

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Communities Overview Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 19 January 2005

Present:

Councillors:

Mrs P A Stott (Chairman)
R C Peachey (Vice-Chairman)

Miss V Ash
D J Cox
Mrs C E Drew
Mrs P A Graham
Mrs M L Hardy

H J Jeffery
Mrs A E Liverton
T G Reeves
Mrs B O Taylor
Mrs E E Wragg

Also Present:

Councillors:

Miss J M Elson
A T Moulding
A J Wilkinson

Ms M Wallage – Tenant Customer Panel

Apologies:

Councillors:

Mrs K J Bamsey
P C Townsend

The meeting started at 6.30pm and ended at 7.52pm.

*26 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Communities Overview Committee held on 18 November 2004, were confirmed and signed as a true record.

27 **Smoking**

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director – Communities in respect of the progress made in the adopting the Council's No Smoking policy in all District Council office buildings, facilities and workplaces. The report recommended a phasing in of the policy at Exmouth Pavilion over a two year period in order to lessen the possible impact on income streams. It was suggested that the cigarette vending machines be removed from the Pavilion.

Concern was raised about image presented by employees based at Knowle who smoked close to the buildings, under windows and on the footpath leading to the car park.

RECOMMENDED that the progress on the application of the Non-smoking Policy be noted and the method of phasing in the Policy at Exmouth Pavilion be adopted as outlined in the report.

28 **Service Plans 2005/08**

Consideration was given to the report of the Policy Manager with regard to Service Plans drawn up for the next three years for each of the service areas within the remit of the Committee. The plans reviewed performance for the year ending 31 March 2005 as well as planning for the future. Following the input of actual performance and target figures in the Performance Indicator table, relevant extracts from all the Plans would be included in the Annual Performance Plan 2005/06.

The following points were noted with regard to each of the plans considered:

Housing and Social Inclusion

The service plans for the previous year had been updated to reflect key changes in housing policy and to remain consistent with housing strategies. Members' attention was drawn in particular to the key issues to be faced which included the Housing Stock Options Appraisal. It was noted that 15 homes had been made available under the Private Sector Leasing Scheme and that 10 more were in the pipeline. Some of the homeowners had joined the scheme as a result of publicity sent to them following the reduction in the Council Tax discount for second homes.

Members were advised that the target of providing 'a minimum of 20 new homes per year for rent, plus shared ownership and discounted housing for sale' was only a minimum and was linked with the level of funding available from the Housing Corporation. Even affordable housing delivered via Planning Policies H3 & H5 normally required a degree of grant funding.

Staff were congratulated for the impressive level of satisfaction shown by tenants in the customer satisfaction survey undertaken in 2004.

Leisure and Lifestyles

The Leisure and Lifestyles plan was designed to deliver a high quality service with a reduced budget and fewer staff. Since the previous year and as a result of the budget prioritisation exercise, the positions of Arts Development Officer, Sports Development Officer, Assistant Arts and Museums Officer and Operations Manager had been cut. Budgets for Arts Development and Cadiac Rehabilitation had been reduced, the Sports Development Budget ceased and the provision of a Water Safety service reduced to a skeletal service at Exmouth. Three key themes were presented in the Plan to offset the affect of the cuts: Partnership working; increasing income and changes in management arrangements. It was hoped that more work could be undertaken in partnership with other organisations, for example with the East Devon Schools Partnership for sports development initiatives, with Honiton Community Centre and Town Council regarding the Thelma Hulbert Gallery, and with the Primary Care Trust for the Pulse Project. Increased efforts would be made to increase income through more business motivated initiative, such as the Choice Card, rather than just by increasing fees. The change in management arrangements related to the setting up of a trust to manage the sports centres and leisure facilities. It was anticipated that this change would have a significant impact on the revenue budget for 2006 and beyond.

Concern was raised that the District would no longer be represented at the Devon Youth Games. Members were advised that entering the games would cost approximately £3,000 and would involve a significant amount of staff time.

Discussion took place on the plan to provide a skeletal lifeguard service at Exmouth and to cut the service provided at Sidmouth. The budget for the level of service to be provided was £15,000. Some Members were concerned that no service would be offered at Sidmouth. It was suggested that any equipment no longer required could be offered to the voluntary water rescue organisations, such as the Inshore Lifeboat, in return for them

Service Plans 2005/08 (Cont.)

offering a level of cover. The details of the service offered at Exmouth were yet to be decided but it was hoped that work could be done with the volunteer Beach Rescue Service.

Environmental Health and Health Equalities (including Food Safety and Health and Safety)

Members were advised that the three plans produced all reflected the results of the budget prioritisation process. The deletion of an Environmental Health Officer post had meant that the service would concentrate on fulfilling legal obligations and little more. A draft Private Sector Housing Strategy had been produced and the Private Sector Leasing Scheme was gaining momentum. Key challenges to be faced included increasing affordable housing, meeting the duties of the new Housing Act and the implications of the new Licensing Act, these could have resource implications and would be reflected in the final Service Plan.

Discussion took place on the number of food poisoning cases reported, the implementation of lead authority partnership with Bradfords PLC and the undertaking of a complete corporate stress audit. Members were advised that the audit would highlight causes of stress which could be tackled before they became a more significant problem. Internal staff would conduct the audit using an Health and Safety Executive toolkit.

RECOMMENDED that the Housing and Social Inclusion, Leisure and Lifestyles, Environmental Health and Health Equalities, Food Safety and Health and Safety Service Plans for 2005/08 be approved.

(Cllr Mrs Stott declared a personal interest in the discussion about the water rescue service, as her son was a member of the Exmouth Lifeboat. Mark Williams also declared a personal interest in the same discussion as a trustee of the Sidmouth Lifeboat)

29 **Draft Revenue and Capital Estimates 2005/06**

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director – Economy with regard to the draft Revenue and Capital Estimates for 2005/06 and the Housing Revenue Account. It was noted that the Executive Board had adopted the draft estimates at its meeting on 17 January 2005. This committee was asked by the Board to consider the estimates, bearing in mind the need to set a balanced budget, and to make recommendations to the Executive Board for consideration at its meeting on 9 February 2005. The Board would then recommend to the Council the 2005/06 Council Tax requirement and the Housing Revenue Account budget.

Members noted that the budget represented the Service Plans in financial terms. It reflected the findings of the prioritisation process, recognised that the general fund balance was low and was based on the expectation of matching income with expenditure. The likely increase in Council Tax would be just under 6%.

Members were advised that the Pest Control budget had been reduced to reflect the reduced take up of the service. In addition it was noted that the figure listed for the warden service was a net figure and did not include the £483,000 contribution received from Supporting People, the funding for which was expected to be cut in 2005/06.

RECOMMENDED

- 1) that the draft Revenue and Capital Estimates for 2005/06, relevant to this committee, be approved;
- 2) that the draft Housing Revenue Account Estimates for 2005/06 and the rent increase of 4.03% to £49.62 a week, which is in line with Government guidelines, and a garage rent increase of 20% to £6 a week, be approved.

Chairman Date.....