

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

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

Present:

Councillors:

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

Mrs K J Bamsey
G P Chamberlain
J E D Falby
K W George
C F A Gibbings
J P Halse

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

Also Present:

Councillors:

Miss V Ash
T A Cope
P A Diviani
Mrs C E Drew
Miss J M Elson
S Hughes
A R Giles

J Jeffery
Mrs A E Liverton
R Mudge
Mrs F Newth
B Nicholson
Mrs M A Rogers
Mrs P A Stott

Apologies

Councillors:

C H Wale
Dr H W Waterworth
S C Wragg

The meeting started at 6.30 pm and ended at 8.45 pm

***21 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Overview Committee held on 5 October 2006, were confirmed and signed as a true record.

***22 District Transport strategy for East Devon - update**

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director – Communities giving an update on the District Transport strategy for East Devon.

Members noted that the District of East Devon had unique characteristics which affected transport locally. Public surveys revealed that transport was an issue to address for local people. Transport was an essential part of the provision of most local services, with the economy, the environment and local communities dependent on effective and appropriate local transport. The Transport Strategy was produced by a Task and Finish Forum, with many other agencies involved.

The TaFF set out with clear terms of reference and was, throughout, very aware that the strategy should not be about committing the Council to expenditure on this largely non-mandatory role but was to understand and then advocate for the actual transport needs of local people. This involved survey work with adults and young people. The Strategy was adopted, after consultation, by the full Council on the 19 April 2006.

23 **County actions on local transport issues**

Consideration was given to a presentation by Dr Ian Harrison regarding Devon County actions on local transport issues in East Devon and gave an overview of the Devon Local Transport Plan 2006 – 2011.

Members noted that Local Transport Plans needed to be compatible with the Regional Spatial Strategy and that these were interlinked. Dr Harrison gave details of the County Council's spending programme for the Exeter Sub Region, which had the biggest budget of the four Sub Regions in Devon. He confirmed the importance of the Jurassic Coast Transport Strategy and the phenomenal success of the X53 Coastlink bus service, which had seen patronage double in recent years with the introduction of new buses.

Members noted that Devon County Council spent £6,000,000 on support for public and community transport, which was socially necessary transport. Dr Harrison confirmed that the future growth of East Devon, through development at Cranbrook, Skypark, Science Park, Airport extension and the Inter modal freight terminal poses significant transport challenges in future years. The challenge was to get the public to use public transport in greater numbers thereby relieving pressure on the road network from private cars.

Devon County Council had made a number of major scheme bids to the Government to improve the transport network in the Exeter Sub Region. The Exmouth to Exeter rail link had 820,000 passengers annually and had seen 10% growth in the last 5 years. However, from December, First Great Western, the new franchise holder was reducing the number of trains per day from 33 to 30. It was essential that pressure was put on First Great Western to reduce overcrowding problems at peak times on this line.

For the Waterloo to Exeter line the Department of Transport is to buy a priced option for an hourly service to London in the new franchise award. It was expected that a new passing loop would be built from Chard Junction to Axminster, funded by Network Rail. It was also an ambition to interlock an hourly service from Axminster to Exeter, which would require the provision of a further passing loop on the line.

During discussions the following points were noted:

- Buses had seen strong growth in the prime corridors but that there was still an issue of accessibility in rural areas;
- The Honiton eastern by pass scheme had been given a low priority by the Government;
- That it was not considered that construction traffic for Cranbrook would have a significant impact on the eastern side of Honiton as most traffic would be coming from the M5;
- The bottleneck problem caused by the weight restricted bridge at Weycroft Mill at Axminster;
- The problem caused by congestion of the A376, Exeter to Exmouth road, particularly during peak times and the continued aspiration for its dualling using the 'blue route' or similar;
- Completion of the Dinan Way link was important to Exmouth, but concern was expressed that this should not be funded by the building of more houses in the Brixington area;
- Developer contributions could be put towards improvements in bus fleets;
- What could East Devon District Council do in partnership to achieve progress with the Exmouth to Exeter rail link;
- A weakness of the Jurassic Coast transport strategy was in dealing with access by boat;
- The issue of the increasing need for community transport with an ageing population;

23 **County actions on local transport issues (Cont)**

- Developers could be required to make contribution to transport improvements through Supplementary Planning Guidance;
- Sustainability of transport was an important issue, particularly when making planning decision.

Dr Ian Harrison was warmly thanked for his excellent presentation on transport issues in East Devon.

RCOMMENDED

1. that joint action be taken with Devon County Council to lobby for rail improvements between Exmouth and Exeter;
2. that joint action be taken with Devon County Council to lobby for rail improvements between Axminster and Exeter with a second passing loop;
3. that improvements be made on the Exmouth to Exeter corridor and for the possibility for Section 106 agreements on Supplementary Planning Document to include contributions towards measures to improve transport along this corridor, including cycle stands and storage facilities;
4. that support be given for the Honiton eastern bypass;
5. that support be given for a Axminster north/south relief road;
6. that support be given to Devon County Council in pursuing regional funding for east of Exeter transport improvements;
7. that improvements be considered to community Transport.

(Councillor Miss J M Elson declared an interest in Community Transport)

*24 **Cycling**

Councillor Roger Giles presented a copy of a draft report to the Scrutiny Committee on the possible use of former East Devon railway lines as cycle routes. The report noted that disused railway lines could offer great potential as cycleways. They followed routes that avoided steep gradients, made use of existing infrastructure and often passed through attractive countryside away from busy highways. They could therefore be ideal routes for cyclists, which if developed, would have considerable tourist and recreational potential. Members noted in particular the success of the Tarka trail.

Councillor Giles confirmed that he was particularly keen on the development of the Feniton to Sidmouth route. Although some of this land was now in private ownership he felt that the majority of it was still intact and that any minor problems of land ownership could be overcome. A concern was expressed over the cost of these cycle routes relative to their usage. But it was acknowledged that the finance needed to be available for cycle way schemes to proceed. The issue of the need for appropriate cycle stands to properly secure bicycles was also noted. Members noted that the report would be going to the Scrutiny Committee and that the financial implications of the proposal needed to be taken into account.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Chairman

Date