

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Board held at Knowle, Sidmouth on Wednesday, 10 May 2006

Present: Councillors:
Miss S M Randall Johnson (Chairman)
R G Franklin (Vice-Chairman)

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

Also Present Councillors:

Miss V Ash	Ms S M Merritt
P W Burrows	R Mudge
D G Button	Mrs F I Newth
G P Chamberlain	A W J Reed
T A Cope	T G Reeves
C F A Gibbings	Mrs M A Rogers
A R Giles	Mrs E E Wragg
M J L Green	S C Wragg
J A Knight	

The meeting started at 5.30 pm and ended at 7.42 pm.

***209 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Board held on 12 April 2006, were confirmed and signed as a true record subject to minute 196 being corrected to show Councillor Miss J M Elson as a Licensed Taxi Driver and not a Private Hire Operator as printed.

***210 Post Office Card Accounts**

The Chairman drew Members' attention to a copy letter from the Department for Work and Pensions circulated at the meeting. It acknowledged the Council's letter concerning the Post Office card accounts. The Leader advised that the Council would continue to take action to maintain and increase the viability of our post offices.

***211 Exclusion of the Public**

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

***212 Forward Plan**

The contents of the Forward Plan for the period 1 May 2006 to 31 August 2006 were noted.

The Corporate Director – Environment advised that the Local Plan Inspector's reports had already been considered by the Development Control Committee at its meeting on 14 March and the Special Meeting of the Council on 22 March 2006. The final draft of the Local Plan would be referred to the meeting of Development Control on 6 June. On 14 June 2006, the final version of the Plan would be referred to a Special Meeting of the Council for adoption.

***213 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.

***214 Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee**

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, held on 18 April 2006, were noted.

Councillor Giles, who had Chaired the Communications Task and Finish Forum was thanked for the useful work carried out. Members agreed that the final report was positive helpful and well thought out. The recommendations had been set out in a clear and useful way.

Councillor Giles thanked those involved in the Task and Finish Forum for their valuable contribution. The brief of the Task and Finish Forum had been to see what steps could be taken to improve internal and external Council communications. The exercise had involved Councillors, Officers and Parish/Town Councils and had looked at all aspects of communication. Many of the recommendations contained in the final report of the Task and Finish Forum had little cost implication.

The Portfolio Holder – Communication raised a number of issues in the report and asked that Executive Board Members continue to receive paper copies of the Scrutiny and Corporate Overview agendas. He supported the early installation of permanent projection equipment for use during Council meetings and emphasised that use of a strap line was on the livery of new vehicles, equipment and street furniture only and not on existing. It was later suggested that the strap line could be ‘an EDDC service’. The Portfolio Holder also spoke strongly in favour of introducing web casting, not only of Council meetings but also to broadcast Council news. He suggested that it would be ideal to trial web casting during Local Democracy Week. Members discussed the cost of web-casting and questioned if this was a priority at this stage.

There was detailed debate around recommendation 13 – that all Members commenting to the media direct on major issues should inform the Communications Officer. It was suggested that Members could benefit from training in dealing with the media.

The Board supported the recommendations in principle and felt that an action plan should be prepared and referred to a future meeting to show how these recommendations would be implemented.

- RESOLVED**
- (1) that the recommendations of the Communications Task and Finish Forum be approved in principle with an action plan being referred to a future meeting of the Board to set out how the recommendations could be implemented,
 - (2) that the decision to include ‘items for discussion at the next meeting’ on future agendas of the Scrutiny Committee as a standard item be noted. (Minute 28 refers)

***215 East Devon Concessionary Fares Scheme**

Members considered the report of Corporate Director – Economy in respect of a proposal to offer additional destinations to residents of East Devon under the Concessionary Fares Scheme when funding was available. The proposal was to extend the Scheme at the earliest opportunity in the event of an under-spend of the concessionary fares budget being identified during the course of the financial year.

Members noted the comments from residents regarding the limitations of the Scheme in respect of travel outside East Devon. This was most evident at the periphery of the district.

***215 East Devon Concessionary Fares Scheme (cont)..**

Members acknowledged the environmental advantages of increased bus usage over private cars. It was felt that the Scheme had been ill conceived by Central Government which had not made sufficient funding available. It was also suggested that should the Scheme become nation-wide in 2008, local train travel should be included.

The introduction of the Concessionary Fares Scheme had already resulted in an increase in residents using the bus services. However it would be a number of months before an accurate estimate of the financial impact could be made. It was important that the Council's ability to pay for any increase in service was established before the Scheme could be extended.

It was proposed that should funds become available, due to an anticipated budget under-spend, the Scheme should be extended on a phased basis.

- RESOLVED**
- (1) that the Corporate Overview Committee be asked to look in detail at the proposed phased extension of the East Devon Concessionary Fares Scheme beyond the boundaries of the district, should funding become available,
 - (2) that the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council be given delegated authority to then extend the boundaries of the East Devon Concessionary Fares Scheme on a phased basis should the budget be available.

***216 Cultural Services in EDDC after the Leisure Trust transfer**

Members considered the report of the Corporate Director – Communities in respect of the residual cultural and community development role left with the Council following the transfer of 'Leisure' to a Trust. The Council still retained the responsibility for cultural development and strategic direction and acknowledged the valuable role of culture in supporting quality of life within communities. Culture also contributed significantly to the local economy.

However, the transfer to the Leisure East Devon had reduced the Council's capacity, in terms of budget, officers/internal expertise and support, to develop cultural activities. Members acknowledged the importance of partnership working and the Council's enabling role.

The report included a number of options for consideration:

- To disband or further minimize the residual cultural role
- To retain the present minimal staff quota and focus on a few key activities
- To provide additional capacity and expertise
- To combine teams across a 'Cultural Services agenda' to create critical mass (the most obvious link suggested could be with the Countryside team and the residual tourism function to provide a consistent management of the cultural services across the Council. Such a combination would support the Council's priorities for community development and well-being and was likely to attract external grants and funding.).
- To put the work out to an external agency (Arts development and management could not effectively be added to Leisure East Devon's remit as this would dissipate its single focus).
- Disseminate the residual work to different services.

- RESOLVED** that the Corporate Overview Committee be asked to review the second and fourth options for progressing the Cultural Services in East Devon with the recommendation that a Task and Finish Forum be set up to examine this important issue in depth.

217 Customer Service Strategy

Members considered the report of the Corporate Director – Central Services introducing the customer service strategy. The aim was for a consistent customer service led culture to be achieved within the Council. It included standards and targets for all services which reflected best practices agreed nationally. The importance of effective line management and team work was acknowledged.

Members noted that the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software would track customer contact through the different access channels. This would allow accurate monitoring and facilitate continual improvement. It was suggested that 100% customer satisfaction should be our target

RECOMMENDED that the Customer Service Strategy be adopted subject to the Corporate Director – Central Services being given delegated authority to make any amendments following consultation with the Corporate Overview Committee at its next meeting in June.

***218 Monthly performance monitoring reports**

Members considered the report of the Policy Manager in respect of the monthly monitoring of performance. At the last meeting of the Executive Board on 12 April, Members were advised that steps were being taken to provide more up-to-date Performance Indicator (PI) information to allow more effective monitoring to be carried out by the Board. This new way of reporting was now possible as a result of the new performance monitoring system (SPAR). It effectively speeded up the PI collection process and meant that more timely performance information could be made available.

RESOLVED that the following new proposals for more timely monthly performance indicator monitoring be approved:

- The report included on the agenda to outline which performance figures were of concern during the previous month
- The colour coded report of the most recent month's figures to be tabled at the outset of the meeting.

***219 Performance monitoring report – April 2006**

Members considered the report of the Policy Manager, referred to at minute 217 above. The performance information for April 2006 had been circulated prior to the start of the meeting.

Members noted the Performance Indicators which had not achieved target and were areas for concern. These included BV78b – Speed of Processing – Change in Circumstances for Housing Benefits and Council Tax Benefit claims and BV78a – Speed of Processing – New HB/CTB claims. The Corporate Director – Economy advised that additional workloads at the end and start of the financial year slowed up the processing of new claims. Action being taken was to take on agency staff, determine and take action in respect of the reasons for the delay and making sure the software systems worked to their optimum with minimum downtime. Staff competency issues and team structures had also been given priority.

- RESOLVED**
- (1) that the performance and proposed remedial action against key performance indicators for the month of April 2006 be noted,
 - (2) that performance awareness sessions be set up for all Councillors, but particularly Executive Board and Scrutiny Committee Members, to assist with the monitoring process.

***220 Standing Orders Exemptions**

Members considered the report of the Contract Services Manager seeking exception to Standing Order 1.12 to facilitate the acceptance of a quotation from a specialist company not registered with Constructionline. The details of the contract were contained in the report.

RESOLVED that the exemption from Standing Order 2.12 be accepted for the reasons set out in the report.

(Councillor R Franklin declared a personal interest in this item as his mother-in-law lived in one of the flats referred to in the report.)

221 Implementation policy document: Introduction of revised Building Regulations April 2006

Before presenting her report, the Leader congratulated Anna Thompson, Building Control Manager in achieving recent election as vice-chair of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors Building Control Forum. This was an international body representing the building standards and enforcement profession worldwide.

Members considered the report of the Building Control Manager in respect of changes to the Building Regulations and how these would be implemented. The Building Control Manager advised Members of a free legislation up-date workshop being run in-house targeting the building trade in particular.

RECOMMENDED that the revised Building Regulations April 2006 and their implementation be approved.

***222 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.

***223 ICT Service – re-structuring proposals**

Members considered the report of the Head of ICT setting out proposals for the re-structure of the ICT section to reflect a number of organisation changes introduced over the last 2 years. These had been introduced to improve customer service, establish the ICT infrastructure and meet e-government priority outcomes

RESOLVED that the re-organisation of the ICT Service identified in the report be agreed.

Chairman Date