

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL
Minutes of a Meeting of the Corporate Overview Committee
held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 26 March 2009

Present:

Councillors:

David Key (Chairman)
Bob Peachey (Vice Chairman)

Ray Bloxham
Roger Boote
Peter Bowden
Graham Brown

Chris Gibbings
Ben Ingham
Stephanie Jones
Tim Wood

Also Present:

Councillors:

David Cox
Jill Elson
Steve Hall
Graham Liverton

Frances Newth
Marion Olive
Tony Reed
Philip Skinner

Officers:

Karime Hassan - Corporate Director
Simon Smale – Head of Environmental Health & Health Equalities
Jamie Buckley – Engagement & Funding Officer
Chris Lane – Democratic Services Officer
Bob Darbourne – Communications & Improvements Manager

Apologies:

Councillors:

Vivienne Ash
Malcolm Florey
Graham Godbeer
Pat Graham
Andrew Moulding
Pauline Stott
Brenda Taylor
Steve Wragg

The meeting started at 6.35pm and ended at 9:15pm

***40 Public question time**

Melanie Turner from Ottery Dogs wished to make a point about the Dog Control Orders. She was concerned that Ottery St Mary residents had adequate areas to exercise their dogs and stated that the problem of children being blinded from toxoplasmosis was often exaggerated. Jeremy Bateson, Chairman of Ottery St Mary Dogs stated that he did not agree with the complete banning of dogs in Winters Lane Playing Field or Land of Canaan. Sonia Banton also reported that she was partially sighted through toxoplasmosis but still felt that dogs should not be banned from Winters Lane playing field and the Land of Canaan. Another resident of Ottery St Mary also spoke in favour of no dog ban for Winters Lane as many of dog owners in this area did not have access to a car and relied on this playing field to exercise their dogs.

Patricia Franklin speaking for Honiton Canine Friendship Group and for Honiton and District Canine Society reported that she was extremely concerned that the proposed Dog Control Orders would have a detrimental effect on the lives of dog owners in Honiton.

*40 **Public question time** (Cont)

Another resident of Honiton spoke in favour of no dog ban for Allhallows Playing Field, Honiton. He lived in a flat and regularly used this area to exercise his dog.

*41 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Overview Committee held on 26 February 2009, were confirmed and signed as a true record.

42 **Dog Control Orders**

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Environmental Health and Health Equalities on the public's response to proposals to create Dog Control Orders for East Devon. Members noted that there was no clear mandate in respect of some proposals whilst, in respect of others, there had been either clear opposition or no response whatever. The report invited informed debate on the issue and suggested draft recommendations for confirmation of orders based on professional opinion and weight of public opinion. This would involve a consolidation of existing Dog Control Orders in line with the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. Members noted the ability for Town and Parish Councils to make dog Control Orders and considered it maybe more appropriate for new Dog Control Orders to be made on as local a basis as possible.

During lengthy discussions the following points were noted:

- That Dog Control Orders were a divisive issue and encouraged strong emotions both for and against;
- That there should be no mix between play areas and the exercise of dogs, dog mess on play areas meant that children could not play on these areas;
- That the majority of dog owners were responsible and cleared up after their dogs, but that there was a minority who were irresponsible;
- That Town and Parish Council should be allowed to make a decision on this issue as it was a very local one;
- The concern expressed over the ability to adequately police any new Dog Control Orders that were made;
- The need for the District Council to be consistent with its decision on this issue throughout East Devon;
- That each town had its own separate problems with regard to dogs.

RECOMMENDED

1. that the Fouling of Land by Dogs Order, the Dogs on Leads by Direction Order and the Dogs (Specified Maximum) Order be confirmed without variation;
2. that the Dogs on Leads Order be confirmed for all areas currently subject to equivalent controls within existing byelaws;
3. that the Dogs Exclusion Order be confirmed for all designated children's play areas and all other areas currently subject to equivalent controls within existing byelaws;

The Chairman thanked everyone for their contributions to the debate.

***43 Pitt report on flooding issues**

Consideration was given to the report of Mark Reilly, Head of Street Scene Services, on the implications to East Devon District Council arising from recommendations given in “Sir Michel Pitt’s Review of the summer 2007 floods”.

Following the exceptional flooding in the summer of 2007, the Government commissioned Sir Michael Pitt to conduct an independent review of the lessons learned. When the report was published it included 92 recommendations, each of which had been supported by Government.

The report and, subsequently, the recommendations followed seven key criteria, namely:-

1. Identification of areas at risk of flooding.
2. Reducing the risk of planning.
3. Rescue and care in an emergency.
4. Maintaining utilities and essential services.
5. Better advice and helping people to protect families and homes.
6. Recovery.
7. Oversight and delivery

These recommendations were addressed to Government, local authorities, local resilience forums, providers of essential services, insurers and others, including the general public. There would be an enhanced role and greater responsibilities for local authorities in the future management of local flood risk. This would impact upon current capacity and capabilities to deal with these increased roles and responsibilities. Mark Reilly reported at the meeting on the response received from the Environment Agency on the impact of the Pitt Report on East Devon District Council.

Councillor Peter Bowden reported, from personal experience that recovering from flooding was a long and painful process. Of the 350 houses flooded in East Devon, 100 were still not habitable, he hoped to back in his house in two weeks. The Flood Recovery Group for East Devon had been charged with overcoming the aftermath of a serious incidence of flooding in East Devon.

Councillor Bowden confirmed that the impact of the flooding and the Pitt Report would be felt for a long time. The effect on the community of flooding was long lasting and was mainly a “people” issue. In order to best aid the victims of flooding it was important to take action to give help in the first 36 hours. The cost of preventing the next flooding event in East Devon would be considerable.

During discussions the following points were also highlighted:

- That East Devon District Council had a very small team of staff trying to sort out the flooding problems;
- That the causes of flooding were a very complex issue;
- The concern expressed that much of the proposed Seaton Regeneration building was to be on a flood plain, particularly the 400 houses;
- The need to maintain the drainage systems which would help prevent local flooding;

***43 Pitt report on flooding issues (continued)**

RESOLVED

1. that the Executive Board be requested to prioritise the implications of the Pitt review for the role and responsibilities of the District Council in the future management of local flood risk, particularly with respect to financial and work load considerations.
2. that representatives from the Environment Agency and Devon County Council be invited to a future meeting of the Corporate Overview Committee to understand the steps that are being taken by both organisations to address the recommendations of the Pitt Review;
3. that the recommendations and views of the Flood Recovery Group be brought to both the Corporate Overview Committee and Executive Board for consideration.

***44 Place Survey Results**

Jamie Buckley, Engagement & Funding Officer gave a presentation on results of the Place Survey. Members noted that the Place Survey had been sent out by the Council on behalf of central Government to a random selection of households in East Devon between September and December 2008. The purpose was to gain information that would improve outcomes for local people and places, so many of the questions were more relevant to East Devon as a place rather than East Devon District Council specifically.

The headline results for this survey were made available to the Committee, Comparison information from other district authority areas was not yet available so the results were not in context. When this information was released by the Audit Commission it would be reported to the Committee. The Council and the East Devon Local Strategic Partnership would use the results of the survey to improve outcomes for local people and places. Members noted that the data received would be helpful to the Leader’s Service Transformation Group.

Jamie Buckley was thanked for her presentation of the Place Survey statistics.

RESOLVED

that the high percentage of resident satisfied with doorstep recycling scheme be welcomed, but concern be expressed over the reduction in satisfaction with the Leisure Service provision over the last 8 years and the Scrutiny Committee be requested to investigate this issue.

***45 Special meeting of the Overview Committee**

Members noted that a special meeting of the Corporate Overview Committee would be held on Thursday 2 April 2009 to consider the design and enhancement of The Strand, Exmouth. The meeting would be held at 6.30pm at the Council Chamber, Exmouth Town Hall and would be preceded by a site visit to The Strand.

Chairman Date.....