

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Board held at Knowle, Sidmouth on Wednesday, 1 August 2007

Present:

Councillors:

Miss S M Randall Johnson (Chairman)
R G Franklin (Vice Chairman)
D J Cox
T A Cope
Miss J M Elson
M J L Green
J P Halse
S Hughes
G K Liverton
A T Moulding

Also Present

Councillors:

Miss V Ash	G S Godbeer
P N Bowden	J A Knight
G P Chamberlain	Mrs A E Liverton
I R Chubb	Mrs F I Newth
P A Diviani	Mrs P A Stott
Mrs C E Drew	C T Tratt
A R Giles	T J R Wood

Apologies from non-Executive Board Members

Councillors

M Florey
S C Wragg

The meeting started at 5.30 pm and ended at 7.15 pm.

***48 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Board held on 4 July 2007 were confirmed and signed as a true record subject to recommendation 1 point 3 of minute 46 being amended to 'Fortnightly collection of residual waste' and Councillor Cope being recorded as stating that he neither supported the size of the trial area nor the fortnightly collection of residuals.

***49 Forward Plan**

The contents of the Forward Plan for the period 1 August to 30 November 2007 were noted.

***50 Matters referred to the Executive Board**

There were no matters referred to the Executive Board by the Scrutiny or Corporate Overview Committees or the Council.

***51 Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee**

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 11 July 2007 were noted and discussed. Councillor Giles, Chairman of that Committee drew Members' attention to the importance of keeping Members informed of what was happening in their Wards, (minute 12 refers). It was noted that Member training on delegated decision making was already being actioned, (minute 15 refers). Members discussed the planning lists available on line. Previously these had been sent to Members by e mail and this had acted as a helpful reminder for them to check the lists. The Corporate Director – Environment agreed to investigate how to improve the new arrangements so that Members could respond more readily to the lists.

*51 **Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee (cont)..**

RESOLVED (1) that the following decisions be noted:

- Minute 11**
- that the Head of Housing & Social Inclusion be thanked for acknowledging the need to improve this Best Value Performance Indicator in respect of average time to re-let Local Authority Housing (BV211),
 - that concern be expressed over the weakness in past performance in re-letting Local Authority Housing and it be noted that the Housing Review Board was monitoring the situation, was seeking to improve performance and endorsed the concerns and action being taken.
- Minute 12**
- that the conclusions of the General User Satisfaction Survey and proposed Action Plan be endorsed,
 - that the Communications Portfolio Holder be asked to assess whether a General User Satisfaction Survey should be undertaken annually.
- Minute 13** that the performance and proposed remedial action against the Service Plans for the fourth quarter of 2006/07, be noted.
- Minute 14** that the Corporate Director – Communities and Funding Coordinator be congratulated on achieving the £204,000 Big Lottery grant for play equipment in East Devon.
- Minute 15** that the Development Control Committee be asked to give consideration to improving Member training on delegated decision making, which could include the possibility of making a training video on this subject.
- Minute 16** that the report to the Executive Board and the decisions made in respect of charges for major application advice, tree advice and Member involvement in pre-app activity, be noted.
- Minute 17** that the Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan be noted.
- Minute 18** that the Task and Finish Forum Status Report be noted.

52 **Financial Strategy (2008 onwards) - key decision**

Members considered the report of the Head of Finance setting out the Council's proposed Financial Strategy for 2008 and the next five years, in compliance with good practice. The Strategy reflected the Council's objectives, and the need to achieve efficiencies and value for money, to maximize income streams, phase major projects and explore 'invest to save' opportunities. The Strategy would be reviewed annually.

52 **Financial Strategy (2008 onwards) - key decision (cont)..**

The Strategy included a five year Medium Term Financial Plan which set out the details of the assumptions and estimates involved in projecting the Council's finances. This would be continually reviewed. Members were reminded that there were always uncertainties in any budget setting process and that finances became more difficult to predict as the period covered lengthened. These assumptions and risks were identified within the Strategy and included inflation, the cost of servicing the new community, the level of grant awarded to this Council through the Local Authority Business Incentive Scheme and Planning Delivery Grant, income from Council Tax and Land Charges, Recycling and Refuse, Concessionary Fares Scheme and the Planned Maintenance Programme. With regard to the Revenue Support Grant, it was expected that the Government would build in assumed efficiency savings which would mean a reduction in grant funding in real terms.

From April 2008 the Concessionary Fares Scheme would be further extended to enable concessionaires to have free bus travel anywhere in England. The Government had not yet confirmed the methodology for allocation of funding and there was justified concern that this may not match actual expenditure.

Members were aware that the cost of recycling and refuse would have a major impact on the budget and any shortfall would be culminated year on year.

The Portfolio Holder – Resources suggested that a Task and Finish Forum should be set up to look in detail at potential 'invest to save' opportunities across the range of services. He also advised that all services would be looked at in detail through the visioning and service planning process. This would help to identify where savings could be made and where increased income could be achieved. Any enhancements to services, with associated costs, would need to have a corresponding saving elsewhere.

The Board discussed the importance of partnership working and of working closely with the town and parish councils. Any locally preferred enhancement to services already provided by the Council was likely to mean that the additional costs would have to be met by the local councils. It was suggested that local councils be advised of any cuts to services as early as possible to give them the opportunity to increase their precepts, if they felt that this was the appropriate action.

RECOMMENDED that the Financial Strategy (2008 onwards) be adopted.

*53 **Revenue and Capital Monitoring report 2007/08**

Members considered the report of the Financial Services Manager setting out the Council's overall financial position for the period 1 April 2007 to 30 June 2007. The report included details of identified budget variations within that period, how these would continue to the end of the financial year and the effect on the Council's overall Reserves and Balances. The remedial measures suggested by officers to counteract material variances were included in the report.

The Corporate Director – Economy reported that the budgets were in a relatively healthy position at this stage in the year. Car parking takings were on budget despite the poor weather over the last few months.

The Portfolio Holder – Communities advised that the Communities Portfolio had performed well during these months and should not have been reported as an area of concern. This would be corrected in the next report.

Print and Post was an area of major concern. There had been a significant overspend on the printing contract caused, in the main, by the flat rate contract. The print and post service was being put out to tender in the autumn which would help address this issue.

***53 Revenue and Capital Monitoring report 2007/08 (cont)..**

Members also noted that the vacant post within the audit section had yet to be filled and the employment of an agency worker had resulted in a minor budget overspend. Although it was acknowledged that this arrangement had cost implications, it was important to employ properly skilled persons to specialist posts and this was taking time in certain cases.

RESOLVED that the variances identified as part of the Revenue and Capital Monitoring process for the first three months of 2007/08 be noted, including the effect on the Council's Reserves and Balances.

***54 Additional staff resources for the Recycling and Refuse contract and exemption to Standing Orders for the purchase of kitchen waste containers**

Members considered the report of the Head of Street Scene Services seeking approval to increase the number of posts working on the Recycling and Refuse services from three (Waste and Recycling Officer and two support officers) to six (to include a Waste and Recycling Contracts Manager to manage the whole recycling and refuse service and two additional support officers). An increase in staff resources was also required within the Customer Service Centre to deal with a temporary initial increase in calls as the contract was rolled out. The Portfolio Holder – Street Scene advised that the increased staffing resources were essential to make sure that the trial was properly resourced. The Chief Executive explained that it was his intention to explore secondment opportunities within the Council to address the Waste Support Officer and Customer Service Centre positions.

Kitchen waste containers had been purchased to serve the trial area and Members were asked to agree to a necessary exemption to Standing Orders so that the containers could be purchased in time for the commencement of the trial. The timetable was very tight and no kitchen waste container suppliers or dealers were currently listed on Constructionline.

The importance of good, timely communication, using Plain English and appropriate diagrams, was acknowledged as vital to the process. The Leader confirmed that the media coverage during the trial period should effectively increase the recycling across the district and not just within the trial area.

RESOLVED

1. that the number of establishment posts allocated to the Recycling and Refuse services be increased from three to up to six posts, namely, one Waste and Recycling Contracts Manager and two Support Officers,
2. that authority be given to supplement the Customer Service Centre with temporary staff during the commencement of the trial scheme and that delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader regarding the duration of the cover to coincide with the implementation plan,
3. that the signed request for exemption to Standing Orders, for the reasons given in the report, and completion of the tender process be noted.

***55 University of Exeter Science Park – responses to Issues and Options report and draft Supplementary Planning Document (Preferred Options)**

Members considered the report of the Policy and Conservation Manager in respect of the above reports in response to the public consultation process. Members noted the areas of public concern, a number of which were highway issues. These had been referred to the Highways Agency and Devon County Council. The responses of these authorities were included in the Issues and Options report which set out the preferred options for the Supplementary Planning Document (SDP).

*55 **University of Exeter Science Park responses to Issues and Options report and draft Supplementary Planning Document (Preferred Options) (cont)..**

The draft SDP was recommended to be approved for public consultation. This document would provide detailed planning and design guidance for the development of the Science Park East of Exeter (Redhayes location). It also set out a vision for the Science Park in respect of its role, function and character. The maps included in the documents would be revisited so that they were clearer and easier to read. The consultation documents would be posted on the Council's web site, and advertised through a public notice in the press, to achieve widest possible coverage. There would be a six week public consultation exercise, to include a one day public exhibition on the draft SDP. Following this period, any representations submitted would be considered and the document amended if necessary and referred to Council for adoption.

Members recognised the inadequacy of the road network in the surrounding area, particularly the Exmouth to Exeter road link. People commuting from Exmouth to the growth area would need good road, rail and public transport links. Malcolm Baker, Head of Planning and Transportation at Devon County Council had offered to give a presentation to the Council on transport issues relevant to the East of Exeter and how the rest of the district related to this growth area in terms of access.

The Leader proposed that the development should be referred to as the Western Part of East Devon rather than East of Exeter. Members also discussed the naming of the Science Park and did not want this to be known as the Exeter Science Park. Members discussed the unique selling point of the Science Park and reference was made to the clear benefits of an association with the MET Office and University of Exeter.

The Leader thanked the Officers involved in this project.

RESOLVED

1. that the East Devon District Council: University of Exeter Science Park Draft Supplementary Planning Document (Preferred Options) be approved for public consultation,
2. that the Head of Planning and Countryside (following discussion with Broadclyst and Clyst Valley Ward Members) be given delegated authority to organise public consultation on the Draft Supplementary Planning Document,
3. that the offer from Malcolm Baker, Head of Planning and Transportation, Devon County Council, to give a presentation on relevant transport issues relating to the growth area be accepted and suitable arrangements made to facilitate this.

*56 **Draft Service Level Agreement – EDDC and Community Council of Devon.**

Members considered the report of the Corporate Director – Communities setting out the proposed Service Level Agreement with the Community Council of Devon (CDD), which ran some of this Council's services for rural communities such as Parish Planning and work on use and sustainability of community halls. The agreement was mainly to confirm and clarify the arrangement which has been in place between the two organisations for many years.

*56 **Draft Service Level Agreement – EDDC and Community Council of Devon (cont)..**

RESOLVED

that the Council commits to the Community Council for Devon for 3 years through signing the Service Level Agreement thus confirming and clarifying existing arrangements and recognising potential links to the Local Development Framework programmes.

Chairman Date