

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Board held at Knowle, Sidmouth on Wednesday, 27 October 2004

Present: Councillors:
Miss S M Randall Johnson (Chairman)

P A Diviani
Miss J M Elson
M J L Green
A T Moulding
Mrs M A Rogers
A J Wilkinson

Also Present Councillors:
G P Chamberlain
D J Cox
Mrs C E Drew
J E D Falby
Mrs A E Liverton
G K Liverton
Ms S M Merritt
R Mudge
T G Reeves
Mrs P A Stott
C H Wale
Dr H W Waterworth
S C Wragg

Apologies Councillor:
R G Franklin
J H Glanvill
S Hughes

The meeting started at 5.30 pm and ended at 8.07 pm

***96 Chairman for part of the meeting**

In the absence of the Chairman and Vice Chairman, Councillor A J Wilkinson was elected Chairman for the beginning part of the meeting. The Leader, who had given her apologies for absence for the start of the meeting, assumed Chairmanship at item 3 of the agenda.

Councillor Wilkinson extended the Board's best wishes to Councillor Glanvill who was still unwell and was likely to require a major operation. The Chairman of the Council, who was present at the meeting, confirmed that she had written to Councillor Glanvill on behalf of the Council to wish him a full and speedy recovery.

***97 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Board held on 29 September 2004, were confirmed and signed as a true record.

***98 Exempt Information**

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.

***99 Forward Plan**

The contents of the Forward Plan for the period 1 November 2004 to 28 February 2005 were noted.

Members were advised that the consultation period for the Exmouth Estuary area redevelopment had been extended to 20 December and the matter would be referred to the Board for decision in the new year.

As previously discussed, the consultation process in respect of the future of Council Leisure Centres would include the Strategic Overview Committee. There was to be a presentation on the future of the Centres at the meeting of the Communities Overview Committee on 18 November and the Strategic Overview Committee members would be invited to attend.

It was suggested that the consultation on the draft contract for refuse collection and recycling should include all overview committees. The Leader said that she would discuss the extent and appropriateness of consultation in this respect with the Portfolio Holder – Environment.

The licensing policy would be included in the Forward Plan for consideration at the meeting of the Executive Board on 24 November 2004. The public consultation had now been completed and the Strategic Overview Committee would consider the policy at its meeting on 16 November and make recommendations to the Executive Board.

***100 Matters referred to the Executive Board**

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

***101 Presentation by the Council's Fund Manager, Investec**

Paul Cammies, representative from Investec, the Council's investment fund manager, had been invited to give a presentation to the Executive Board on the half year investment figures and to comment on anticipated performance. Investec was the market leader in managing local authority funds.

At its meeting on 28 July 2004, Members agreed that Council's funding position should be reviewed in November when the results of the second quarter were available. Members had been concerned over Investec's performance in 2003/04 compared with other investment companies although they acknowledged that previously they had out-performed similar companies and results in 2004/05 showed a healthier return.

Mr Cammies outlined the processes involved in forecasting future financial trends. He advised that the incoming data was tested very regularly and fund decisions were challenged and modified as necessary. A full audit had been carried out by Investec to find out why its performance in 2003/04 had been comparatively poor. Weightings' choices had been identified as the reason for the 2003/04 performance and the company had now changed its methodology so that it could be more flexible and able to adapt quickly.

Mr Cammies was thanked for his informative and helpful presentation.

102 **Playing Pitches Strategy – provision of recreational land in Honiton (key decision)**

Members considered the report of the Head of Leisure and Lifestyles in respect of the above Strategy which had been considered by the Communities Overview Committee at its meeting on 6 October 2004, together with the recommendations of the Playing Pitches Strategy Task and Finish Forum. The consultants had talked directly with clubs in East Devon and plotted the patterns of provision. The Task and Finish Forum had added local knowledge, included progress made to date and identified what future action was needed. The Head of Leisure and Lifestyles and his team were thanked for their useful input into this strategy.

RECOMMENDED that the recommendations of the Playing Pitches Strategy Task and Finish Forum be accepted and the Playing Pitches Strategy for East, Mid and West Devon be adopted.

(Councillor Miss Elson declared a personal interest in this item as a governor of Exmouth Community College. Councillor A T Moulding declared a personal interest as Chairman of the Cloakham Lawn Sports and Social Club)

103 **Financial Management, Income Management and Human Resources and Payroll Systems**

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Finance in respect of the above systems which were now being implemented with a 'go live' date of 1 April 2005. The report provided Members with details of the costs of implementation, including training, the back filling of key posts and ICT expertise. Members were advised that as a result of the complexity of these projects, including the need to have specific interfaces written to facilitate communication between the new systems and the Council's existing systems, additional budget provision would be required. Alternatives to certain elements of the project were being investigated with the aim of achieving cost savings. It was not feasible to allow slippage on these projects as the timetable in place included support from the contractors and any change to timings would mean that this essential support could be lost. It was suggested that the true cost of ICT should be examined together with the mechanisms in place to control costs.

RECOMMENDED that the capital budget for the Financial Management System and the Income Management System be increased by £112,000 and that the budget for the HR and Payroll System be increased by £18,000.

*104 **Revenue and Capital monitoring report 2004/05 – month five (August)**

Consideration was given to the report of the Financial Services Manager in respect of the second monthly update report of the budget monitoring process for 2004/05. Members were reminded that the purpose of the report was to provide an update on the overall financial position of the authority following the end of each month and to provide a comparison month on month in respect of each individual service. Members noted the identified budget variations within the month, whether these variations would continue to the end of the financial year and their effect on the Council's overall reserves and balances. Members also noted the remedial measures suggested by Officers. The anticipated revenue overspend had been reduced as a result of the moratorium on recruitment and steps taken to reduce spending and increase income.

There was a need to review and revise the capital programme and prioritise capital expenditure. Although certain projects had slipped, the costs would still impact on future budgets.

***104 Revenue and Capital monitoring report 2004/05 – month five (August)**

The Leader gave a clear message that over-spending would not be tolerated and that controls on expenditure had to be kept firmly in place. Portfolio Holders actively monitored expenditure and would continue to do so. It was vital to get budgets right to allow realistic measurement of performance against cost. The involvement of the Overview/Scrutiny Committees at an early stage of the budget process was welcomed.

It was noted that future financial details would be produced in larger print with modified use of colour.

- RESOLVED**
- (1) that the variances identified as part of the Revenue and Capital Monitoring process for month five of 2004/05, including the effect on the Councils reserves and balances, be noted and support given to the remedial actions, suggested in the “officers comments” column in Appendix A to the report.
 - (2) that Corporate Directors continue to consider, with service managers, where additional savings might be achieved from revenue budgets, to offset the projected overspend in 2004/05.

105 Exeter and the Heart of Devon Economic Development Strategy

Members considered the report of the Economic Development Manager in respect of the above strategy which was circulated with the agenda. Members were advised that the results of the consultation exercise had been incorporated within the revised document which was now being circulated for approval to partner organisations prior to its adoption by the Exeter and Heart of Devon Economic Partnership.

- RECOMMENDED** that the Exeter and Heart of Devon Economic Partnership’s Sub-Regional Economic Strategy 2004/2008 be endorsed.

106 Disabled Facilities Grants

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Environmental Health and Health Equalities in respect of the legal duty of the Council under the Housing Act 1985 to pay grants towards the cost of adapting the homes of disabled people in private accommodation. Members noted that the fixed maximum government grant towards the cost of this expenditure had been reduced which would result in costs beyond £300,000 being borne in total by the Council.

Various options were considered but Members acknowledged the Council’s requirement to fulfill its statutory duty and protect the vulnerable members of the community. Members also discussed the inappropriateness of cuts being made in the year when the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act were to be implemented.

- RECOMMENDED**
- (1) that the budget for gross expenditure on disabled facilities grants be reduced to £444,000 to reflect the reduction in government capital grant,
 - (2) that delegated authority be given to the Portfolio Holder – Communities, in consultation with the Head of Environmental Health and Health Equalities, to agree a process to prioritise applications in accordance with the objective criteria.

106 **Disabled Facilities Grants (cont)**

- (3) that letters be sent to the East Devon MPs, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the LGA lobbying against the Government cuts in grant provision for disabled facilities, the letter to include reference to East Devon's specific problems associated with its ageing population and the resultant pressures from any cuts on services and vulnerable members of the community.

*107 **Independent Remuneration Panel - Remit**

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director – Economy in respect of the remit of the Independent Remuneration Panel. Members were reminded that the existing scheme would terminate on 31 March 2005 and the Board was now required to consider a remit for the Panel to consider allowances for 2005-06.

RESOLVED

- (1) that IRP be asked to consider appropriate levels for the basic allowance, special responsibility allowances (positions listed on Appendix A of the report), child care and dependent carer allowance and travel and subsistence allowances,
- (2) that 3 Members be nominated to answer questions raised by the Panel on matters pertinent to the work of a councillor on East Devon District Council.

*108 **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 descriptions set out in the agenda, is likely to be disclosed.

109 **Sale of Former Outdoor Swimming Pool Site, Exmouth Sea Front**

Consideration was given to the report of the Senior Estates Surveyor in respect of the proposed sale of the above site by way of a 125 year lease. Members were advised that an offer had been received to develop the site. The proposed development would form the first part of the 'Unlocking Exmouth – A Framework for Discussion' proposal for Exmouth. Exmouth Town Council had considered the proposal at its meeting on 11 October 2004 and unanimously supported the appointment of the developer as lessee. Members were advised that a letter had been received from the lifeboat services asking for its requirements and proposals also to be considered.

RECOMMENDED

that the Council be minded to agree the proposal, from the developer, named in the report, in principle as part of the 'Unlocking Exmouth' initiative but negotiations be undertaken first with the RNLI concerning their requirements in the area, with a report being referred back to the Executive Board in January 2005 to up-date Members on progress.

(Councillors M J L Green and Mrs P A Stott (who attended the meeting as an observer) declared a personal interest as members of their families served in the RNLI).

Chairman Date