

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Environment Overview Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on Thursday, 9 December 2004.

Present:

Councillors:

G K Liverton (Chairman)	A S Pascoe
N J Spence (Vice Chairman)	A W J Reed
G P Chamberlain	P J Skinner
A E J Dinnis	Dr H W Waterworth
B O Ingham	S C Wragg
Mrs H E Parr	

Also Present:

Councillor:

J E D Falby

Apologies:

Councillors:

Mrs L A Roden
R Mudge

The meeting started at 6.30pm and finished at 9.00pm.

*49 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Environment Overview Committee held on 11 November 2004, were confirmed and signed as a true record.

*50 **Matters brought forward with the permission of the Chairman**

a) Light pollution presentation

The Chairman apologised that the committee had not yet received a presentation on light pollution. He reported that the lady concerned had suffered bereavement and it was hoped that the presentation would be received in March 2005.

b) Dog bins

The Chairman agreed for this item to be dealt with as a matter of urgency as it had been brought to Members' attention that dog bins in urban areas were full to overflowing, causing a possible health threat. The Head of Street Scene Services had confirmed that due to the budget overspend there had been a cut in the frequency of collections from every two days to every three days. It was felt that the problem was more specific in urban areas. The Chairman reported that he had discussed this with the Portfolio Holder for the Environment who had agreed to reconsider the frequency of collections and it was hoped that a report would be brought to the next meeting of the Environment Overview Committee.

c) Stakeholder aspirations for routes between Devon and Bristol to London Waterloo via Salisbury

The Chairman agreed for this item to be dealt with as a matter of urgency due to the very tight timetable required from the Rail Passengers Committee for pre-consultation comments on preferred outcomes of the new franchise. Themes had been identified for consultation. These included the strategic regional issues faced, local transport plans, integration, service frequencies, on train facilities, station facilities and accessibility.

***50 Matters brought forward with the permission of the Chairman (Cont'd)**

It was felt that it was important to look to the future regarding freight rail options. It was essential that a new rail service served the new community and that rail services were regular and frequent. Connections were a priority and through ticketing was seen as beneficial. The rail companies should positively encourage bicycles on trains as well as improving wheelchair access within stations. Facilities for disability scooters on trains and training for staff at stations were key areas for attention.

The Corporate Director noted the comments made, which would be passed on to the Rail Passengers Committee.

51 Declaration on climate change

Consideration was given to the report of the Sustainable Development Officer on the declaration of climate change. All authorities in Devon were being asked to sign the "Devon, Plymouth and Torbay Declaration on Climate Change and Fuel Poverty". The signing of the declaration would demonstrate a public commitment by East Devon District Council to tackling issues such as the potential impact of climate change, the lack of effective action taken so far to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and the links between poor energy efficiency and fuel poverty. The Council would be expected to take a proactive role in working with other agencies and the communities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, to help the community adapt to inevitable climate change, and to reduce fuel poverty. Members acknowledged and welcomed the declaration, but were aware that committing to issues contained in the declaration could involve considerable expense.

RECOMMENDED that the "Devon, Plymouth and Torbay Declaration on Climate Change and Fuel Poverty" could be a future project, finance allowing.

52 Statement of Community Involvement

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director – Environment regarding the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The Local Development Framework required the District Council to produce a SCI. The Government advice on the preparation and content of the SCI and a draft SCI produced by South Hams District Council were noted. The SCI would cover the whole district and represented a radical way for the Council to be engaged with the public. It could be appealed against and would potentially be challenged. The Corporate Director – Environment reported that the issues, which required further attention, were the Axminster Area Study and the Exmouth Area Study and asked the local members to suggest people and organisations who should be consulted.

RECOMMENDED that a special meeting of the Environment Overview Committee be arranged for early 2005 to discuss the issue further and consider a draft Statement of Community Involvement prepared by the Corporate Director – Environment.

53 **The role of the design champion**

Members received a short CD presentation produced by English Heritage as an introduction to historic environment issues. The CD included a short movie introduction, case studies and a reference library of current advice. HELM (Historic Environment Local Management) was a training programme designed to make it easier for local authority members and officers to deal with the historic environment and benefit from its effective management. HELM had been developed with the support of the ODPM, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and DEFRA and emphasised the key role councillors could play in managing the historic environment. Greater integration of the historic environment throughout council departments would help local authorities achieve their social, economic and environmental goals. The CD explained the role of the heritage champion and gave a mini job description.

Members discussed the role of the design champion, Councillor B O Ingham, in taking forward the Council's design and heritage agenda. Councillor Ingham reported on the wide remit of the post. He had attended a meeting with English Heritage on 1 December 2004 and had met and discussed the role with the Corporate Director – Environment. He intended to work through the action plan on improving the quality of new developments with officers in order to assess progress, changes etc. Planning decisions within East Devon would be reviewed to recognise where the Council had got things right and also to learn from where wrong decisions had been made. It was hoped that the Council could set up a design award to recognise good quality in the built environment. Councillor Ingham stated that he would like to report back to the committee at a future date on how things had progressed.

Members felt that there was a need to know what the terms of reference were and to define the description of the design and heritage agenda and role of the champion. Members discussed whether the design champion should be a member of the Development Control Committee. The design champion felt that there would be an advantage in not being on the Committee as it gave him independence and objectivity. He would monitor the Development Control and the Planning Inspections Committees, what they did and how their decisions were reached. Other members expressed concern over having a 'planning supremo'.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman thanked the design champion for undertaking this onerous task.

RECOMMENDED that the Executive Board prescribe the terms of reference of the role of the design champion, stating exactly what the role would be and giving a clear direction on the responsibilities.

54 **Council policy on PVC windows**

Members felt that standards on PVC windows had been improved but there was a need to consider and review the Council's policy on PVC and its use, especially concerning listed buildings.

RECOMMENDED that the Conservation Architect prepare a report on the Council's policy on PVC windows for consideration by the Environment Overview Committee in January 2005.

*55 **Joint Overview Committee meetings**

Consideration was given to the format of the joint meetings of the overview committees. This included the groups to be invited and the desired outputs of the meetings.

It was noted that the joint meeting of the Environment and Communities Overview Committees would be held at 6.30pm on Monday, 10 January 2005 to consider modern methods of construction. The joint meeting of the Environment and Economy Overview Committees would be held at 6.30pm on Tuesday, 18 January 2005 to discuss byelaws and water access.

The meeting concerning modern methods of construction required specialist input. Some suggestions of those to invite included timber construction and prefabricated unit developers, the Building Control Manager, a representative from the Housing Corporation, a national house-builder, as well as funding, insurance and technical representatives.

Consideration was given to the best witnesses to invite to the meeting concerning byelaws and water access. The following suggestions were made: Exe Estuary Partnership Officer (Natasha Barker), Jim Shapter, one District Council Exmouth Town Ward member, and representatives from the RNLI, the Exe Sailing Club, Exe Powerboat and Ski Club, Exmouth Residents Association, the Police and Exmouth Town Council.

Chairman

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