

Agenda Item 8

Overview and Scrutiny – Economy Committee

25 February 2010

10/1002



Town Management Arrangements in Exmouth and Seaton

Summary

The Exmouth Town Management Partnership has been a focus for successful co-operation between business, local authorities and the wider community in Exmouth since its inception in 2001/02. Through discussion with Seaton Town Council it is hoped similar arrangements can be agreed for Seaton to promote both improvements to the town's shopping and visitor appeal and to complement the wider regeneration objectives for the town.

Recommendation

1. that the Committee support proposals to facilitate closer co-operation between retailers, the local authorities and other town centre stakeholders in Seaton, through the appointment of a Town Manger;
2. that the governance arrangements for active town management in Seaton be devised to reflect those currently in place in Exmouth and thereby secure the engagement of private, public and community stakeholders.

a) Reasons for Recommendation

To support the realisation of the Council's regeneration objectives for Seaton.

b) Alternative Options

To seek other means of promoting investment in and improvements to Seaton's shopping and visitor appeal.

c) Risk Considerations

The funding necessary to sustain the appointment of a Town Manger for Seaton is dependant upon the outcome of on-going negotiations with third parties and cannot yet be guaranteed.

d) Policy and Budgetary Considerations

The recommendations are broadly in line with Council policy but the funding to enable the Council to play a substantial part in resourcing this appointment has still to be agreed.

e) Date for Review of Decision

The Committee may wish to monitor the progress of and outputs from this proposal throughout the life of the project.

1 Main Body of the Report

- 1.1 The Exmouth Town Management Partnership has been a focus for successful co-operation between business, local authorities and the wider community in Exmouth since its inception in

2001/02. The terms of reference of the Partnership are attached as Appendix One of this report.

- 1.2 The formation of a Town Management Forum in Exmouth coincided with the publication of a 'Social and Economic Assessment of Exmouth undertaken by the School of Business and Economics of the University of Exeter in the summer of 2001. The findings of this study informed moves towards the appointment of a Town Manager by Exmouth Town Council. In November 2001, the Council agreed to offer funding of £4,000 in the period to 31 March 2002. And £8,000 per annum in the years 2002/03 to 2006/07.
- 1.3 The Council's hopes for what became the Exmouth Town Management Partnership were that it would eventually become a largely independent organisation sustained by local businesses through the Exmouth Chamber of Commerce. The four holders of the post of Exmouth Town Manager have each sought to foster a close working relationship with the town's business community, encourage town centre investment and enhance its appeal both within and beyond the town. The Council's economic development budget 2007/08 made provision for an increase in the Council's funding for the Exmouth Town Management Partnership to £10,000 and this sum has been a feature of the Council's budget since that time. Devon County Council and Exmouth Town Council each make a similar funding contribution and by this means the post of Exmouth Town Manager is sustained.
- 1.4 The Council has no direct officer involvement in the delivery of Town Management in Exmouth. With fewer economic development officer resources available this is no longer practicable. However, the value of collaboration with other stakeholders in promoting improvements to Exmouth's shopping, visitor and its wider employment offer can be in little doubt.
- 1.5 This thinking has informed the Council's approach to regeneration in Seaton. In its' efforts to attract investment to the sites of the former Lyme Bay Holiday Village and the Racal Factory (East Devon Local Plan Policy LSE1), the Council has also recognised the need to support and enhance the vibrancy of the town centre. For this reason in its Section 106 negotiations with private investors, the Council has sought to secure funding contributions to support the appointment of a Town Manager for Seaton. These negotiations have still to be concluded but through the Seaton Regeneration Programme Board, the Town Council has been encouraged to evaluate the town management arrangements in place for Exmouth as a possible guide to engagement with the Seaton's retailers and other town centre stakeholders.
- 1.6 These discussions have now progressed to the point at which a job description and person specification have been drafted to frame the appointment of a Town Manager by Seaton Town Council. The Town Council has agreed to part fund the post and is seeking a firm commitment to the project from East Devon District Council. This request will ultimately be a matter for decision by the Council but the Town Clerks of both Exmouth and Seaton Town Council have agreed to attend your meeting to outline what their authorities' see as the benefits of active town centre management and to respond to questions from the Committee.
- 1.7 The mechanisms in place for proactive town management in Exmouth can be seen to offer a useful guide to its potential in Seaton. There are however, important differences. Seaton has a much smaller resident population and a much less developed tourism infrastructure. It will take time to foster the commitment and support of commercial and community stakeholders. At least in the early stages of the project, progress towards the development of genuine sense of local partnership will be as important an indicator of the value of local authority funding investment as will any physical changes on the ground. There is not as yet the Seaton equivalent of the Exmouth Town Management Forum/Partnership and progress towards that outcome could offer a useful initial guide to the value of the arrangements agreed by funding stakeholders.

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications to report

Financial Implications

There is currently no budget provision and as indicated within the report resourcing this appointment has still yet to be agreed

Consultation on Reports to the Executive

Not applicable.

Background Papers

- N/A

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Economy Overview
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