

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL
Minutes of a Meeting of the Corporate Overview Committee
held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 20 September 2007

- Present:** Councillors:
D R A Key (Chairman)
R C Peachey (Vice Chairman)
- R Bloxham M Florey
R Boote G S Godbeer
G P Brown B O Ingham
- Also Present:** Councillors:
P A Diviani Mrs A E Liverton
G P Chamberlain G K Liverton
Mrs C E Drew A T Moulding
Miss J M Elson A W J Reed
R G Franklin P J Skinner
- Apology** Councillors:
Miss V Ash
P N Bowden
T A Cope
C F A Gibbings
Mrs P A Graham
J P Halse
Mrs P A Stott
Mrs B O Taylor

The meeting started at 6.30 pm and ended at 8.45 pm

***12 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Overview Committee held on 26 July 2007, were confirmed and signed as a true record, subject to Councillor M Florey replacing Councillor C Tratt in the declarations of prejudicial interests.

***13 Exmouth: Rolle College Campus**

Members received a presentation from Councillor Miss J M Elson, Communities Portfolio Holder, Tony Alexander, Principal of Exmouth Community College and Ken Turner on the future of the Rolle College campus. The presentation complemented the written report which had been made to Lord Triesman at the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills on Thursday 26 July 2007.

Members noted that Exmouth Community College wished to take over part of the Rolle College campus to use, for amongst other things a Post-16 Centre for Exmouth. It was anticipated that the University of Plymouth would put the Rolle College campus on the open market for sale next month. Funding was required immediately to purchase part of the site. However, the University of Plymouth were reluctant to name a price. It was possible that the campus could be demolished and housing built on this site.

***13 Exmouth: Rolle College (Cont)**

It had been estimated that to rebuild the campus would cost in the region of £25,000,000. Many of the current buildings were only a couple of years old and in a very good state of repair. It was these that Exmouth Community College wished to take over for its own use,

Tony Alexander, Principal of Exmouth Community College explained that over the last five years, the College had made many improvements. It was the largest comprehensive school in the UK with 2563 students on its rolls and was at present expanding year on year with the need for more space. Discussions had been held with Exeter College over joint working on the Rolle College site. Students from Exeter would come to the site to take vocational courses. Exmouth would greatly benefit if a Further Education base could be established. Tony Alexander emphasised that he and his management team had been working on this proposal for the last 2 years.

Members noted that the possible revenue costs of the purchase of part of the Rolle College Campus would be taken up by the Learning Skills Council and Devon County Council. The shortfall in the capital costs was the biggest issue and needed to be take up with Hugo Swire MP to promote funding and find new sources of capital.

During discussions and questions the following points were noted:

- That the establishment of a Further Education College on the Rolle College campus would be a significant boost to the economy of Exmouth;
- It had been estimated that losing Rolle College would remove £4,000,000 from the local economy;
- That any funds the University of Plymouth received from the sale of the site would be reinvested in building work in Plymouth;
- That the Rolle College campus was attractive with excellent facilities;
- That this was a once in a .lifetime opportunity for Exmouth and East Devon and every effort should be made to ensure it has the best chance of succeeding;
- There was room on the site for a voluntary aided Beacon school development;
- The possibility of obtaining funding from SWRDA was considered as a number of jobs would be created by the proposal and money generated for the local economy;
- That putting a similar presentation on for Devon County Council would be of benefit;
- The possibility of getting funding for the purchase of the required parts of the Rolle College campus by having Section 106 agreements on the parts that were sold for housing development.

Tony Alexander, Ken Turner and Councillor Jill Elson were warmly thanked for their presentation on the future of the Rolle College campus.

- RESOLVED**
- 1) that the Executive Board be informed that the proposal for Exmouth Community College to take over part of Rolle College for its use has the full support of all Members of the Overview Committee;
 - 2) that the Executive Board be recommended to consider the issue of the purchase of part of the Rolle College campus for use by Exmouth Community College as an emergency item at their meeting on 26 September 2007;
 - 3) that the Corporate Director – Environment be requested to set up a meeting with SWRDA with the Leader of the Council, Portfolio holder for Strategic Planning & Regeneration and Principal of Exmouth Community College.

*14 **Affordable Housing**

Members received a report from Matt Dickins, Principal Planning Officer regarding the East Devon Local Development Framework (LDF), Housing in East Devon for the 2006 to 2026 period and in particular on the issue of Affordable Housing. It was noted that there was a clear expectation that LDF documents should accord with national and regional planning policy. A number of higher tier policies did, however, provide a reasonable amount of flexibility and scope for interpretation. In the case of South Hams District Council, they had produced plans that did not accord with higher tier policies. This was in respect of 'over provision' of housing as a means to secure affordable housing.

Members noted that if they sought to deviate from higher tier policies then they would need to have reasoned justification to do so and the more the deviation the stronger the reasoning would need to be. It was accepted that radical solutions had to be produced to overcome the affordable housing problem in East Devon. With the 4,522 applicants on the East Devon council house waiting list as at 1 April 2007, there was clear evidence of demand for housing. The current South West Regional Spatial Strategy provided for 4,900 dwellings in East Devon, outside Cranbrook in the period 2006 to 2026. The current Local plan policy requirement is for 40% of all housing to be affordable, if 4,900 dwellings are provided over 20 years this would equate to a total of 245 per year, if 40% of these were affordable this would provide 98 affordable houses per year.

During discussions and questions the following points were noted:

- Better use of the current housing stock could help the problem, including holiday and empty homes;
- The need for a radical solution to the problem;
- The need to over allocate to ensure an appropriate and adequate supply of affordable housing;
- East Devon was currently only delivering 60 affordable houses per annum;
- That it was anticipated that the Regional Spatial Strategy when produced next year, would allocate much higher levels of house building for East Devon;
- The need to move the development boundaries which were placed around our towns and villages to allow more houses to be built;
- The possibility of using rural buildings, such as redundant barns, to provide more housing;
- The replacement of bad planning policies with good ones that allowed more development;
- A cross section of the community was needed in rural communities, not just the older generation. Young people at present could not afford to live in villages;
- The opening up of planning policies to provide for more development;
- The importance of Councillors showing leadership on the issue of provision of Affordable Housing;
- That some parishes were prepared to accept Affordable Housing, whereas others were more reluctant. It was considered important that Parish Councils should be aware of the need for affordable housing and prepared to support it in their particular parish;
- Visioning work would be carried out with Parish/town council's, which would include discussion on affordable housing later in the year;
- The importance of working closely with land owners to provide the land for affordable housing and being flexible when dealing with them;
- Sustainable issues should be considered. New housing should be put where there was the infrastructure to support them;
- A small amount of affordable housing development in villages would make them more sustainable;

*14 **Affordable Housing** (Cont)

- The greatest need for housing was within the towns of East Devon, particularly in Exmouth;
- A large proportion of the people needing affordable housing wished to purchase their own home and did not necessarily want to live in rented accommodation;
- A graduated roof tax could be a good suggestion.

RESOLVED that an draft issues and options paper be prepared for the next meeting on 18 October 2007, incorporating the points made at this meeting.

Chairman

Date