

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Economy Overview Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on Tuesday, 15 June 2004.

Present:

Councillors:

P W Burrows
B H Clark
J E D Falby
K W George
J P Halse
D R A Key
G K Liverton
S C Luxton

Ms S M Merritt
R Mudge
B Nicholson
A S Pascoe
A J Toye
B J Toye
C H Wale

Also Present:

Councillors:

P A Diviani
M J L Green
Mrs A E Liverton
R C Peachey
Miss S M Randall Johnson

The meeting started at 6.30pm and ended at 9:00pm.

*1 **Election of Chairman**

RESOLVED that Councillor S C Luxton be elected Chairman of the Economy Overview Committee for the ensuing year

*2 **Election of Vice Chairman**

RESOLVED that Councillor C H Wale be elected Vice-Chairman of the Economy Overview Committee for the ensuing year

*3 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings of the Economy Overview Committee held on 28 January 2004, 3 March 2004 and the joint meeting with the Environment and Communities Overview Committees held on 30 March 2004 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

*4 **Exempt Information**

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

*5 **Blackdown Hills Rural Partnership – Local Product Strategy**

The Chairman welcomed Catherine Leach, Local Product Strategy Co-ordinator for the Blackdown Hills Rural Partnership. A brief presentation was received on projects progressed in or to the benefit of East Devon through the Blackdown Hills Local Product Strategy (LPS).

***5 Blackdown Hills Rural Partnership – Local Product Strategy** (Cont'd)

In 2001 the Blackdown Hills Rural Partnership applied for LEADER+ funding from the European Union, to achieve economic benefits within the AONB area. East Devon District Council's contribution was £20,000 per annum. £8,000 (per annum for six years) which would be funded through the Economic Development Service specifically for the LPS. The LPS was economic development led, with all projects assessed against AONB environmental objectives.

There were four LPS sector co-ordinators whose work involved building new networks and publicising grant availability in order to stimulate grant applications to be made. The four LPS sectors were food and drink, tourism and recreation, arts and crafts, and woodland and forestry. The various sector groups that had evolved as a result of the work of the sector co-ordinators, and various cross sector projects were noted.

The Local Product Strategy Co-ordinator then went on to outline some of the specific schemes in East Devon, and the LPS projects currently being developed. It was noted that funding had been granted in principle by LEADER+ and all partners for six years from 2001-2007.

On behalf of the Committee the Chairman thanked Catherine Leach for her presentation and the excellent work of the Blackdown Hills Local Product Strategy.

(Councillor P A Diviani declared a personal interest in the above item as Vice-chairman of the Blackdown Hills Rural Partnership and Chairman of the Local Product Strategy Steering Group.)

***6 CCTV Task and Finish Forum**

Consideration was given to a report of the meetings held on 5 February, 7 April and 26 May 2004 of the CCTV Task and Finish Forum, and to a report of the Head of Economic Development and Property. The extensive reports and conclusions of the CCTV TAFF were noted and members discussed the Forum's recommendations. It was agreed that the key problem appeared to be that the Police were not using the mobile CCTV van frequently enough. The recommendations of the CCTV TAFF were agreed, subject to finance availability.

- RECOMMENDED**
- 1) that a centrally monitored comprehensive CCTV system for the whole district would not be justified on grounds of cost or proven need;
 - 2) that where there was a demonstrable need for CCTV as the agreed solution for community safety/crime and disorder problems, then locally based and monitored schemes would be the most appropriate solution;
 - 3) that, subject to finance availability, the Council consider introducing a grant scheme for CCTV, where Town and Parish Councils and local organisations could make applications for assistance in providing and running their own CCTV scheme;
 - 4) that the Council enter into immediate discussions with the Police concerning the use of the mobile CCTV van to ensure that the vehicle is used much more frequently and widely throughout the whole of East Devon;
 - 5) that the Council, as a Local Planning Authority, consider introducing a planning policy to secure the contribution of planning gain payments towards grant aiding community safety/crime and disorder schemes (including the provision of locally based and monitored CCTV schemes).

***7 Revenue and Capital Outturn Report for 2003/04**

Consideration was given to a report of the Financial Services Manager comparing the outturn figures for Revenue and Capital against the original and revised budgets for the financial year 2003/04 for the Economy, Resources and Communications Portfolios. Consideration was given to a summary position for each Portfolio. In total the Portfolios had overspent the revised estimate by £432,440. It was noted that additional items had been added and the net effect was that the remaining balance of the General Fund Balance would be £55,000. Members felt that this demonstrated ineffective budgetary control over the preceding year and wished to be kept much better informed of the financial position by receiving monthly reports.

In order to improve the Council's and Members' awareness of budgetary performance a quarterly review mechanism had been introduced for 2003/04 and reported to the Executive Board. This financial reporting was in its early stages, but demonstrated that measures had been put in place to ensure that such overspends did not occur again. The Chief Executive had also stressed the seriousness of the Council's financial situation.

It was noted that there had been an increase in income from the East Devon Business Centre which was encouraging. Through the procurement process the Council should look for the best deal possible for the supply of power, tele-communications, etc. The Chairman advised that this could be considered at a future meeting of the Economy Overview Committee, along with other areas of concern identified at the meeting.

Concern was expressed over the amount spent on consultants' fees and telephones (supplies and services, Corporate Director – Economy) and a written response was requested from Head of Streetscene Services to explain the overspends. A written response was also requested from the Head of Finance detailing the break down of support services costs for the communications portfolio.

Members felt that the Sidmouth Cemetery extension was not a priority and that this could be moved into the 2005/06 budget. The Head of Economic Development and Property would investigate this. It was noted that no commitment had been previously identified for sundry financial assistance to the Historic Chapels Trust and a written response concerning this was requested from the Head of Leisure and Lifestyles.

RECOMMENDED that monthly financial updates be received by the Overview Committees.

RESOLVED that the 2003/04 Outturn position for the Environment Portfolio be noted, with concern expressed over the apparent lack of budgetary control.

***8 East Devon Economic Development Issues Report**

Consideration was given to a report of the Economic Development Officer. An Economic Development Issues report, that had been produced to focus debate, was also considered. It was noted that the Council, in close co-operation with the business community through the East Devon Business Forum, would be producing a new economic development strategy for East Devon. It was agreed that a Task and Finish Forum should be convened to consider the document and report back to the September meeting of the Economy Overview Committee.

RESOLVED that a Task and Finish Forum be established to review the East Devon Economic Development Issues report, the membership to be agreed by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman and political group leaders.

***9 Economy Overview Committee – Draft Work Plan 2004/05**

Members considered a report of the Corporate Director – Economy which set out the provisional work programme for the Economy Overview Committee for 2004-2005. It was noted that the draft Sub-Regional Economic Development Strategy and the monitoring report on the Joint Best Value Review of Economic Development needed to be considered as soon as possible. It was agreed that an additional meeting of the Economy Overview Committee would be held on 13 July 2004.

The Chairman invited members to bring any items to the Economy Overview Committee and felt that monthly meetings would be necessary in the future.

- RESOLVED**
- 1) that an additional meeting of the Economy Overview Committee be held at 6:30pm on 13 July 2004;
 - 2) that the draft work programme be adopted.

***10 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.

***11 Outdoor Swimming Pool Redevelopment Site, Exmouth**

Consideration was given to the report of the Senior Estates Surveyor concerning the re-marketing of the former outdoor swimming pool site, Exmouth. The officers recommended that the Committee did not proceed with individual negotiations with any of the parties that had shown interest, and that the agents dealing with the estuary site be asked to report on the details of marketing the site, and the viability of the various uses proposed. It was noted that the designated operator of the 10-pin bowling alley and children’s indoor activities area (nominated by the developer) had indicated that he would be willing to proceed with the whole development for which planning permission had been granted. Members agreed that it was imperative to retain the freehold title and offer the site as leasehold.

RECOMMENDED that the offer by the designated operator of the 10-pin bowling alley and children’s indoor activities area (referred to in the report) to carry out the existing approved scheme be considered, in consultation with Exmouth Town Council.

Chairman Date.....