

# **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **Minutes of a Meeting of the Corporate Overview Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 28 June 2007**

### **Present:**

Councillors:

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

P N Bowden  
M Florey  
C Gibbings  
Mrs P A Graham

J A Knight  
Mrs P A Stott  
T J R Wood  
S C Wragg

### **Also Present:**

Councillors:

Miss V Ash  
T A Cope  
Miss J M Elson  
S Hughes  
Mrs A E Liverton

G K Liverton  
A T Moulding  
K Potter  
A W J Reed  
Mrs P A Stott

### **Apology**

Councillors:

R Bloxham  
R Boote  
G P Brown  
Mrs B O Taylor

The meeting started at 6.30 pm and ended at 9.20 pm

#### **\*1 Welcome and introductions**

The Chairman welcomed new members to the meeting of the Corporate Overview Committee.

#### **\*2 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Overview Committee held on 29 March 2007, were confirmed and signed as a true record.

#### **\*3 Presentation plus question and answer session on “Why the community of East Devon needs the Post Office”**

Members received a presentation from Mr David Fent, Branch Secretary of Exeter Branch of the Sub Post Masters Union and Councillor Ken Potter, Chairman of the Exeter Branch of the Sub Post Masters Union and this Council’s member champion for Post Offices.

Councillor K Potter gave the background to the Post Office and its current financial difficulties. These had been caused by a mixture of poor management, privatisation, splitting the business, “tinkering” by politicians and lack of continuity. He confirmed that the Post Office was a great British institution and had an important role to play.

\*3

### **Presentation plus question and answer session on “Why the community of East Devon needs the Post Office” (Cont)**

David Fent, Postmaster for Woolbrook, discussed the social need for the Post Office. Many elderly customers used the Post Office as an important social meeting place and a visit to the Post Office was often the only time during the day they got out of their home. The latest round of closures of 2,500 Post Offices would still leave a network of 11,800 Post Offices in the UK. 85% of mail collected was through Post Office branches. They were the largest provider in the country for travel insurance and currency, as well as being the second largest for banking services.

Mr Fent confirmed however, that Post Offices needed fresh business to safeguard their future. He suggested that District Councils could put more pressure on the Government to allow Councils and other organisations to put more business their way. This could include allowing them to sell car park season tickets, taking payments for parking and speeding fines, court fines, local authority fines and dealing with bus passes.

During discussions the following points were noted:

- Many of the proposals for fresh business for Post Offices were outside the District Council's control;
- The difficulties of increasing Post Office opening hours as these were regulated centrally;
- That there would be no voluntary closures under the forthcoming round of closures;
- The last round of closures had a detrimental effect on the provision of Post Office services in rural areas as some Postmasters had volunteered to accept early retirement. This which meant that some of the Post Offices closed in rural areas were the busier ones;
- The majority of Post Offices were unprofitable, losing between £2 - 300 per week;
- It was hoped that the Post Office could reinvent itself to become more profitable and improve its marketing;
- Concern over whether the Council could give Post Offices more business as it would not necessarily support 'Best Value' principles;
- Members wished to express their strong support for the continued successful operation of Post Offices in East Devon.

Councillor K Potter and Mr D Fent were thanked for their informative and interesting presentations.

**RESOLVED** that the Association of District Councils be requested to ask the Government to rethink the situation with regard to taking responsibilities away from Post Offices, on both community and social grounds..

\*4

### **Shoreline Management Plan 2**

Members received a presentation by Mike Baker, Principal Engineer on the Shoreline Management Plan 2 (SMP2). The stretch of coast involved extended from Durston Head near Swanage in Dorset to Rame Head near Plymouth, a distance of 308km.

Members noted that the SMP2 was a non statutory strategic level document which would recommend a coastal management policy for each section of coast. It would identify a sustainable coastal management option and would assist coastal management decision making and formed part of the Government's strategy for dealing with the coastline. This would take into account social, environment and economic issues.

\*4 **Shoreline Management Plan 2 (Cont)**

Teignbridge District Council was acting as lead authority and was currently involved in the process of procuring a Consultant to undertake the study. The views of Councillors were invited so they could be included in the study. An Elected Members' Forum would be held on 16 November 2007 and it was likely that Councillor C Gibbings would represent the Council at this meeting.

The policy options ranged from "no active intervention" to "hold the existing defence line". The SMP2 process hoped to overcome the short term "fire fighting" solutions used in the past and it was hoped to be able to plan the management of the coastline. Whilst the SMP2 had not so far taken into account the needs of private enterprise in planning schemes, this could be done if it fitted in with policy.

Members discussed Pennington Point, Sidmouth and although it was not the purpose of the SMP2 to consider detailed schemes, it was noted that there was no sign of Government funding for such schemes at present.

Mike Baker, Principal Engineer, was thanked for his presentation.

\*5 **Exe Estuary Coastal Management Study**

Members received a second presentation by Mike Baker, Principal Engineer, on the Exe Estuary Coastal Management Study. Members noted that this study was a sub cell of the SMP2 study and would provide a valuable input to the larger study. Its aim was to increase the protection to the Exmouth sea wall by improving the level of the beach, as well as to improve the amenity environmental and flood defence attributes of Dawlish Warren. Funding of £100,000 had been secured from DEFRA for the Exe Estuary Coastal Management Study, which had started in March 2007. The draft report should be ready in early December 2007, with consultation carried out for a 6 week period beginning in January 2008.

Mike Baker confirmed that the Overview Committee would be kept informed on progress with the project.

During discussions the following points were noted:

- There would be no physical modelling of the Exe Estuary produced but computer modelling would be used;
- All the agencies involved in the study were working together well;
- That the aim of the study was to achieve a long term sustainable management plan for the Exe Estuary coastline trying to overcome errors made in the past by taking an overall strategic view of all the issues involved and dealing with the situation with no preconceived ideas on what the solution might be;
- It was felt that it was not appropriate to involve insurers in the study at this stage.

Mike Baker, Principal Engineer, was thanked for his presentation.

6 **Recommendations of the Culture Task and Finish Forum**

Members considered the report of Culture Task and Finish Forum which made a number of recommendations. The report proposed a series of actions to better focus the Council's work across cultural issues within existing resources. The Corporate Director – Communities reported that although the Council had lost many of its cultural activities when Leisure East Devon had been separated, the Council retained its strategic responsibility for Culture.

**6 Recommendations of the Culture Task and Finish Forum(Cont)**

Although there was no mandatory requirement for the Council to undertake cultural work it was important to the District Council and had an impact on a number of the Council's services.

During discussions the following points were noted:

- the financial implications and staffing levels for the proposals made in the report needed to be thought through before a positive recommendation could be made to the Executive Board;
- that the proposals made in the report would not necessarily increase the budget;
- the importance of embracing the proposals made for progressing cultural services within the visioning process and then looking at the policy for how culture could be taken forward;
- that the issue of obtaining funding from developments S106 agreements could be improved to achieve more funding for Culture in East Devon;
- the need for a holistic approach to Culture was emphasized.

**RECOMMENDED** that in principle approval be given to the proposals made by the Culture TaFF but that the Corporate Director – Communities be requested to take on board the comments made by Members at the meeting and come back to a future Overview Committee with positive recommendations showing staffing and resource implications of the proposals.

**\*7 Membership of Task and Finish Forum**

Consideration was given to the membership of the Beach Concessions TaFF.

**RESOLVED** that the following members be nominated to serve on the Beach Concessions Task and Finish Forum Councillors: C Gibbings, Mrs P A Graham, B O Ingham, D R A Key, J A Knight, R C Peachey and T J R Wood.

**\*8 Next meeting**

The Chairman reported that the following items would be considered at the next meeting of the Overview Committee on 26 July 2007:

- Employment land supply
- Exe Estuary partnership
- Exmouth regeneration and proposals to reuse the Rolle College buildings.

The issue of Seaton regeneration would be discussed at a future meeting.

Chairman .....

Date .....