

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Board held at Knowle, Sidmouth on Wednesday, 13 December 2006

Present:

Councillors:

R G Franklin (Vice Chairman in the Chair)

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

Also Present

Councillors:

Miss V Ash
P W Burrows
T A Cope
R Giles
C F A Gibbings
G K Liverton

Ms S M Merritt
Mrs F I Newth
A W J Reed
Dr H W Waterworth
S C Wragg

Apologies

Councillors:

Miss S M Randall Johnson (Chairman)
J B Nicholson

Non-Board Members

Councillor Mrs A E Liverton

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

***109 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Board held on 15 November 2006 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

***110 Funding issues in East Devon – Devon Primary Care Trust (PCT)**

A copy letter was tabled prior to the meeting for Members' information. The letter had been sent by the Chief Executive to the Chairman and Chief Executive of the Devon PCT on behalf of the Council. The Devon PCT had announced funding problems and the need to cut local health care service provision. The proposal was to cut back health provision at local hospitals and rely more on the services of the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital. The blanket approach being adopted by the Devon-wide PCT did not seem to take into account local variability of need, poor local access and the elderly population needs.

The Chairman agreed to discuss this issue as a matter of urgency to raise Councillor awareness of the current situation, to note the Chief Executive's letter and to consider what further action could be taken.

*110 **Funding issues in East Devon – Devon Primary Care Trust (cont)..**

Members were concerned that the decision had been taken by the new Devon PCT without any consultation. They compared this with the good joint working arrangements that had existed with the East Devon PCT. Members welcomed the letter sent by the Chief Executive and noted the series of questions put to the Devon PCT.

Sending patients with minor injuries to the Exeter Hospital would increase costs and would put the future of the small cottage hospitals in jeopardy. Cut backs in local service provision would have a significant impact on the local communities in East Devon.

Members suggested that the Chairman and Chief Executive of the PCT should be invited to speak to the Council and answer questions as the earliest possible opportunity.

- RESOLVED**
- (1) that the Chief Executive's letter to the Chairman and Chief Executive of the Devon PCT sent on behalf of the Council, setting out serious concerns about the PCT's lack of local consultation and its proposal to divert health care to the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital rather than use locally based health care, be acknowledged and endorsed,
 - (2) that a further letter be sent to the Chairman and Chief Executive of the Devon PCT on behalf of the Executive Board, endorsing the comments made by the Council's Chief Executive and inviting them to a meeting of the Executive Board to address the Council's concerns and answer questions. (Suggested dates for the meeting, to which all members of the Council would be urged to attend, would either be the next scheduled meeting of the Executive Board on 17 January 2007 or, if this date was unsuitable, an alternative date in January when a special meeting of the Executive Board would be called.)

Councillor P W Burrows, who was attending the meeting as an observer, declared a personal interest in this item as his wife was a member of the PCT.)

*111 **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.

*112 **Forward Plan**

The contents of the Forward Plan for the period 1 December 2006 to 31 March 2007 were noted.

*113 **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.

***114 Meetings of the Overview Committees**

The minutes of the meetings of the Scrutiny Committee held on 22 November 2006 and of the Corporate Overview Committee of 30 November, were noted.

RESOLVED (1) that the following decisions be noted:

Scrutiny Committee
Minute 32 that a quarterly update be given to the Scrutiny Committee on progress made on the rollout of 100% recycling

Corporate Overview Committee
Minute 29 that the Annual Monitoring Report be endorsed (subject to amendment to incorporate minor details where data is still being collated) and submitted to the Development Control Committee for information on 12 December 2006.

(2) that the following decisions, subject to amendments, be approved by the Executive Board

Scrutiny Committee
Minute 29 (1) that the Council encourage and actively promote Town and Parish Councils achieving Quality Council status,

(2) that initially a quarterly meeting be held between the Quality Parish Councils and the District Council, at an officer level in the first instance, as a means of starting a dialogue,

(3) that the idea of partnership working with Quality Parish Councils be explored,

(4) that, subject to (2) above, in preparing a budget for next year some consideration be given to an appropriate sum being set aside to help train clerks to achieve Quality status,

(5) that subject to financial projections and further clarification and the outcome of the dialogue referred to in (2) above, Heads of Service assess what services could be devolved to Quality Parish Councils linked with appropriate funding, but with a particular emphasis being placed on planning in the first instance,

(6) that a clustering process for Parish Councils be investigated,

(7) that the re-introduction of Area Committees be not supported by the Executive Board

Scrutiny Committee
Minute 30 (1) that the important role that disused railway lines could play in future transport schemes as indicated in the East Devon Local Plan 1995 – 2011, be recognised,

114 Meetings of the Overview Committees (cont)..*Scrutiny
Committee**
Minute 30 (cont)..

- (2) that the great potential of disused railway lines in East Devon for conversion as cycling routes as indicated in the East Devon Local Plan 1995 – 2011, be recognised,
- (3) that the Sustrans press release of 13 September 2006 be noted and the economic, environmental and health benefits which result from the creation of off road cycleways be recognised, particularly Sustrans analysis that each £1 spent on a cycleway generates a benefit of £20,
- (4) that Policy TA5 in the East Devon Local Plan 1995 – 2011 designed to safeguard disused railway line for future transport scheme be fully supported,
- (5) that Devon County Council and East Devon District Council continue to cooperate in a partnership approach towards the creation of cycleways on disused railway lines in East Devon,
- (6) that Devon County Council and East Devon District Council define what external funding would be available for the creation of cycleways on disused railway lines in East Devon,
- (7) that Devon County Council and East Devon District Council jointly progress work carried out previously, such as the feasibility studies on the suitability of disused railway lines in East Devon for the creation of cycleways,
- (8) that a reference be included in the Devon Local Transport Plan identifying disused railway lines in East Devon for creation of cycleways after completion of the existing National Routes.

**Scrutiny
Committee**
Minute 36

that as the opportunities arise the following criteria and design features be considered an integral part of refurbishments and service provision:

- (a) Implement the recommendations of the Best Value and British Toilet Association review, for example the provision of baby-changing facilities.
- (b) Self locking toilets to reduced staff costs.
- (c) Unisex cubicles to reduce the amount of anti-social behaviour.

***114 Meetings of the Overview Committees (cont)..**

- Scrutiny Committee**
Minute 36 (cont)..
- (d) Outdoor shower units for those toilets directly adjacent to beaches.
 - (e) Energy saving design features such as minimal water use devices.
 - (f) Use for advertising and public information such as environmental campaigns.

Corporate Overview Committee
Minute 27

that the issue of gulls in towns be recognised as a national problem and the local Members of Parliament and the Government be lobbied through the Association of District Councils, and asked to produce the correct management strategy to help alleviate the problem.

(3) that the following be referred to Council recommended for approval:

Scrutiny Committee
Minute 33

that the East Devon Rural Services Standards for rural communities based on the Government's own Rural Service Standards be adopted as a basis for future negotiations with agencies whose policies impact on rural communities.

- Corporate Overview Committee**
Minute 28
- (1) that the importance of the sustainable construction and alternative energy issues be acknowledged and addressed through involving all planning officers and Members in relevant training,
 - (2) that the sustainable construction and alternative energy issue be taken forward corporately under the wider climate change banner.

***115 Revenue and Capital monitoring report 2006/07 – month seven**

Members considered the report of the Financial Services Manager summarising the Council's overall financial position for 2006/07. Members' attention was drawn to Appendix A which identified budget variations within the month, together with an assessment on how these variations would continue to the end of the financial year and how this would affect the Council's overall reserves and balances.

The report highlighted the large, high risk and volatile budget areas and linked predicted spending patterns. All operational managers and finance staff had undertaken risk assessments to make sure that adequate controls and any necessary remedial measures were in place.

The Corporate Director – Economy advised that the position of the Council's General Fund had improved since last month largely due to the additional income which continued to be generated by the Council's car parks.

Expenditure on concessionary fares was slightly over budget with local people continuing to take advantage of the free bus services. This pattern would be up-dated next month and any budget adjustments made. The situation was minimal compared with other Councils who had not opted out of the Devon-wide scheme.

*115 **Revenue and Capital monitoring report 2006/07 – month seven (cont)..**

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

*116 **Affordable Housing – Fortfield Hotel, Sidmouth**

Members considered the report of the Corporate Director - Communities in respect of Council negotiations which had achieved, through a planning agreement, four affordable housing units for rent to be built on land at Fortfield Lawn, Sidmouth. The homes would be made available to people with a strong local connection with Sidmouth. Members were advised that the properties would meet the Eco-home 'very good' standard and the Housing Association was being asked to aim to achieve 'excellent'. The Guinness Trust was in negotiation with the developer and hoped to secure capital funding through a Housing Corporation Grant. The contribution proposed from the Council of £20,000 per unit could be drawn from the commuted sum payments received for affordable housing.

RESOLVED that a capital grant of £80,000 be provided to the Guinness Trust to provide affordable rented housing, on the Fortfield Hotel site, to be funded from the commuted sum budget.

117 **East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) – Heritage Lottery Fund application**

Members considered the report of the AONB Manager in respect of an AONB Partnership application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a community landscape initiative across the AONB parishes. Members were advised that the project, 'Parishscapes', with the support of English Nature, had been successfully piloted in Beer and Branscombe during 2005/06. Two digitised tithe maps had been produced which showed landscape cover in the 1840s. The pilot had been well received and had engaged the local communities in various educational and awareness activities, increasing local appreciation and understanding of their historic landscape. Extending the project across the AONB parishes would offer opportunities for a range of cultural and historical activities. The project would also link in with the larger South West project looking to archive digital images of all the tithe maps in the region. Members noted that a Heritage Lottery Fund bid could not be made without a financial commitment from the Council over the next three years.

The Chairman congratulated the AONB Team for progressing this initiative.

RECOMMENDED that an 'in principle' agreement to commit the annual Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty grant of £10,000 for three years from April 2007 for the East Devon AONB 'Parishscapes' Heritage Lottery Fund proposal be supported.

*118 **Performance monitoring report – October 2006**

Members considered the report of the Policy Manager setting out the performance information for October 2006 for monitoring purposes. This was to allow the Executive Board to identify any service areas where improvement was necessary.

Changes made to the SPAR software meant that performance could now be compared against the same period last year. The software was also able to show performance against key performance indicators (PIs) over time so that Members could determine if performance had been consistently below target, or if the current situation represented only a temporary problem.

***118 Performance monitoring report – October 2006 (cont)..**

An additional six PIs had been added for monthly monitoring. Information for these would be collected from November onwards. These additional measures tied in with the changed Comprehensive Performance Assessment methodology, previously reported, whereby key indicators would be used and monitored by the Audit Commission to assess the Council's standard.

RESOLVED that the performance and proposed remedial action against key performance indicators for the month of October be noted.

***119 Local Democracy Week 2006**

Members considered the report of the Member Services Officer who set out the Council's annual involvement in Local Democracy Week, how this was carried out, its purpose and the positive feedback from participating schools/colleges. Members considered the list of suggestions from the schools/colleges about what they thought the Council could do for them and, if they could, what they would do to improve their school facilities. The event was highly regarded by Councillors as it gave them an opportunity to address students and discuss local issues. Members commented positively on what had gone well and made suggestions for possible future improvements, including more time being allocated to the Councillor/student question session.

The Portfolio Holder – Communications thanked those Councillors who had taken part in the event. The Member Services Team was also thanked for organising and staging the road-shows.

Members discussed ways in which local democracy could be further promoted and whether some of the suggestions put forward by the schools could be supported.

- RESOLVED**
- (1) that the Council's involvement in Local Democracy Week and the positive feedback received be noted,
 - (2) that £250 be awarded to the student council, or equivalent student body, of each participating school/college with the stipulation that the students themselves decide on how the money was spent,
 - (3) that ideas for further promoting local democracy, including Political Speed Dating, be further explored.

(The following Councillors declared personal interests in this item as Governors of local schools/colleges – A R Giles, A T Moulding, Miss J M Elson and Mrs F I Newth)

120 Disability Equality Statement for East Devon District Council

Members considered the report of the Corporate Director – Communities in respect of the new Disability Equality Statement which the Council was required to produce. The statement took into account development in the Council's approach to diversity and feedback from consultations with local people with disabilities.

RECOMMENDED that the revised Disability Equality Statement be approved.

***121 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 and on balance the public interest is in discussing the items in private session (Part B).

***122 Early transfer of Leisure East Devon (LED) ICT Services**

Members considered the joint report of the Corporate Directors of Central Services and Communities and the Head of ICT in respect of the ICT services provided to Leisure East Devon through a service level agreement. LED had given notice to the Council that it wished to transfer its ICT service provision to an external supplier. A project team had agreed that the transfer was viable and could be completed by April 2007. Members noted the level of recharge costs which the Council would lose as a result of the transfer and how this would be compensated.

- RESOLVED**
- (1) that Leisure East Devon's request for an early exit (less than the contracted one year) from the contracted ICT Service Level Agreement, at a date to be mutually agreed between the Chief Executives of the two organisations, be approved,
 - (2) that ICT provide suitable technical resources to enable the transfer of services to the agreed suppliers.

***123 Printing and copying at EDDC – progress report**

Members considered the report of the Head of ICT up-dating Members on printing and copying costs and how these could be minimised without adversely affecting the service. The report included cost implications in respect of replacement, repair and maintenance of existing print equipment. It was also noted that the Xerox contract was due to expire in October 2008. A number of possible options were proposed:

- Optimize print and copying costs
- Re-tender for the print and copying contract
- Consider an interim bid
- Replace equipment only when necessary and opt for larger good quality equipment rather than stand-alone computer printers.

The Head of ICT and Ian Craigie were thanked for the work they had done in researching this issue and for collating and presenting the information in such a comprehensive way.

RESOLVED that the actions being taken to manage the printing costs and the actions to be taken in preparation for the end date of the Xerox contract be acknowledged and approved.

Chairman Date