

# **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **Minutes of a Meeting of the Corporate Overview Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 3 November 2005**

### **Present:**

#### Councillors:

G K Liverton (Chairman)	J A Knight
R C Peachey (Vice-Chairman)	A W J Reed
A E J Dinnis	T G Reeves
J E D Falby	Mrs B O Taylor
C Gibbings	C H Wale
J P Halse	

### **Also Present:**

#### Councillors:

Miss V Ash	A T Moulding
T A Cope	R Mudge
P A Diviani	Mrs F I Newth
Mrs C E Drew	B Nicholson
Miss J M Elson	Mrs M A Rogers
A R Giles	Mrs P A Stott
Mrs P A Graham	Dr H W Waterworth
S Hughes	Mrs E E Wragg
Mrs A E Liverton	S C Wragg

B Buxton – Honiton Sport  
Nick Cornwell – Honiton Sport  
Jeremy Gibson – Honiton Sport

Sidmouth Town Councillor J Brokenshire  
Sidmouth Town Councillor I J Mackenzie-Edwards  
R Aplin – Sub Postmaster, Sidford Post Office

S Rose – World Heritage Coast Projects Coordinator  
J Wokersien – Clerk to Exmouth Town Council  
Mrs H Sanham – Clerk to Seaton Town Council  
B Dunford – Seaton Community Representative  
D Conway – Exmouth Community Representative

### **Apologies:**

#### Councillors:

G P Chamberlain  
B O Ingham

### **Apology:**

#### Councillor:

**Non-Overview  
Members**

R H H Cross

The meeting started at 6.30 pm and ended at 9.16 pm

Councillors Knight and Gibbings were welcomed to their first meeting of the Committee.

Members asked after Councillor Chamberlain's health and wished him a speedy recovery after his recent operation.

**\*18 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Overview Committee held on 6 October 2005, were confirmed and signed as a true record.

**19 Honiton Sport – presentation of proposals as part of MCTI**

Members received a presentation from Bob Buxton and Nick Cornwell on Honiton Sport's proposals as part of the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative (MCTI). The proposal put forward involved use of the Honiton Showground for a multi sports area. If successful the area would contain three football pitches, three rugby pitches, an all weather cricket pitch, two further cricket pitches, an all weather hockey pitch, an archery area and junior rugby, football and cricket pitches together with car parking, a stadium, pool, hall and pavilion. Initial partners in the project were Devon County Council, East Devon District Council and Honiton Town Council. Honiton Sport now wanted support from the Council in principal to enable a bid to be put to the Big Lottery under the Living Landmarks Scheme. The deadline for the bid was early January 2006. If the first stage of the bid was successful it would provide funding for a feasibility study which would allow a more detailed examination of the proposal.

The cost of the scheme was unknown at this stage but was estimated to be £4.5 million for the pitches and pavilion and a further £7.8 million for the pool and athletics track. It was recognised that as the site was on a flood plain it was not ideal but it was a large site with potential for further expansion, it could cater for a large number of cars and also could be accessed from the Honiton via a proposed cycle/walk way. Members were advised that obtaining planning permission for the site would not be easy as the proposal involved the construction of buildings and provision of car parking outside the town limits which was contrary to planning policy. Environmental and Travel Impact Assessments would need to be carried out and demand for the facilities proved.

Members were advised that if the Council reallocated the resources already used for sport in Honiton, for example releasing land at Hayne Lane for business or residential purposes, the capital generated and revenue diverted would approximately cover the partnership funding which Honiton Sport would be looking for from this Council.

**RECOMMENDED** that the Council support in principal the Honiton Sport proposal as part of the MCTI.

**20 Sidford Car Park**

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director – Economy with regard to whether or not pay and display charges should be retained in Sidford car park. Charges were introduced in April 2005 for cars parked in the afternoon. No charge was made for parking in the morning. Letters of objection had been received from residents and traders who believed that trade in local shops had been adversely affected by the introduction of the charges. Members were asked to consider whether there was any evidence to support this contention and whether the charges should be retained.

Roger Aplin, Sub Postmaster, Sidford Post Office advised members that since he had taken over the Post Office seven years previously many shops in Sidford had closed down. It was contended that the introduction of car park charges had shifted trade to the mornings and reduced trade overall making the situation worse. Sidmouth Town Councillors Ian Mackenzie-Edwards and Jack Brokenshire expressed concern for the long term survival of businesses in Sidford. It was noted that in the majority of towns in East Devon there were certain areas where shoppers could park on the road free of charge for

20 **Sidford Car Park** (Cont.)

up to thirty minutes. As Sidford was situated on two busy main roads there was little on street parking available. It was suggested that up to thirty minutes free parking should be permitted in the car park.

Members noted that free car parks were provided elsewhere in the District and parking was available at a lower charge in Colyton and Lypstone. However it was recognised that although some car parks were free to the user, they were not free to the tax payer. Business rates and maintenance work had to be paid for every car park regardless of the charging status. It was suggested that local traders should be approached and asked for their views on how the costs of providing the car park should be covered. Suggestions put forward included an increase in the number of reserved spaces in the car park and a financial contribution from all traders.

Consideration was given to the effects of the recent sewage pipe collapse in Sidford. The resultant works by South West Water were expected to take up to eight weeks. It was suggested that Sidford traders could suffer during this period and that this might be lessened if the car park charges were dropped for the period of the work.

**RESOLVED** that the Portfolio Holder – Economy and Regeneration be asked to consider suspending charging for Sidford Car Park for the duration of the sewage works.

**RECOMMENDED** that the ideas put forward during the meeting, such as the introduction of more permits and thirty minutes free parking, be evaluated in conjunction with Sidford Traders Association.

21 **Leisure Trust – What will the Council expect?**

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director – Communities with regard to the Council's expectations from Leisure East Devon in return for continued Council funding. The Council had previously agreed to the setting up of the not for profit, free standing trust (Leisure East Devon). The majority of the Trust's finance would accrue via fees and charges, however additional funding would be made available by the Council due to the obligation it would place on the Trust to provide services beyond those which a commercial organisation would provide in a free market situation.

The report set out the suggested service levels which could be expected of the Trust. Once agreed, if the Trust failed to meet a service level, the funding it received could be cut if this was felt to have been avoidable. However, Members were advised that the Council would only do this to encourage better performance and would not seek to undermine the ability of the Trust to continue operating.

Concern was raised that one of the suggested service levels was to achieve a minimum demonstrable efficiency saving of 2.5% each year. Members were advised that this level of efficiency saving was specified due to the need to meet Gershon efficiency saving targets and would apply to the leisure service irrespective of whether or not it was put out to a trust.

The need for effective partnerships, continued outreach work and an annual meeting of Trustees and the Council were recognised. It was also recognised that the Council would lose the majority of its culture and leisure expertise to the Trust once it was established.

21 **Leisure Trust – What will the Council expect** (Cont.)

Members expressed their whole hearted thanks to the volunteer Trust Board Members who had given their time and enthusiasm to the Trust.

**RECOMMENDED** that the service specification attached to the report be agreed.

22 **World Heritage Coast – feasibility studies for Exmouth and Seaton Gateway Visitor Centres**

Consideration was given to the report and presentation by the Corporate Director – Environment with regard to feasibility studies undertaken by Locum Consulting on the proposed world class visitor centres at Exmouth and Seaton.

Locum Consulting believed that the centres would provide a trigger for regeneration investment in both towns, would provide a vision of quality and would be a tangible transformation of the World Heritage Coast brand.

Various sites were looked at for both centres. It was felt that the sites chosen should be closely linked to the relevant town as well as to the coast. In Exmouth the centre would be located on the Imperial Recreation Ground, in Seaton it would be on the East Devon District Council owned land in the vicinity of the tram station and the Tourist Information Centre.

The number of expected visitors was forecast to be 255,000 per year for Exmouth and 230,000 for Seaton. The centres would contain an exhibition area, education suite, tourist information, and retail and catering outlets. It was suggested that entry to the centres would be free with charges payable for entry to exhibitions and tours.

The total cost of the centres was estimated to be £7.5 million for Seaton and £8.5 million for Exmouth. The cost for the Seaton centre did not include the cost of the land but this would count towards partnership funding. It was anticipated that there would be a shortfall in funding the market testing exercise but Members noted that as the exercise would straddle the 2006/07 budgets, further funding could be found from stakeholders. Members made no commitment to meet the shortfall.

Sam Rose, World Heritage Coast Coordinator advised that negotiations were taking place with the Regional Development Agency (RDA) with regard to a sizable multi million pound umbrella project of which these centres were a part. If the negotiations were successful sufficient match funding would be granted to enable market testing of the centres to take place.

An application would need to be submitted to the Big Lottery before the 16 December 2005 deadline. Prior to this East Devon District Council would be required to sign a land agreement to make a commitment regarding the land needed.

It was noted that concerns about travel links were being addressed via the Regional Spatial Strategy, funding to improve rail links and the proposed provision of cyclepaths on both sides of the River Exe.

Strategic level partnerships were being developed with various organisations, for example the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Natural History Museum, London. The two Town Councils concerned both fully supported the project and had committed financial support to it.

**World Heritage Coast – feasibility studies for Exmouth and Seaton Gateway Visitor Centres (Cont.)**

- RECOMMENDED**
1. that the Executive Board welcomes the reports by Locum Consulting on the Exmouth and Seaton Visitor Gateway Centres: Options Appraisal and Preliminary Feasibility reviews and support the work of the project steering group in taking these projects forward to delivery;
  2. that subject to key stakeholders on behalf of the Project Steering Group demonstrating financial commitment to fund market testing for delivery of a Exmouth Gateway Visitor Centre (EGVC); otherwise known as a World Heritage Coast & Exe Shoreline Visitor Centre at Exmouth, the Imperial Recreation Ground be safeguarded as the potential site of a privately funded and owned EGVC; that a building zone be identified and the proposed capital programme scheme dealing with contamination at the foreshore be designed to accommodate a future building and car parking;
  3. that the Executive Board supports the inclusion within the project outline brief of a public meeting room within the Exmouth Gateway Visitor Centre;
  4. that the Executive Board support the concept framework diagram for the location of the Seaton Gateway Visitor Centre that seeks integration of the Visitor Centre within the wider Seaton regeneration area;
  5. that the Executive Board recognises the financial and staff resource commitment that is required from East Devon District Council to take these projects forward and indicate what it would be prepared to commit to these projects, bearing in mind that neither of them currently feature in the capital or revenue budgets;
  6. that the stakeholder steering groups be requested to sign a memorandum of understanding covering the on-going management of the projects;
  7. that a bid be made to the Living Landmarks Big Lottery Fund on behalf of both Gateway Visitor Centres as part of a single bid for the Jurassic Coast Interpretation Action Plan.

(Councillors T A Cope and R Mudge declared personal interests in this item as they had both been involved in the Exmouth Visitor Centre project since it was started. They took no part in the discussion or voting)

Chairman ..... Date.....