

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Board held at Knowle, Sidmouth on Wednesday, 8 September 2004

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

Miss J M Elson
J H Glanvill
M J L Green
S Hughes
A T Moulding
Mrs M A Rogers
A J Wilkinson

Also Present Councillors:
Miss V Ash
R H H Cross
J E D Falby
R Mudge
Mrs H E Parr
Mrs L A Roden
Dr H W Waterworth

Apology Councillor P A Diviani

The meeting started at 5.30 pm and ended at 6.50 pm

The Leader of the Council had been delayed and arrived after the start of the meeting. The Vice Chairman was in the Chair until item 7 on the agenda (but including item 15 which had been brought forward by agreement of the Board) when the Leader arrived and assumed Chairmanship of the meeting.

*49 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Board held on 28 July 2004, were confirmed and signed as a true record.

*50 **Exempt Information**

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.

*51 **Forward Plan**

The contents of the Forward Plan for the period 1 September to 31 December 2004 were noted and Members were up-dated in respect of the progress of key decisions within the Plan. It was confirmed that, where relevant, the Strategic Overview Committee would be included in the consultation process. The Corporate Director – Environment agreed to investigate the scope of the review of conservation areas in the district, scheduled to be considered in January 2005, and advise Members accordingly.

***52 Matters referred to the Executive Board**

There were no matters referred to the Executive Board by an Overview Committee or the Council.

53 Housing Strategy Statement 2004 – 2007 (key decision)

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion in respect of the draft Housing Strategy Statement which set out the Council's plans and priorities for local housing and housing related issues. Members were advised that the intention was for the Housing Strategy to be an evolving and dynamic working document. By necessity the statement followed national guidelines and good practice but had a direct relevance to East Devon. Central to the document was the action plan which identified how the Council would progress and how improvements in housing relating matters could be measured and assessed. Members noted that the response from the consultation exercise had been largely very positive.

The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion and his team were congratulated for their hard work and effort involved in producing the statement.

- RECOMMENDED**
- (1) that the document be approved for submission to the Government Office for the South West,
 - (2) that delegated authority be given to the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder – Communities, to make any further minor amendments to the document immediately prior to submission.

54 Job Evaluation Proposal (key decision)

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Organisational Development in respect of a proposal to adopt and implement a formal job evaluation scheme at East Devon District Council. The Council had not carried out a job evaluation exercise systematically since 1974. The reasons for implementing the exercise, the proposed method and associated costs were noted. Members were aware that the exercise was likely to be an unsettling time for staff but noted that the Scheme included a rating element to ensure fairness and equality.

- RECOMMENDED** that a joint agreement be drawn up with Unison for the adoption and implementation of a formal analytical job evaluation scheme, namely the Greater London Provincial Council Scheme.

***55 Performance Monitoring 2004/05 – July 2004**

Members considered the report of the Policy Manager giving performance monitoring information for July 04. Members noted the performance of the key indicators and proposed remedial action. Members noted that most services were making significant progress and particular note was made of improvements within planning.

The housing needs team was praised for its efficient and helpful service. Members noted the intention to reduce the authority's reliance on use of bed and breakfast accommodation by taking steps to increase the bank of private housing available for letting.

Special thanks were extended to the Streetscene team with particular reference to the swift and efficient clean-up operation following the Seaton Carnival on Saturday.

Performance Monitoring 2004/05 – July 2004 (cont)

- RESOLVED**
- (1) that the performance and proposed remedial action against key performance indicators for July 2004 be noted,
 - (2) that immediate action be taken in respect of PI8:percentage of invoices for commercial goods and services which were paid within 30 days,
 - (3) that the Corporate Director – Economy and the Head of Economic Development and Property report to a future meeting of the Board up-dating Members on the accessibility of Council owned buildings to disabled people, and proposed action.

*56 **General User Satisfaction Survey 2003/2004**

Members considered the report of the Policy Manager and noted the key findings of the General User Satisfaction Survey, which was undertaken every three years. The results demonstrated that customer satisfaction with the Council's services remained high and compared well with other councils in England. It was noted that although the survey showed that the Council had improved on its previous performance in five service areas and remained the same in one, there was a noticeable decrease in overall satisfaction with the Council. It was felt that this inconsistency was largely due to the public reaction to the large increase in Council Tax levied in 2004 by the County Council and the Police Authority.

- RESOLVED** that the results of the General User Satisfaction Survey for 2003/04 be noted and the teams responsible for the service areas showing an increase in user satisfaction ratings compared with the survey conducted in autumn 2000 and/or are amongst the top 25% of English Councils for customer satisfaction, be congratulated.

57 **Home Safeguard – Marketing Plan**

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion in respect of proposals to increase the number of customers subscribing to the community alarm scheme. The Plan reflected the intention to adopt a more business like, cost-effective approach to the service with the aim of make it self-financing, thus avoiding the need for it to be subsidised from the General Fund. Increasing the cost of subscribing to the service and widening the client base would mean that a contingency fund would be built up to pay for replacing/upgrading the equipment when this was required in the future.

The Leader extended a challenge to all Councillors to help promote the service so that more East Devon residents and their families would benefit.

The team working on the initiative was thanked and congratulated on its successful efforts.

- RECOMMENDED** that the draft Home Safeguard Marketing Plan be approved, subject to the age of new subscribers receiving the service free being increased to 80, and the actions contained therein be implemented by the Housing and Social Inclusion Service.

(Councillors Moulding and Green declared a personal interest in this item as both had relations who benefited from the Home Safeguard service).

58 **Honiton: Battishorne Kickabout Area and Community Centre**

Members considered the report of the Corporate Director – Environment, up-dating Members on the round table meeting held with key stakeholders on 10 August to discuss the developer's offer for community facility provision linked to the Battishorne Way development. The Executive Board had resolved (Minute 17 of 16.6.04 refers) that the views of interested parties should be sought before the Council responded to this offer.

Members were advised that the overwhelming view of the stakeholders was for the developer's financial offer to be committed to the delivery of the proposed Dowell Street Community Centre. The consultation exercise had been very useful and positive.

Members were advised that the authority was negotiating a legal agreement with the developers to ensure that the developer's financial contribution was ring-fenced for a community centre in Honiton should the Dowell Street Community Centre proposal fail for any reason.

RECOMMENDED that the potential developer's financial contribution to community facilities in connection with Battishorne Way, Honiton be ring-fenced for use towards a community centre in Honiton.

(Councillor Miss Ash who was attending the meeting as an observer declared a personal interest as Vice Chairman of the Community Centre Association but did not speak on the item)

59 **Budleigh Salterton Cricket Club – National Lottery Partnership Funding**

Members considered the report of the Head of Leisure and Lifestyles in respect of the National Lottery Partnership Funding grant offered to Budleigh Salterton Cricket Club in June 2002. Members were advised that the Club had not met the terms of the offer, one of which was that the scheme should be completed within 12 months, due to the need in the first instance to overcome localised flooding problems.

RECOMMENDED that further consideration of the partnership funding grant be deferred until the completion of the extended Budleigh Salterton eastern surface water out-fall scheme.

(Councillor Franklin declared a prejudicial interest in this item as a member of the Cricket Club and left the Chamber during the discussion and voting).

(Councillor Moulding declared a personal interest in this item as his remit through Somerset County Cricket Club was to promote cricket whenever possible).

*60 **Sidmouth Cemetery – Proposed Extension**

Members considered the report of the Licensing Manager seeking permission in principle to convert Council owned land adjoining the existing cemetery to facilitate its extension. The land use was currently for non-statutory allotments. It was predicted, based on current patterns, that without further extension, the cemetery would reach its capacity within 4-5 years. Members noted that the suggested value of land on the outskirts of the town was incorrect (para I.12 of the report) as such land would be of agricultural, not residential, value.

RESOLVED that the proposed cemetery extension be approved in order to continue to provide burial facilities in the Sidmouth area.

61 **Budleigh Salterton Town Design Statement**

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director – Environment in respect of the Budleigh Salterton Design Statement which had been produced by the local community. The statement was of a very high standard of presentation and content. It identified, in planning design terms, what made Budleigh Salterton unique. The statement also identified examples of weaknesses of design in post-war developments and analysed why such design was less than satisfactory.

Members noted the extent of the consultation process and were asked to consider adopting the Statement as interim Supplementary Planning Guidance pending adoption of the Local Plan.

It was suggested that certain further improvements could be made to the document to clarify some of the terminology used to avoid misinterpretation. It was also suggested that the statement should include reference to acceptable contemporary and innovative architecture which could enhance the town.

- RECOMMENDED**
- (1) that the Head of Planning and Countryside Services be given delegated authority to approve, in consultation with Ward Members and the Budleigh Salterton Design Group, any minor amendments or additional text to accommodate additional Officer comments, including reference to acceptable modern design and innovation,
 - (2) that the draft Budleigh Salterton Design Statement be approved, subject to (1) above, and adopted for development control purposes as interim supplementary Planning Guidance,
 - (3) that the Budleigh Salterton Design Statement group be congratulated on their work and its results.

62 **Dunkeswell Parish Plan**

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director – Environment in respect of the Parish Plan produced by residents of Dunkeswell, which had been submitted to the District Council for endorsement. It was noted that the document included aspirational elements, such as a future by-pass and new primary school, which were the responsibility of other authorities.

- RECOMMENDED**
- (1) that the Dunkeswell Parish Plan be endorsed and taken into account when decision making,
 - (2) that Dunkeswell Parish Council be congratulated on its Parish Plan.

63 **Widworthy Parish Plan**

Members considered the report of the Corporate Director – Environment in respect of the Parish Plan produced by residents of Widworthy, which had been submitted to the District Council for endorsement. Members commented that the document reflected the flavour of village life and was well researched and presented.

- RECOMMENDED**
- (1) that the Widworthy Parish Plan be endorsed and taken into account when decision making,
 - (2) that the Widworthy Parish Council be congratulated on its Parish Plan.

*64 **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 is likely to be disclosed.

*65 **Withycombe Village Road, Exmouth – Affordable Housing**

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion seeking Member authority to dispose of the disused public convenience site at Withycombe Village Road to one of the authority’s housing association partners for them to build an affordable housing scheme. Members noted that if approved, the Council’s contribution would be transferring the site to the scheme. It was suggested that an alternative option could be to retain the site on a long lease to make sure that the development was retained for social Housing.

RESOLVED that the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion, be authorised to issue instructions to dispose (in the most appropriate way with the feasibility of leasing being explored), of the Withycombe Village Road public convenience site to the housing association partner, identified in the report, to enable them to provide affordable housing.

Chairman

Date.....