

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Strategic Overview Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 21 September 2004

Present: Councillors:

Dr H W Waterworth (Chairman)
B O Ingham (Vice-Chairman)
Mrs M J Boote
P W Burrows
T A Cope
D R H Hull
Mrs A E Liverton
R C Peachey
N J Spence
S C Wragg

Also Present: Councillors:

S Hughes
G K Liverton
Ms S Merritt

Apologies: Councillors:

Mrs K J Bamsey
D G Button
R H H Cross
H J Jeffrey

The meeting started at 6.30pm and ended at 8.35pm

*6 **Minutes**

The minutes of the inaugural meeting of the Strategic Overview Committee held on 1 June 2004, were confirmed and signed as a true record.

*7 **Executive Board Draft Forward Plan**

Consideration was given to the Executive Board draft Forward Plan with particular regard being given to the proposed consultation for decisions. It was noted that the Committee was too late to request consultation on the decision concerning the implementation of the Licensing Act but that Members could discuss the matter at the next meeting of the Council.

*7 **Executive Board Draft Forward Plan (Cont.)**

- RECOMMENDED**
1. that the Strategic Overview Committee be included in the proposed consultation for the following key decisions: Customer Access Strategy; and Refuse and Recycling (Waste) Strategy.
 2. that the meeting of the Communities Overview Committee when the key decision involving the future of the Council leisure centres is considered be a joint meeting with members of the Strategic Overview Committee invited.

*8 **Service, financial and improvement planning system**

Consideration was given to the report of the Policy Manager with regard to the timetable for preparing service plans and budgets for 2005/08. The report advised Members of the progress made in respect of the Council's Performance Management Framework. Members suggested that the chart accompanying the report would be easier to read in a linear format.

- RECOMMENDED** that the timetable for preparing Service Plans and budgets for 2005/08 be approved.

*9 **Corporate Improvement Plan monitoring**

Consideration was given to the report of the Policy Manager with regard to the Corporate Improvement Plan that had been drawn up following the Peer Review and Comprehensive Performance Assessment in 2003. The report monitored the progress made and gave Members an opportunity to highlight any concerns.

The Council had been successful, in securing, with 12 other authorities in Devon, £1,130,000 in funding from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister towards a joint Devon improvement programme. The programme would be constructed around 6 key themes representing identified common areas of weakness across Devon. Concern was raised that one of the themes was the strengthening of partnership working and the development of Local Strategic Partnerships yet this had come out as a low priority in the Council's recent prioritisation process.

The following suggestions were made with regard to the Improvement Plan:

- that an issue does not get moved into the completed section until all the actions to be carried out have been completed;
- that whenever the progress of the plan is considered, the two relevant pages of the Corporate Strategy accompany the report;
- that when a target is missed a revised target is set and an explanation given as to why it was missed;
- that the start and finish times be included together with a note saying when an issue is ongoing;
- that further actions be added to issue 17 regarding the strengthening of links with Town and Parish Councils;
- with regard to issue 21 concern was raised that should we develop performance indicators to monitor the performance of other service providers who operate outside the Council's remit, that the performance judged against these indicators does not reflect upon this Council;

***9 Corporate Improvement Plan monitoring (Cont.)**

- that Revenue Support Grant be written in full under issue 24 instead of as initials;
- Issue 25, action b) be changed to refer also to the implementation of a training plan.

RESOLVED that the updated Corporate Improvement Plan be noted.

***10 Quarterly monitoring of performance – first quarter 2004/05**

Members noted the performance information for the period 1 April to 30 June 2004 for the services within the remit of the Committee. Detailed consideration was not given to the proposed remedial actions suggested as the indicators were due to be updated in the near future.

RESOLVED that report be noted.

***11 Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) Statement**

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of ICT with regard to the progress being made towards the mandatory e-government targets, the latest communications regarding e-government and plans and risks relating to the next stages in the process. The plans involved a huge scale of change in how the Council provided its services and met its obligations. The ICT Section were making significant progress but had tight deadlines to meet. The Devon Portal was running and consideration was being given to expanding the use of the infrastructure now in place. The CAPS planning programme was still on target to go live in October 2004. Further amendments would be made at a later date to link the programme with the Council web site.

Concern was raised that Councillors who use a Council provided computer for their own use may be treated as being in receipt of a benefit for tax purposes. It was noted that the Head of Legal and Member Services was looking into the issue with particular reference to whether computers should also be declared under the Code of Conduct.

Members expressed their appreciation of the helpful and patient staff involved in the Member training and thanked the Head of ICT for his report.

RESOLVED that an updated IEG progress report and roadmap be considered at the January 2005 meeting

RECOMMENDED that a meeting of the e-Government Members Group be called.

***12 Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West 2006 - 2026**

Members were advised that in 2005 the Regional Planning Guidance would be replaced by the Regional Spatial Strategy. Consideration was given to a precis document that outlined three possible strategies that could be adopted. It was noted that the Environment Overview Committee would be giving the strategies full consideration in due course. The document gave a basic description of each option and outlined the main features, both positive and negative. No consensus of opinion in clear favour of any one option was reached but the following views were raised:

Option One:

- this would be the option most similar to the status quo;
- the report states that under this option affordable housing was less likely to be delivered in smaller rural communities;

*12 **Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West 2006 – 2026 (Cont.)**

- However it also states that in smaller towns and key centres in rural areas development would cater for rural needs.

Option Two:

- The area around Exeter would become ‘bricked over’;
- There would be a loss of rural services and a reduction of economic activity in deprived areas outside the designated Principal Urban Areas (PUAs);
- However the concentration on the PUAs could result in the strategy having less impact on the rural areas

Option Three:

- This option covered the whole of the South West but excluded Bristol and could reflect the importance of market towns as opposed to concentrating on large cities;
- It is more likely to deliver jobs and affordable housing in rural locations;
- However the downsides of this option would require careful consideration.

Chairman

Date.....