value for money .

9 **Local Government Reorganisation – White Paper**

Sara Randall Johnson, Leader of East Devon District Council, reported on the recent White Paper produced by the Government entitled 'Strong and Prosperous communities which discussed the possible reorganisation of Local Government. She expressed her concern that Exeter City council was applying for unitary status and the detrimental effect that this could have on the financial viability of Devon County Council. None of the other District Council's in Devon supported Exeter City's bid for unitary status. It was noted that if Exeter was successful it could have great financial implications for other districts and result in large council tax increases. The biggest town left in Devon would be Exmouth with a population of 35,000.

RESOLVED that Sara Randal Johnson and Graham Brown draft a letter on East Devon Business Forum's behalf expressing the Business Forum's objections to the application by Exeter City Council for unitary status and the detrimental impact this could have on other Councils in Devon.

10 **The East Devon Business Forum in 2007/08**

Nigel Harrison reported that the purpose of the Business Forum was to obtain the practical experience and views of the business community throughout the District. It was an opportunity to discuss first hand what went on in business in East Devon. The driving aim was to hear the views of the business community. He confirmed that East Devon District Council took notice of the views and opinions on the East Devon Business Forum in its decision and policy making.

11 **Dates of Future Meetings**

The Forum agreed the dates for Future Meetings:

- Thursday 19 April 2007
- Thursday 19 July 2007
- Thursday 27 September 2007
- Thursday 31 January 2008

Chairman Date.....