

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Board held at Knowle, Sidmouth on Wednesday, 16 August 2006

Present:

Councillors:

Miss S M Randall Johnson (Chairman)
R G Franklin (Vice Chairman)

P A Diviani
Miss J M Elson
S C Luxton
J B Nicholson
Mrs P A Stott
A J Wilkinson

Also Present

Councillors:

Miss V Ash
P W Burrows
G P Chamberlain
D J Cox
R Giles
M J L Green
D R H Hull
J A Knight

Mrs A E Liverton
G K Liverton
R Mudge
Mrs F I Newth
Mrs H E Parr
A W J Reed
T G Reeves

Apologies

Councillors

S Hughes
A T Moulding

Apology from non- Board member

Councillor Dr H W Waterworth

The meeting started at 5.30 pm and ended at 7.55 pm.

The Leader had given her apologies as she anticipated arriving slightly late. She arrived during agenda item 8 – Regional Spatial Strategy on which she had already advised she would be declaring an interest. As a result she waited outside the Council Chamber until item 8 had been discussed and then assumed Chairmanship of the meeting. The Vice-Chairman was in the Chair until after item 8.

***40 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Board held on 19 July 2006 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

***41 Exclusion of the Public**

RESOLVED

that the classification given to the documents to be submitted to the Board be confirmed and that the reports relating to exempt information be dealt with under Part B of the agenda.

***42 Forward Plan**

The contents of the Forward Plan for the period 1 August 2006 to 30 November 2006 were noted.

***43 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.

***44 Meetings of the Scrutiny and Corporate Overview Committees**

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, held on 26 July 2006, and of the Corporate Overview, held on 3 August 2006, were noted.

RESOLVED

(1) that the following decisions be noted:

- (a) Scrutiny Minute 10 that the issue of older people's access to services be discussed at the meeting to be held on 25 October 2006 to consider rural deprivation, which would include issues for both younger and older people.
- (b) Scrutiny Minute 12 that the draft forward programme for the Scrutiny Committee be agreed subject to the item on Effectiveness of Member Involvement being dealt with at the meeting on 20 September 2006.
- (c) Overview Minute 15
 - that Sustainable Construction and Energy Efficiency be discussed further at a future meeting of the Corporate Overview Committee
 - that the article 'Focus shifts to energy efficiency in old homes' from Planning – the Professional Journal for the Royal Town Planning Institute be circulated to all Members for information.

(2) that the following recommendations be approved:

- (a) Scrutiny Minute 9
 - that all Members be trained in planning issues and that holding training sessions after Council meetings would be a good opportunity;
 - that the Committee continues to closely monitor Performance Indicator L12 - average void period for council homes;
 - that the Corporate Director – Central Services investigate Indicator BV204 - planning appeals allowed, to find out how many appeals allowed were from delegated decisions and how many on decisions made by Committee;
 - that the Corporate Director – Central Services review the Performance Indicator descriptions for clarity;
 - that the Corporate Director – Central Services circulate the Audit Commission description of the collection method for BVPI 2b.
- (b) Scrutiny Minute 10 that the Corporate Director – Communities produce more written information for older people about the services available.
- (c) Scrutiny Minute 11 that the recommendations of the Fees and Charges Task and Finish Forum be accepted subject to changes detailed in the minutes.

***44 Meetings of the Scrutiny and Corporate Overview Committees (cont)..**

- (d) Overview that a sustainability seminar be arranged in the
Minute 15 autumn to which all Members of the Council will be
encouraged to attend.

***45 Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) (Key decision)**

Members considered the report of the Head of Planning and Countryside Services in respect of the draft Regional Spatial Strategy which had been produced by the South West Regional Assembly. The document reflected a new spatial and economical approach to planning. It would impact on the future of the South West for the next 20 years and responded to the Government's challenge to build sustainable communities. The closing date for the consultation exercise on the draft document was 30 August 2006.

The Vice Chairman and the Corporate Director – Environment stressed the importance of the document and the impact that it would have on the future development of the district. When approved, the Strategy would provide guidance on the way in which planning applications were determined.

The document was under-pinned with various assumptions in respect of economic and population growth rates. The Corporate Director – Environment drew Members' attention to the functional approach adopted by the Strategy with most of new development to be focused at the strategically significant settlements as this would encourage a better balance between homes and jobs. Exeter had been identified as a strategic settlement and would take most of the local growth. The provision of employment land within Exeter would have to be reviewed during the life of the RSS to make sure that this met the development needs of the city. Other settlements would have an appropriate level of development reflecting their role and function, significance locally and within the sub-regional context. There would be local demand for affordable housing and to accommodate key workers but not all settlements would wish to expand significantly. Some settlements had the characteristics of dormitory towns and this would need to be addressed to achieve sustainability.

The report dealt with each section of the document and included individual recommendations throughout. It was proposed that the report would be amalgamated to form East Devon District Council's overall response to South West Regional Assembly's consultation exercise.

Major challenges faced by the Region were noted. The Region needed to develop economically and in terms of population whilst maintaining quality of life and distinctiveness. Climate change and sustainability were recognised as intrinsic cross-cutting issues. The draft document included Government targets for improved energy efficiency and reduction in CO2 emissions. It was suggested that the Government should be lobbied to strengthen their policies and offer more help to local authorities so that an ecological balance could be achieved.

Members agreed that investment in infrastructure needed to be in place to facilitate growth within settlements. Adequate transport links were key to growth. Members stressed the importance of achieving the dualling of the A303 and passing loops on the Waterloo and Salisbury railway lines as the area needed two strategic road and rail links.

Members discussed the projected size of the new community and felt that the number of dwellings proposed in the Strategy, 6,500, could not be achieved without significantly compromising Exeter Airport, or other interest of acknowledged importance such as the erosion of the Green Wedge around Rockbeare. The size of the community could be re-assessed during its development.

***45 Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) (Key decision) (cont)..**

Members also discussed the housing total and distribution in other towns and the possible implications of a reduced housing allocation for the remainder of the District. The implication for Axminster and affordable housing across the District was highlighted. It was suggested that over-allocating housing requirements throughout the district would give settlements within the district the opportunity to expand to meet local need. The local authority would need to be more innovative in achieving an adequate provision of affordable housing. This should include a proportion for life-time housing so that people did not have to move when their circumstances changed, for example, the need to use a wheelchair.

Members discussed the section on waste handling and would welcome the provision of waste handling sites closer to the district to reduce the time and cost of transporting waste to existing sites.

RESOLVED

- (1) that the formal response of East Devon District Council, detailed below, be made to the draft Regional Spatial Strategy as published by the South West Regional Assembly,
- (2) that the Regional Assembly be requested to provide training for Members on the ways in which they can help achieve carbon neutral development through planning,
- (3) that local MPs be asked to lobby for the dualling of the A303 and the creation of passing loops on the Salisbury and Waterloo lines for the strategic benefit of the area.

Details of response to the draft Regional Spatial Strategy:**(1) Section One – A Sustainable Future for the South West**

The general thrust of this section is supported although some of the targets will be challenging to meet without more commitment on behalf of the Government to statutory standards for sustainable construction.

(2) Section Two – The Context for the Spatial Strategy

The functional approach proposed by the RSS is a logical way forward. There is a need to understand how each of the individual settlements in an area works rather than simply referring to its population base as the basis for planning for the future of that settlement. This has clear implications however for villages in rural areas and how their future would be mapped out.

The identification that the affordable housing issues in the South West are more complex than identified in the Barker Report is notable. Clearly a more complex solution is required on a major scale to overcome the disparity between income and 'ability to buy housing' is called for. The use of exception type policies in relation to bigger settlements i.e. over 3,000 population, may be appropriate for example.

Where growth is allocated, mechanisms for matching investment in infrastructure must be in place and this will be as applicable to settlements outside the principal urban areas.

*45 **Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) (Key decision) (cont)..****Details of response to the draft Regional Spatial Strategy:****(3) Section Three – The Spatial Strategy and Guidance for the Scale and Location of Development**

Concentrating the majority of growth in housing and associated development on a limited number of settlements rather than a strategy based on more dispersed growth pattern is clearly the more sustainable approach to development distribution. East Devon sits within the “realised potential” zone which runs through the East of Devon, through Somerset, Dorset, up through Bristol and on to Cheltenham & Gloucester. The principle that where dormitory relationships exist between the Strategically Significant Cities and Towns (SSCT) and other towns and villages nearby is not exacerbated by development proposals contained within local development documents is also supported.

**(4) Development Policy B – Development at Market Towns
Development Policy C – Development in Small Towns and Villages**

The identification that it is more important to focus development where services already exist rather than an attempt to put in housing in the hope of supporting failing services is an appropriate way forward. The idea that adding open market housing to villages will make them more sustainable is identified as misconceived as it is the service provision available in the market and smaller towns that is the valuable resource which should drive the future allocation for housing and other development.

There may be some debate as to whether or not guidance should be provided at this level of policy development on the future of villages and hamlets not classified as Policy C settlements. However this is much more a matter for the Local Development Document (LDD) to address but should be based on the principal set out in the RSS of the function of the settlement both for its own inhabitants and for those of its hinterland. These days many villages functions wholly and solely as residential settlements with little or no facilities available. The future of any facilities that do exist has a less direct relationship with the number of houses in that community than with the type of service and quality of service provided.

(5) Development Policy I – Release, Redevelopment and Disposal of Land

All the principles enshrined in these policies are supported although the ability to deliver 50% of new development on brown field land is going to prove testing in East Devon with the advent of the New Community on green field land.

*45

Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) (Key decision) (cont)..

Details of response to the draft Regional Spatial Strategy:

(6) Exeter Strategy and land to the east of Exeter

The strategy for the Exeter area that recognises the role of Exeter as a key economic driver of the region's economy and in turn the employment land provision that is required to support this future role be supported. In view of the more recent successful performance of the Exeter economy a mid term review of job creation in the Exeter travel to work area (TTWA) should be undertaken to establish whether it may be necessary to identify a further strategic employment allocation.

The overall growth assumption of 18,500 dwellings for the Exeter Urban Area be supported.

The RSS establish a requirement for an early review of housing numbers in the Exeter Urban Area taking into account the result of a mid term review of economic growth.

Objection be made to the provision of 6,500 dwellings at Cranbrook on the grounds that such an expansion can only be achieved by expanding south of the former A30 undermining structure and local plan policies designed to prevent coalescence between settlements, namely Rockbeare and the new community, and threaten the successful operation and expansion of Exeter Airport by potentially building dwellings in proximity to the airport where future residents could be expected to object to existing and future operations associated with the running of an airport including engine testing.

The principle of expanding the new community to accommodate a significant level of housing growth be supported and that an upper figure of 5,000 dwellings be provided at the new community to the north of the former A30 up to 2021.

The new community be acknowledged as the first priority for accommodating housing growth in the Exeter Urban Area within East Devon beyond 2021 but in the absence of detailed assessments of how such expansion can be handled without harming interests of acknowledged importance the additional 1,500 dwellings identified for the new community be added to the total of 1,500 dwellings required for the Area of Search K to be brought forward in a subsequent review of the RSS.

(7) Housing Distribution and Housing Totals for East Devon

The implications for housing numbers and distribution for East Devon outside of the Exeter Urban Area be noted and the figures included in Table 4.1 of the report be supported.

45 Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) (Key decision) (cont)..*(8) Towns within the Exeter Area of Influence**

The proposal that there is a need to secure improved self containment in the towns within the wider sub-region is welcomed and particularly the provision of employment land and the creation of jobs to reduce commuting by car. However the delivery of employment land in these areas may well prove problematic and highly contentious and may also be dependent upon infrastructure support particularly transport infrastructure. Public transport enhancements to those Towns within the Exeter Area of Influence should be prioritised.

Policy SR18 requires that the Local Development Documents of the authorities around Exeter should facilitate culture, tourism and retail developments and enhancements for Exeter although how and why this should be done is unclear. The greater objective is to create self containment for the surrounding towns and villages under the sustainability theme.

(9) Section Five – Regional Approach to Transport

Support the regional approach to transport on the basis that the key infrastructure requirements set out in the Exeter sub-regional strategy statement are taken forward and that the Council supports the dualling of the A303 and the creation of 2 passing loops on the Salisbury and Waterloo railway lines to provide the area with 2 strategic rail and road links.

(10) Section Six – Harnessing the benefits of population growth and managing the implications of population change

This policy is supported but it needs to go further in looking at the wider delivery of affordable homes by alternative providers to Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and to consider the delivery of exceptions sites for settlements of over 3,000 houses. The RSL has identified that simply building higher levels of market housing actually attracts more commuters, second homes owners or retired people from outside the region. The need for more creative solutions is identified but not expanded upon. This is a notable omission. The RSS could be much more creative in this field.

(11) Urban density

Whilst recognising the reasoning behind raising densities in urban areas the figure of 50dph will not be appropriate in every urban area. The character of the Cities and Towns designated as Strategically Significant Cities and Towns varies considerably. Minimum densities should be determined by individual Local Development Document informed by character appraisals that allows local circumstances to inform urban form and density. The wording of the policy should reflect Development Policy F “within urban areas or urban extensions.....consideration should be given to increasing dwelling density to in excess of 50dph.” Prescribing a density figure is ill conceived and could lead to public dissatisfaction with the character of developments.

*45 **Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) (Key decision) (cont)**

Details of response to the draft Regional Spatial Strategy:

(12) **Gypsy and Travel accommodation requirements**

Policy TG1 is supported.

(13) **Policy G11 – Networks Green Infrastructure**

This District is already commissioning with its partners a Green Infrastructure Assessment of the area East of Exeter to inform the future planning of the area so that development works around the environment rather than imposing itself upon it. Consequently this policy is strongly supported.

(14) **Section Seven – Enhancing Distinctive Environments and Cultural Life**

Policy ENV2 is supported.

(15) **Policy F1 Flood Risk**

Policy F1 is supported

(16) **Energy and Renewable heat targets**

The policies on provision of waste sites and provision of waste facilities and waste hierarchy are supported.

(17) **Section Eight – Enhancing Economic Prosperity and Quality of Employment Opportunity**

The requirement to assess the supply of and demand for, employment in the District is supported including co-operation with adjacent local authorities.

(18) **Tourism policies**

The principle of directing major tourism attractions to the Strategically Significant Cities and Towns in policy T03 is supported.

(The Leader declared a prejudicial interest in this item as an employee of Flybe, based at Exeter Airport, and remained outside the Chamber during the discussion and debate).

*46 **Quarterly monitoring of the Corporate Strategy – first quarter 2006/07**

Members considered the report of the Corporate Director – Central Services setting out the quarterly monitoring of the Corporate Strategy. The report detailed the progress in implementing the four priorities of the Corporate Strategy during the first quarter 2006/07.

Members noted progress against the identified Performance Indicators which compared performance in the first quarter with year end 2005/06. Corporate Directors had provided a commentary on the statistics, giving an outline of achievement and action taken to overcome any areas where performance had not achieved target. The Board felt that the report had been presented in a helpful way and was well received.

*46 **Quarterly monitoring of the Corporate Strategy – first quarter 2006/07 (cont)..**

RESOLVED that the progress in implementing the four priorities of the Corporate Strategy during the first quarter of 2006/07 be noted.

*47 **Monitoring of progress with Service Plans in 2005/06**

Members considered the report of the Policy Manager giving details of progress on the actions in the Service Plans for 2005/08 made during the last financial year (2005/06) for monitoring purposes. Members welcomed the progress identified for the year which showed that the Council had performed well overall.

RESOLVED that the progress with the actions in the Service Plans for 2005/08 made during the last financial year (2005/06) and the proposed remedial action be noted.

*48 **2005-06 backward look efficiency statement**

Members considered the report of the Corporate Director – Economy setting out the statement to be provided to the Department for Communities and Local Government which outlined the efficiencies achieved in the previous financial year. Members noted that the return detailed savings in excess of the target of £537,000.

Financial and service planning had identified opportunities to make further savings in accordance with the Gershon agenda and achieve efficiency savings totally £1.55m over a 3 year period from April 2005.

The Board congratulated Officers on the savings made.

RESOLVED that the efficiency savings achieved in the previous financial year and the further savings to be made in accordance with the Gershon agenda be noted.

*49 **Leisure East Devon – loan facility and request for financial assistance**

Members considered the report of the Corporate Director – Economy in respect of a request from Leisure East Devon for the Council to maintain the loan facility for the duration of the 5 year period of the agreement in the event of the loan being repaid prematurely.

The loan of £300,000 over 5 years had been provided to assist the new Trust. Members were advised that the Trust was anxious to repay the loan at the earliest opportunity but for the loan facility to be kept in place for the remainder of the 5 years in case they needed to raise funds in the future.

In addition, the Council was asked for financial assistance towards the cost of upgrading the Exmouth Sports Centre. The Trust had identified the need to improve the facility to retain its customer base.

The Council's property condition survey of the function room had identified the need to undertake certain maintenance works.

- RESOLVED**
- (1) that the loan facility be made available to Leisure East Devon, in accordance with previously agreed terms, until 31 December 2010,
 - (2) that the cost of redecoration and carpeting of the present function room be funded by the Council from the planned maintenance budget.

*50 **Refuse and Recycling Project Team - recommendations**

Members considered the report of the Head of Streetscene Services which set out the recommendations of the meeting of the Refuse and Recycling Project Team held on 22 June 2006. The agreement of the Executive Board was needed to take the project forward.

RESOLVED

- (1) that the name of the project team be changed to the Recycling and Refuse Project Team,
- (2) that the following bin sizes be agreed (where practicable)
 - (a) that a 180 litre bin be provided to all households throughout East Devon for the purpose of general waste.
 - (b) that in certain circumstances households be permitted to obtain a larger or smaller wheeled bin if applied for. These would be a 140 litre bin for small families or people who live on their own and a 240 litre bin for a family of two parents and two or more siblings.
- (3) that the larger scale trial be commenced in an area yet to be decided with appropriate media coverage and communication to households which acknowledged the trials carried out to date,
- (4) that the system of issuing recycling boxes to continue as at present with a single 55 litre box – householders with additional recycling which will not fit into the box can put it into carrier bags and place these by the box,
- (5) that the following action be taken in respect of contamination of recycling boxes:
 - (a) the cessation of collection services to be at the discretion of the Waste and Recycling Officer,
 - (b) when recycling is in place for 100% of properties, the Council to take a tougher stance, including enforcement action if necessary, towards householders contaminating recycling boxes.

51 **Communications Task and Finish Forum Action Plan**

Members considered the report of the Corporate Director – Central Services setting out the action plan which would progress the recommendations of the Communications Task and Finish Forum. The action plan also included four further recommendations which had been agreed by the Communications Think Tank when Members considered the ideas from Town and Parish Councils on improving communications.

The Task and Finish Forum and Officers were thanked for their excellent work.

RECOMMENDED

that the Communications Task and Finish action plan be approved subject to Councillors' home addresses being deleted from the Council's web site; Councillors' e-mail addresses and telephone numbers would continue to be published.

***52 Application for New Growth Point Status**

Members considered the report of the Corporate Director – Environment in respect of the Exeter area's bid for New Growth Point Status. East Devon was acting as lead authority and had submitted a bid on behalf of the District, Exeter City Council and Devon County Council for the Exeter Principal Urban Area. Members were advised that the bid had been received by Government and was receiving consideration. Areas which were successful would benefit from additional support through the Comprehensive Spending Review. The aim of the initiative was to increase housing building rates to ease pressures on first time buyers and meet national growing housing needs.

RESOLVED that the progress of the bid for New Growth Point Status for the Exeter Principal Urban Area be noted.

***53 Standing Orders Exemptions – replacement doors**

Members considered the report of the Housing Services Manager seeking agreement to the exception to Standing Order 1.12 for sourcing suitable companies, who are not registered with Constructionline, to submit tenders for replacement doors to Council dwellings.

RESOLVED that exemption from Standing Order 1.12 be accepted to allow tenders to be invited from specialist contractors not registered with Constructionline.

***54 Exclusion of the Public**

RESOLVED that under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting as exempt information, of the description set out in the agenda is likely to be disclosed.

***55 Home Safeguard – Review of Operators' Payments**

Members considered the report of the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion in respect of remuneration proposals for the Home Safeguard Operators' night shift payments which recognised that Operators no longer worked a 'sleeping night' due to the number of calls received throughout the night shift.

RESOLVED that the revised remuneration scheme for Central Control Operators' night shifts, detailed in the report to the Board and the adverse impact on the Home Safeguard budget be noted.

***56 The Church House Trust – loan request**

Members considered the report of the Corporate Director – Economy in respect of a loan request received from the Church House Trust.

RESOLVED that, subject to The Church House Trust's application for lottery funding being successful, a loan of £200,000, repayable with interest over 25 year and secured against the freehold of Church House, be granted.

Chairman Date