

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Corporate Overview Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 2 February 2006

Present:

Councillors:

G K Liverton (Chairman)
R C Peachey (Vice-Chairman)

A E J Dinnis
Mrs R E Burrow
G P Chamberlain
J E D Falby
C Gibbings

B O Ingham
J A Knight
A W J Reed
T G Reeves
Mrs B O Taylor

Also Present:

Councillors:

Miss V Ash
T A Cope
P A Diviani
Miss J M Elson
R G Franklin
A R Giles
Ms S M Merritt
A T Moulding

R Mudge
Mrs F I Newth
B Nicholson
Miss S Randall Johnson
Mrs P A Stott
Dr H W Waterworth
A J Wilkinson
S C Wragg

Apology

Councillor C H Wale

Apology:

Councillor:

**Non-Overview
Members**

Mrs C E Drew
Mrs E E Wragg

The meeting started at 6.30 pm and ended at 7.48 pm

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Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Overview Committee held on 1 December 2005, were confirmed and signed as a true record.

***26 Draft Revenue and Capital Estimates 2006/07**

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Finance in respect on the Draft Revenue and Capital Estimates for 2006/07, which had been circulated within the agenda for the Executive Board meeting on 18 January 2006. Members noted that the Board had adopted the draft estimates at that meeting and had asked this committee to consider the estimates, bearing in mind the need to set a balanced budget. The recommendations made would be considered by the board at its meeting on 15 February 2006. The Board would then recommend to the Council the 2006/07 Council Tax requirements and the Housing Revenue Account budget.

The estimates presented included items already approved by the Executive Board. Members considered in depth a schedule of service enhancements requested by Officers but not included within the estimates. The total cost of the enhancements came to £610,550. Members were advised that a council tax increase of 4.9% would allow for enhancements of up to £294,000 within a balanced budget.

Members noted that as a result of the difficult decisions and action taken during the past two years the Council was in a better financial position than in previous years and was now able to invest in its priority areas.

The Corporate Director - Economy explained that financial papers reflected current service provision and that special items bids were for the potential enhancements detailed in the service plans. As there were no questions on the detailed budget, members had a discussion on the special items bids.

The following points were raised with regard to the enhancements requested:

1. Enabling Officer (affordable housing)
Enabling affordable housing was the Council's top priority. This enhancement received total support.
2. Affordable housing – EDDC contribution re: second homes monies
The additional council tax collected from the owners of second homes had been allocated for affordable housing in previous years. This had levered in additional funding from Devon County Council. Members agreed that this should continue.
3. Car Parks – Assistant Car Park Supervisor
Members agreed that this could not be considered a priority at the present time.
4. Street Cleaning – Additional resources for service provision/improvements
This enhancement was for a second 'hit man' needed to target street cleansing issues in rural areas, including the increasing problem of fly tipping. Members advised that street cleansing was a popular and growing concern among residents. This enhancement was supported.
5. Additional Play Area Inspector
Members agreed that this could not be considered a priority at the present time. The legal implications were queried.
6. Anti-social Behaviour response coordination
The Communities Portfolio Holder hoped that members would support this bid in future years, if not in this one. East Devon was unlikely to be a top priority for funding in Devon as it had the lowest level of crime figures in the county. Members were advised that when the Crime and Disorder Act was passed the Council was duty bound to help promote community safety and to work in partnership with other organisations to prevent crime and disorder. The Community Safety Coordinator was currently funded by Home Office money, administered by the council on behalf of the Community Safety Partnership. This enhancement was requested to protect the post as the

***26 Draft Revenue and Capital Estimates 2006/07 (Cont.)**

appropriateness of using local Community Safety funding for officers was under question. It is expected that any future funding will be intended for specific community safety initiatives.

7. Additional resources to meet LPSA2 agreement – Local Public Service Agreement 2 “improving the quality of our urban environment”

The Head of Streetscene explained that the street cleansing in East Devon was the third poorest in terms of BVPI 199 in the whole of the South West. Members noted the problems of trying to reach the top 25% for street cleaning and the need for a stepchange to try and reach this figure. The Council could achieve additional one off funding if there was an 8% improvement in performance. If this was achieved there was the potential to draw down through the LPSA2 approximately £100,000 - £125,000 from the Government. It was suggested that coastal towns needed investment to raise their level of street cleansing. Members agreed not to support this request.

8. Free town car parking for the two Saturdays leading up to Christmas

Free car parking had been granted to Ottery St Mary for the two Saturdays before Christmas as compensation to the towns traders for the problems they faced in 2005. Members agreed that although the free parking had been appreciated it should not be repeated in 2006.

9. Seafront decorative lighting – Seaton

Members considered that the issue of decorative lighting on seafronts was one that should be taken on by the respective Town Councils. Devon County Council was intending to replace lighting columns along East Walk. Additional funding was required to reinstate the decorative lighting following this replacement. Members agreed that this work was not a priority and that a report should be made to a future meeting of the Executive Board on consultation with Devon County Council and both Town Councils (Seaton and Exmouth) regarding this whole issue.

10. Seafront decorative lighting – Exmouth

Members comments were the same as for the Seaton lighting (see 9 above).

11. Reinstate capital grant funding for cemeteries

Members were advised that although the Council continued to provide revenue funding for cemeteries in East Devon it no longer provided capital grants. The cemeteries were not looked after by the Council but if the current holders opted to close them the Council would be required to take over their maintenance. Members considered that this was not a priority area and agreed not to support the bid.

12. Community Fund

The draft estimates included a sum of £12,000 for Community Funding, Members were asked to consider whether to raise this by £88,000 to allow further assistance to be given. Members agreed that provision of the Community Fund was important and agreed to increase the fund by £8,000 to a total of £20,000.

13. Exmouth/Seaton Gateway Towns

Members supported the bid for £15,000 to match fund the amounts pledged for 2006/07 by Devon County Council, Exmouth Town Council and Seaton Town Council for continued work by consultants on taking forward the two visitor centre projects.

14. Cultural Strategy Delivery Manager

The Culture Portfolio Holder reported to Members that the District Council was now short of capacity to follow through the wide cultural strategy actions, expectations and requirements upon the Council. A cultural strategy delivery manager would help overcome this. Though committee members felt uncertain of the detail of the situation,

*26 **Draft Revenue and Capital Estimates 2006/07** (Cont.)

they agreed that they could not support the appointment of a cultural Strategy Delivery Manager.

15. Local Development Framework

Members were advised that additional funding was required as a result of the introduction of the Local Development Framework. The Framework required that a Sustainability Appraisal, a Strategic Environmental Assessment and an Employment Needs Assessment for the District, had to be produced for Core Strategy documents. Consultants would need to carry out this work as insufficient Officer capacity and expertise was t available in house. Members agreed to support this bid.

16. Implementation of e-procurement module on Cedar

Members agreed not to support the bid for the provision of a temporary post to implement throughout the Council the e-procurement module of the new financial system.

17. Communications and Consultation Assistant

Members agreed on the importance of communications. Full support was given for this bid.

RECOMMENDED that the Special Item bids numbered 1, 2, 4, 13, 15, and 17 be included, as printed in the report, in the Revenue and Capital Estimates 2006/07 and that the bid numbered 12 be included at the lower amount of £8,000.

*27 **Draft Housing Revenue Account Estimates 2006/07**

Members received and noted the report of the Head of Finance with regard to the draft Housing Revenue Account Estimates 2006/07.

- RECOMMENDED**
- (1) that the draft Housing Revenue Account estimates for 2006/07 be adopted and forwarded to the Scrutiny and Corporate Overview Committees for consideration,
 - (2) that Council house rents be increased, on average, by 4.8% to £52.54 a week from 3 April 2006,
 - (3) that garage rents be increased, on average, by 10% to £6.60 a week from 3 April 2006.

*28 **Service Plans**

Members considered the report of the Policy Manager with regard to the draft Service Plans drawn up for the next three years for each service. The plans reviewed performance for the year ending 31 March 2006 as well as setting service improvement plans for 2006/09. Members appreciated the amount of work which had gone into preparing the plans.

RECOMMENDED that the draft Service Plans be adopted.

Chairman

Date