

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 9 July 2008

Present:

Councillors:

Roger Giles (Chairman)
Jim Knight (Vice Chairman)

Trevor Cope
Frances Newth
Barry Nicholson

Philip Skinner
Chris Tratt

Officers:

Peter Jeffs – Corporate Director
Diccon Pearse – Corporate Director
Rachel Pocock – Head of Legal, Licensing and Democratic Services
Stephen Rippin – Streetscene Manager
Len Wright – Car Park Services Manager
Debbie Meakin – Democratic Services Officer
Hannah Jarvis – Democratic Services Officer

Also Present

Councillors:

Vivienne Ash
Peter Bowden
Jill Elson
Ray Franklin
Graham Godbeer
Peter Halse

Ann Liverton
Graham Liverton

Apologies:

Councillors:

Bob Buxton
Vivien Duval Steer
John Jeffery
Stuart Luxton

Darryl Nicholas
Margaret Rogers
Eileen Wragg

Apologies from non-Scrutiny Members:

David Cox
Paul Diviani
Andrew Moulding

The meeting started at 6.30pm and ended at 7.47pm.

The Chairman welcomed Trevor Cope and Chris Tratt to their first meeting of the Scrutiny Committee as committee members.

*8

Public question time

There were no questions or issues raised by members of the public.

***9 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 11 June 2008 were confirmed and signed as a true record, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Trevor Cope in the list of Councillors giving apologies.

***10 Response from Devon PCT to Scrutiny Questions**

A copy of the correspondence with Dr Kevin Snee was briefly discussed by Members. Future topics relating to the PCT are also on the Scrutiny Committee's forward plan.

RESOLVED that correspondence with Dr Kevin Snee be noted.

11 Update on Civil Parking Enforcement

Officers from the Streetscene service gave Members an update on the implemented operations on civil parking enforcement. Members robustly questioned the officers on issues of legality of tickets issued to date and how strictly any violations would be dealt with.

Steve Rippin and Len Wright of Streetscene gave clear and precise information on:

- Staff numbers, which although limited for the large area to cover, operated a rota to cover the hot spots identified by the County Council and operated in pairs to cover both the on-street and off-street violations to ensure legal parking charge notices were issued;
- Training for all officers had been completed successfully;
- Handheld technology allowed officers to record violations, including photo images, which could be sent to the back office. The new system had a slow roll-out but when complete, would allow the back office to deal with queries on notices far easier and quicker because of the data available to them;
- Improvement in percentage of tickets paid, explained in part by growing experience of officers and also the handheld technology in place;
- Cover provided by Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) at weekends and bank holidays, operating in areas on different days to avoid pre-5 April problems of traffic warden visiting the same areas on same day of the week;
- Some loading bays had been identified as not being correctly signed and therefore any notice issued could be appealed against;
- Obstruction was still a police matter, as only they could enforce the removal of a vehicle causing obstruction;
- The implementation was reasonably successful, and certainly more successful than some other authorities.

Peter Halse, the Portfolio Holder for Economy, gave his congratulations to the officers involved, for their success in bringing the operations into being despite limitations imposed by the Traffic Management Act anomaly.

- RESOLVED**
1. that the present situation with civil parking enforcement be noted;
 2. that congratulations be given to the officers for their success in implementing the new operational procedures;
 3. that a press release be sent out to give the current situation on civil parking enforcement.

RECOMMENDED that discussions take place with Devon County Council and the Police about continuing police responsibilities for dealing with obstruction; and to clarify operational issues such as the correct marking of loading bays.

(Councillor Roger Giles and Councillor Barry Nicholson declared personal interests in this item as Members of the Environment, Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee at Devon County Council)

12 **Update on Poltimore House**

Members last discussed Poltimore House at the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on the 5 December 2007, where the Committee recommended that a full risk assessment, including a comprehensive survey of the site, be undertaken by the Trustees with a report back to Scrutiny Committee; and that the ten year plan of the project be completed and reported back to the Committee.

The proposed use of the house had now changed to that of a college for heritage skills. This was initially identified by the feasibility study examined by Members in December 2007, but not as the primary use for the house. The Trust was now seeking external funding for a Development Manager, to develop a business plan for the implementation and running of the proposed college, and to seek funding for the college.

Members discussed the proposed use of the house, and the possible problems in obtaining further funding to bring the house up to a standard associated with modern colleges.

Graham Liverton, the Portfolio Holder for Environment, added his concerns about the apparent slow progress in bringing the house back into use and asked the Scrutiny Committee to monitor the situation closely.

Members agreed that progress appeared slow and that there was still no clear business plan, despite such a document being asked for as far back as 14 February 2007 by the Scrutiny Committee.

- RESOLVED**
1. that the Trustees of Poltimore House be invited back to the Scrutiny Committee when the result of the funding for a Development Manager for a college of heritage construction was known;
 2. that the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee write to the Trustees of Poltimore House setting out what the Committee was looking for from the Trustees, and to establish a return date in three months time.

- RECOMMENDED**
1. that the Trustees provide the Scrutiny Committee with a business plan, and that the Council carry out a liability and financial assessment of the Council's risk as soon as possible, and certainly within the next three months.

(Councillor Philip Skinner declared a personal interest as a part owner of a radio station which adjoins Poltimore House).

*13 **Performance Indicators to be measured in 2008/09**

Members considered the report that sets out the new system of National Indicators for 2008/09 onwards. Diccon Pearse, Corporate Director, explained that the new indicators were moving away from single authority responsibility. The indicators were now targeting partnership work with other bodies, to give a picture of the public's expectation of the Council and its partners.

***13 Performance Indicators to be measured in 2008/09 continued**

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

***14 Quarterly Monitoring of Service Plans – Fourth Quarter 2007/08 and full year 2007/08**

Members considered performance against service plans for the fourth quarter of the last financial year. Officers of Housing Needs were congratulated for the improvement in reducing void periods.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

***15 Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan**

Members considered the Forward Plan for the Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan for Scrutiny be noted.

***16 Task and Finish Forum Status Report**

Members noted the Task and Finish Forum Status report which presented details of the current Task and Finish Forums.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Chairman Date.....