

**EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of a Meeting of the Communities Overview and**  
**Scrutiny Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth**  
**on Wednesday 20 January 2010**

**Present:** Councillors:  
Helen Parr (Chairman)  
Graham Troman (Vice Chairman)  
Vivien Duval-Steer  
Roger Giles  
Marion Olive  
Philip Skinner  
Mark Williamson

**Officers:** Sue Bewes – Housing Strategy Manager  
John Golding – Head of Housing and Social Inclusion  
Peter Jeffs – Corporate Director  
Rachel Perram – Democratic Services Officer

**Also Present:** Councillors:  
Graham Brown  
Iain Chubb  
Jill Elson  
Frances Newth  
Pauline Stott

**Apologies:** Ray Bloxham  
Derek Button  
Paul Diviani  
Christine Drew  
Chris Gibbings  
Graham Godbeer  
Margaret Rogers

The meeting started at 6.33pm and ended at 8.25pm.

**\*21 Public question time**

There were no questions from members of the public.

**\*22 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 28 October 2009 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

\*23 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor/ Officer	Agenda Item	Type of interest	Nature of interest
Councillor Jill Elson	<b>10. Review of Funded Community &amp; Voluntary Sector Groups</b>	Personal	Chairman of the Exmouth & District Community Transport Group (Ring and Ride)

\*24 **Report on the East Devon Affordable Housing Summit 17 September 2009**

The Chairman welcomed the Housing Strategy Manager and the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion to the meeting.

The Housing Strategy Manager advised Members that this report had been produced following the Housing Summit, held in September 2009 - called as a result of a resolution from the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in June 2009.

Feedback from the event had been extremely positive, with plenty of influential contributors and stakeholders present on the day. Many of the 'blue sky' thinking ideas were being auctioned.

Members of the Committee were invited to develop an action plan from the Feedback Chart in Annex 6 of the agenda.

The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion urged Members to focus on items that were achievable with resources available. Members noted that some comments tabled were unrealistic given current Government legislation and that attention should be given to deliverable outcomes.

Members found the format of the report to be excellent and made it easier to categorise and prioritise initiatives. Concern was raised from several Members over the time that had elapsed since the original resolution of the Committee. Officers reassured Members of the Committee that this had not delayed progress in relation to the development programme. The meeting was reminded that Government funding to aid affordable housing projects was likely to reduce at the end of March 2010. It was clear from a recent regional summit that the Government would expect Councils to develop more housing with less funding in the future.

- RESOLVED:**
1. that the report on the first East Devon Affordable Housing Summit be noted;
  2. that the Communities Portfolio Holder call a 'Think Tank' to start in February 2010 to consider the relevant actions identified at the Affordable Housing Summit;
  3. that progress on the Action Plan and Think Tank be reported to the next meeting of the Committee on 10 March 2010.

25 **Presentation by Cllr Philip Skinner – Rural Member Champion**

Members of the Committee heard an informative talk by the Rural Champion that gave an insight into the broad remit of this role, which included involvement in areas such as planning, communication, the Local Development Framework and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA).

The Chairman thanked the Rural Champion, inviting Members to ask questions about the role.

The Champion felt that there had been plenty of action in the future provision of housing and employment land in the District.

In response to a query over whether there was a 'Towns Champion' for East Devon, Members heard that the definition of a rural settlement was of a population fewer than 20,000. Exmouth was the only place that officially classified as a town in this context. Both Exmouth and Seaton were well served by their Champions, who had been assigned to drive forward regeneration in those places.

Members discussed the difficulties encountered by young people who lived in isolated rural areas and who did not have access to vehicles or public transport. They had problems accessing further and higher education.

Members heard about the issue of 'food security' in the district. This term referred to the availability of land in order to produce food for the local area. Land could potentially become more of an issue as the Council continued to strive towards the Government's targets for new housing in East Devon.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the Rural Champion be encouraged to develop the following topics:

1. Access to courses for young people living in isolated communities (could be examined in conjunction with the Business Champion);
2. Broadband – increasing speed and bandwidth throughout East Devon. This work to be carried out in conjunction with Devon County Council;
3. Improved transport access for rural areas;
4. Food Security – encouraging development that takes this into account for local people;
5. An item be prepared for the Parishes' and Towns' newsletter explaining the remit of the Rural Champion.

\*26 **Rural Manifesto**

Members considered a report prepared by the Corporate Director, Peter Jeffs that summarised the main parts of a 'Rural Manifesto', produced by the Rural Services Network (RSN). The Manifesto included a range of rural issues encountered by Councils who had a significant rural population. The report specifically allowed comparison with EDDC's existing Rural Standards Policy. EDDC was consulted by the RSN in advance of the production of the Rural Manifesto. It was noted that many of the Council's concerns had been voiced in the Manifesto.

Members agreed that it was important for the voice of East Devon's rural community to be heard nationally and that the Council respond at Government level to the Rural Manifesto.

\*26 **Rural Manifesto (continued)**

Members wished for the response to encapsulate what the Council believed to be important for East Devon's rural community. If adopted as a Council, the new policy would have a knock-on effect on the Local Development Framework. The Council should set out its position within the next few months.

**RESOLVED:** 1. that the Corporate Director examine the 'Rural Manifesto' and compare this with the EDDC Rural Services Standard and report back.

27 **Review of Funded Community and Voluntary Sector Groups**

Members considered a report prepared by the Corporate Director. This listed the community groups and charities to which EDDC provided funding.

Members heard that the Council's budget was in the process of being agreed, and at this point it would become clear which organisations and to what level, the Council would provide funding over the next year.

Members agreed that it was important for such organisations to have firm Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with EDDC, as was access to accounting information and financial reports.

**RECOMMENDED:** that where appropriate, a three year Service Level Agreement be made with the community and voluntary sector groups to whom EDDC provided funding.

\*28 **Forward Plan for Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2009/10**

Members noted that the next meeting of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny on 10 March 2010 would focus on Children and Young People.

The Committee would also receive an update on progress with the Action Plan for Affordable Housing.

Chairman ..... Date.....