

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Board held at Knowle, Sidmouth on Wednesday, 4 April 2007

Present:

Councillors:

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

P A Diviani
Miss J M Elson
S Hughes
A T Moulding
Mrs P A Stott
A J Wilkinson

Also Present

Councillors:

Miss V Ash	M J L Green
T A Cope	Mrs A E Liverton
D J Cox	G K Liverton
Mrs C E Drew	Mrs F I Newth
A R Giles	Mrs H E Parr
C F A Gibbings	

Apology

Councillor J B Nicholson

Apology from non- Board Member

Councillor P W Burrows

The meeting started at 5.30 pm and ended at 7.35 pm.

***187 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Board held on 14 March 2007 were confirmed and signed as a true record subject to the final paragraph of the preamble at Minute 179 being amended to include the woodland element of Plot D.

***188 Exclusion of the Public**

RESOLVED

that subject to agenda item 17 (exemption to contract standing orders for the supply and installation of specialist skate equipment) being taken in Part A of the agenda, the classification given to the documents to be submitted to the Board be confirmed and the reports relating to exempt information be dealt with under Part B of the agenda.

***189 Forward Plan**

The contents of the Forward Plan for the period 1 April to 31 July 2007 were noted.

***190 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.

*191 **Minutes of the meetings of the Housing Review Board, Scrutiny and Corporate Overview Committees**

The minutes of the meetings of the Housing Review Board (8 March), the Scrutiny Committee (21 March) and of the Corporate Overview Committee (29 March) were noted and discussed.

The Chairman of the Housing Review Board, Councillor D Cox, spoke on Minute 65: Government Office South West option appraisal 'sign off' report. All sections of the report had been signed off and the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion was to write in a positive way in response to points raised and would ask for clarification on certain issues. Councillor Wilkinson said that the role of Chairman of the Review Board was a key position and that Councillor Cox, the Board and the Housing Team had helped to put the Council in a strong position. The involvement and active role of tenants on the Board was seen as a positive step.

The Scrutiny Committee (minute 60) and the Corporate Overview Committee (minute 37) had made different recommendations in respect of the interim report of the Member Involvement in the Political, Advisory and Decision Making Arrangements of the Council Task and Finish Forum. It was appropriate that consideration of the preferred Committee Structure be referred to the Annual Meeting of the Council on 23 May 2007 for consideration.

RESOLVED (1) that the following decisions be noted:

Scrutiny Minute 59 that further discussion on the provision of a pre application planning advice service be postponed pending receipt of the report by the Head of Planning and Countryside Services.

Corporate Overview Minute 39 that the review of the work of the Overview Committee be noted with affordable housing and climate change issues being included in the 2007/08 Forward Plan for further consideration.

CO Minute 40 that the draft Forward Plan for the work of the Corporate Overview Committee for 2007/08 be noted and the additional items raised at the meeting be added.

CO Minute 41

- that the report of the House of Commons Committee and Local Government Committee on Coastal Towns be welcomed,
- that the errors of fact made in Annex A of the report of the Select Committee on Coastal Towns on the visit to Exmouth be noted.

CO Minute 42 that a Task and Finish Forum be established to consider Beach Concessions in three broad areas, namely:

- Office practices and procedures associated with the granting of beach concessions,
- The terms and conditions attached to beach concessions, including the level of fees charged,
- The arrangements for monitoring adherence to the terms and conditions of beach concessions granted.

*191 **Minutes of the meetings of the Housing Review Board, Scrutiny and Corporate Overview Committees (cont)..**

(2) that the following recommendations be approved,

- Housing Review Board Minute 65**
- that the recommendations contained in the Government Office South West (GOSW) option appraisal 'sign off' report be incorporated into the Service Plan and updated Housing Strategy Statement, where not already included, and
 - that the Housing Review Board seek some further clarification on parts of the GOSW analysis of the stock options appraisal.

HRB Minute 66 that the preparations being undertaken for the Audit Commission housing inspection be noted.

HRB Minute 67 that it be noted that the Housing Review Board:

- adopts and supports the back to basics work approach,
- encourages and supports tenant/officer working groups, and
- promotes the concept of Board Member Champions.

- HRB Minute 68**
- that the recommendations contained in the action plan, appended to the report, aimed at improving the management and use of community centres be approved;
 - that the Pastoral Care Service lease at Clayton House Community Centre be renewed;
 - that the Council be asked to open discussions with Health and Social Care for an improved community facility at Weycroft Hall;
 - that in the cases of hardship the Housing Review Board consider applications for concessions and be given the discretion to waive charges.

- HRB Minute 69**
- that the options for a revision to the Cash Incentive Scheme be approved subject to a more flexible approach being taken regarding which properties were allocated and a less prescriptive approach to how relocation expenses were spent;
 - that the Housing Strategy Unit market the proposals with potential users of the scheme, prior to implementation.

HRB Minute 70 that the improvement and modernisation programmes set out in the report to the Housing Review Board be approved, taking into consideration the potential variation between the units projected in the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and what could be achieved in view of current and future pricing.

*191 **Minutes of the meetings of the Housing Review Board, Scrutiny and Corporate Overview Committees (cont)..**

HRB Minute 72 that the performance on repairs to Council homes be noted, subject to future reports containing all performance broken down on a contractor basis.

HRB Minute 73 that the satisfaction levels in the report be noted and a study be carried out to investigate the low levels of satisfaction in Honiton, with a report being referred back to a future meeting of the Housing Review Board.

Scrutiny Minute 55

- that the Poltimore House Trust be requested to submit a feasibility study within two months,
- that East Devon District Council should not commit any further funds to the restoration of Poltimore House bearing in mind the overall costs, valuation shortfall and open ended nature of the project.

Scrutiny Minute 65

- that the Maritime and Coastguard Agency be invoiced for the hire of the television for the initial two month period;
- that the Scrutiny Committee receive a report within 6 months on the total official usage made of the television.

(3) that the following be forwarded to Council and recommended for approval

HRB Minute 71 that the improvement voucher scheme proposals outlined in the report to the Housing Review Board be agreed.

(4) that the following recommendations of the Executive Board, as a result of consideration of the minutes of the Scrutiny and Corporate Overview Committees, be referred to Council:

- (a) that charges currently made for non commercial events held on Council owned land be retained with Portfolio Holders using their delegated authority to waive the charges when an appropriate case is put by Officers,
- (b) that the Council, at its Annual Meeting in May, considers proposed changes to the Committee Structure,
- (c) that planning training be mandatory for all members of the Development Control Committees and timetabled to accommodate the needs of all Councillors, with other Councillors, not on the Development Control Committee, being encouraged to take part in the training to develop their knowledge and understanding of planning procedure and regulations.

***192 Revenue and Capital Monitoring report 2006/07 – Month 11**

Members considered the report of the Financial Services Manager in respect of the Council's overall financial position at Month 11. The budget variations had been identified within the month together with an assessment of how these variations would continue until the end of the financial year and the subsequent effect on the Council's overall reserves and balances.

Members noted that the position of the General Fund had deteriorated since last month largely due to there now being a more accurate financial picture including the printing over-spend and additional start up costs associated with the Customer Service Centre. The Portfolio Holder – Communications advised that a number of steps were being taken to reduce the amount of printing required and that Councillors and Officers would be actively encouraged to use electronic means of communication when this was appropriate. As previously agreed, the identified surplus on the General Fund of £57,620 would be used to create an Invest to Save Fund.

The Portfolio Holder – Resources advised that the Council's investment income had exceeded target despite earlier concerns which had been addressed with Investec. The monthly reporting of the Council's financial position had meant that any problems could be identified at an early stage and appropriate action taken.

RESOLVED that the variances identified as part of the Revenue and Capital Monitoring process for Month 11 of 2006/07 be noted, including the effect on the Council's Reserves and Balances.

***193 Performance Monitoring report – February 2007**

Members considered the report of the Policy Manager setting out performance information for February 2007. Members noted the Performance Indicators (PIs) which showed variation in January and those showing up as areas of concern. Overall, the Council was in a favourable position and performing well. The Job Evaluation process had not had the feared negative impact on BV12 (Working days lost due to sickness absence). This PI continued to have 'excellent' status.

RESOLVED that the performance and proposed remedial action against key performance indicators for February 2007 be noted.

***194 Tackling Homelessness – a progress report**

Members considered the report of the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion setting out information on the effectiveness of the housing advice and homelessness services provided by the Housing Needs Team.

The Homelessness Act 2002 required local authorities to develop a more strategic approach to tackling and preventing homelessness. The Act also extended the priority need categories. This authority adopted its Homelessness Strategy in 2003 which recognised homeless prevention as the most positive approach.

The Portfolio Holder – Communities drew Members' attention to the number of measures that the Council had introduced to address the problem of homelessness. These measures included providing more housing options and empowering applicants to resolve their own housing problems. A Housing Needs Team now operated in Exmouth Town Hall and was dealing with 50-60 customers each week. Another service introduced was a district wide 'options' service set up to help resolve housing and homelessness issues. These and other measures detailed in the report were beginning to make a difference in reducing the number of homeless approaches received and less use was being made of temporary accommodation.

***194 Tackling Homelessness – a progress report (cont)..**

Councillor G Liverton spoke of the helpfulness of the Housing Needs Team and thanked them for their efforts and courteousness.

An associated benefit of reducing homelessness was that savings of £50,000 had been identified in the budget for 2007/08. These savings would be used to progress other initiatives to further reduce homelessness.

RESOLVED that the progress being made in relating to preventing and tackling homelessness be noted and the overall approach being taken endorsed.

***195 Criminal Damage Action Plan**

Members welcomed the Action Plan which had been circulated prior to the meeting and the work undertaken by the East and Mid Devon Community Safety Partnership and the Antisocial Behaviour and Community Safety Co-Ordinator. The Partnership recognised that reducing the incidents of criminal damage would dramatically reduce crime figures and have a positive impact on fear of crime. The Devon and Cornwall Constabulary had undertaken a Strategic Assessment of the main problem areas and when criminal damage took place. The peak times for criminal damage were:

- ❑ when young people leave their schools at the end of the day and cause damage to areas around the schools, and,
- ❑ late at night - midnight to 3 am.

Steps taken by the community including taxi marshals and Christians Together 'chill out' initiatives were noted.

The Chief Executive advised that the Council was in a position to take steps to address the end of school day problems by increasing the presence of Street Scene staff in key areas, for example, in Phear Park. It was expected that the Government's proposal to extend the school day would have a positive impact on the problem. After school clubs would also help as would improved and more flexible school transport provision to support after school activities.

RESOLVED that the Criminal Damage Action Plan be welcomed and steps to be taken by East Devon District Council to reduce the associated problems be noted.

***196 Warren View Sports Ground – Capital Programme progress report**

Members considered the report of the Principal Engineer in respect of the Warren View Sports Ground. The authority had worked with the Environment Agency to address the ground condition problems and a phased approach had been agreed. Tenders had been invited to carry out the specified works which would enable the works to be started in May and completed before the start of the new season in August/September 2007.

RESOLVED that the progress and developments in respect of the Warren View Sports Ground, as detailed in the report, be noted.

***197 Exemption to Standing Order for purchase of Grounds Maintenance Machinery**

Members considered the report of the Head of Streetscene setting out the reasons for an exemption from Standing Order for the purchase of specialist equipment for which there were no suitable suppliers listed on Constructionline or OGC Buying Solutions. Tenders had been sent to seven local Horticultural Machinery suppliers and the lowest bids had been accepted.

- *197 **Exemption to Standing Order for purchase of Grounds Maintenance Machinery (cont)..**
- RESOLVED** that the exemption from Standing Orders to purchase Grounds Maintenance Machinery and the reasons given for this exemption be approved.
- *198 **National Non-Domestic Rates: Application from Axminster Museum**
Members considered the report of the NNDR Team Leader in respect of an application received from Axminster Museum Charity Bookshop for discretionary rate relief as set out in the report. The application was supported by the Axminster Chamber of Commerce and Industry.
- RESOLVED** that discretionary rate relief, as set out in the report to the Board, be granted to the Axminster Museum Charity Bookshop.
- (Councillor A Moulding declared a prejudicial interest (as a Member of the Axminster Heritage Committee which was in the process of taking over responsibility for the Axminster Museum) and left the Chamber during the discussion.)
- *199 **Exemption to Contract Standing Orders**
Members considered the report of the Head of Street Scene Services seeking approval for Contract Standing Orders to be waived so that specialist companies not registered on Constructionline could be invited to tender for skate park equipment.
- RESOLVED** that Contract Standing Orders 1.27 (a), 1.27 (c) and 1.30 be waived and companies not currently on Constructionline be invited to tender given the specialist nature of the work.
- *200 **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 on the agenda is likely to be disclosed and on balance the public interest is in discussing the items in private session (Part B).
- *201 **Leisure East Devon – Annual report**
The LED Annual Report and financial statements for year ended 31 December 2006 had been circulated to Board Members with the agenda together with the LED Business Plan I January 2007 – 31 December 2009, the Marketing Plan 2007 – 2009 and Staff bulletin.
- The members of the Executive Management Leisure East Devon gave a presentation on LED activities, its current and projected position and marketing plan.
- Members were advised that LED had out-performed its budget last year and aimed to deliver further improvements to its customers. The marketing plan recognised the increased competition from other providers and the need to maintain the present level of service and was looking at how further income could be generated.
- The Chief Executive of LED thanked the Council for its continued support.
- The Leader thanked the Executive Management Team for the comprehensive, detailed and encouraging report.

*201 **Leisure East Devon – Annual report (cont)..**

The Portfolio Holder – Resources praised the efforts of the Trust acknowledging that maintaining and extending the service was a challenge.

Councillor D Cox, who was a member of the LED Board, said that the LED team was very professional with a determination to succeed. It was well managed with good financial controls and a sound business plan.

The Executive Management Team answered questions raised by Members and noted suggestions made, including the changing role of the Advisory Forum, possible funding and business opportunities and sustainability issues.

RESOLVED that the annual report of Leisure East Devon be received and the business and marketing plan noted.

Chairman Date