

# **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **Minutes of a Meeting of the Strategic Overview Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 25 January 2005**

**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  
H J Jeffrey  
Mrs A E Liverton  
R C Peachey  
N J Spence  
S C Wragg

**Apologies:**

Councillors:

Mrs K J Bamsey  
D G Button  
R H H Cross

**Also Present:**

Councillors:

S Hughes  
A T Moulding  
Mrs M Rogers  
N Rogers  
A J Wilkinson

The meeting started at 6.34 pm and ended at 9.10 pm

\*27 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Strategic Overview Committee held on 16 November 2004, were confirmed and signed as a true record.

\*28 **Executive Board Draft Forward Plan**

Consideration was given to the Executive Board draft Forward Plan for the period 1 February 2005 to 31 May 2005 with particular regard being given to the proposed consultation for decisions.

**RECOMMENDED**

that the Strategic Overview Committee be consulted jointly with the Communities Overview Committee on the key decision in respect of the future of Seaton Town Hall, Mackarness Hall, Honiton and Manor Pavilion, Sidmouth.

**\*29 Service Plans 2005/08**

Consideration was given to the report of the Policy Manager with regard to Service Plans drawn up for the next three years for each of the service areas within the remit of the Committee. The plans reviewed performance for the year ending 31 March 2005 as well as planning for the future. Following the input of actual performance and target figures in the Performance Indicator table, relevant extracts from all the Plans would be included in the Annual Performance Plan 2005/06.

The Chairman acknowledged the usefulness of the service plans but was aware of the significant Officer time involved in their preparation. He felt that the document could be streamlined and some of the wordiness removed to make the document consistently easier to prepare and more user-friendly to read. He drew attention within the service plans to good examples of clear lay-out with headings and bullet points. The Committee discussed the following points which it felt would increase the usefulness of the plans:

- Include clearer details of staff resources within teams, expressed as full time equivalents, designations of managers and the teams they head up,
- Provide a break down of costs within individual service areas,
- Clarify the meaning of 'performance in perspective' and consider whether this section could be included within the section on 'key achievements in performance',
- Resources required should identify whether these are adequate or that additional resources are needed,
- Consistent use of plain english with avoidance of jargon and 'management speak',
- The assets section should refer only to material assets and not staff,
- Consistently include a fifth column to show the links to corporate goals/priorities and/or other key strategies.

The following points were noted with regard to each of the plans considered:

#### Organisational Development

Karen Jenkins, Head of Organisational Development summarised the work and restructuring of the Section in 2004. The Service included Human Resources and Training, Payroll and the Policy Team. Looking ahead Karen outlined future targets and planned initiatives including Job Evaluation implementation and completion of a stress audit. Details were given of the Management Development programme and the number of managers, supervisors and team leaders who had already benefited from this. The success of proactive and preventative initiatives, such as the stress audit, would be evaluated through improved employee satisfaction, reduced absenteeism, etc.

The following amendments to the Organisational Development Service Plan were agreed:

- Page 4, Section 3 – amend wording to read ... other local public sector authorities ...
- Page 4, Section 3 -UNISON – upper case,
- Page 6, Section re assets – delete apostrophe from PCs,
- Page 13, Section 14 – 12% budget reduction 'in 05/06'

#### Legal and Member Services

Rachel Pocock, Head of Legal and Member Services outlined work carried out in 2004 and plans for 2005 and beyond. She identified the key elements of the Service which included Legal, Member Services and Licensing. Efficiency improvements would be made to the service through increased use of IT. Challenges included the implementation of Freedom of Information and Licensing Act, the development of the Equality Standard and increased public involvement in local democracy.

**\*29 Service Plans 2005/08 cont/..**Legal and Member Services cont/..

The following amendments to the Legal and Member Services Service Plan were agreed:

- ❑ Page 16, Section 5 – delete last line of first paragraph to de-personalise,
- ❑ Page 17, Section 6 - delete reference to staff as assets
- ❑ Page 17, Section 7 – delete 4<sup>th</sup> bullet point
- ❑ Page 18, Section 8 – delete all comment against key achievement re: increasing the effectiveness of the Overview Committees and the satisfaction of members with the process and re-write to give a positive indication of what the Overview Committees are addressing and achievements with reference to the scrutiny function being developed in line with the CPA recommendation that use be made of cross party skills.
- ❑ Page 20, Section 12a – include end date of December 2005 to 2<sup>nd</sup> listed outcome/target/milestone,
- ❑ LEXCEL – upper case
- ❑ Page 21 – delete example included in 1<sup>st</sup> CPA improvement,
- ❑ Page 23 – 1<sup>st</sup> PI on page – LNEW re increased use of electronic dispatch of agendas – to be a temporary PI,
- ❑ Page 23 – 5<sup>th</sup> PI on page – LNEW re Councillor take-up of training offered, include this as being a measure of training that offers a range of times and dates so that data is not skewed against Councillors who work and cannot attend training during the day,
- ❑ Page 23 – 6<sup>th</sup> PI - include PI number

ICT

In the absence of the Head of ICT, James Corrigan, Projects and Information Manager presented the Section's Service Plan. Members were advised of the Section's key challenges which included the development of Customer Access, the continuing systems replacement programme, infrastructure up-grades and replacements, meeting the Government's e-enablement targets, delivering a transactional web site and building confidence in the service. Improvements to the structure of the Section with better run and relevant teams had resulted in budget savings and improved and efficient service delivery.

The following amendments to the ICT Service Plan were agreed:

- ❑ Page 25 – delete word 'draft'
- ❑ Page 27 – possible clarification that the number of mobile phones under assets refers to the total number provided as a corporate resource
- ❑ Page 29 – 9<sup>th</sup> key outcome on page re gazetteer – include 'on-going' in end date column

Karen Jenkins, Rachel Pocock and James Corrigan were thanked for their helpful and informative presentations.

**RECOMMENDED** that the Service Plans for Organisational Development, Legal and Member Services and ICT for 2005/08 be approved subject to the amendments put forward by the Committee during its discussions.

**RESOLVED** that the quality service provided by the receptionists and switchboard operators at the corporate reception be acknowledged and the staff thanked for their efficiency, professionalism and helpfulness.

\*30

**Draft Revenue and Capital Estimates 2005/06**

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director – Economy with regard to the draft Revenue and Capital Estimates for 2005/06. It was noted that the Executive Board had adopted the draft estimates at its meeting on 17 January 2005. The Board asked all four Overview Committees to consider the estimates, bearing in mind the need to set a balanced budget, and refer their recommendations to the Executive Board for consideration at its meeting on 9 February 2005. The Board would then recommend the 2005/06 Council Tax requirement to the Council.

Members noted that the budget represented the Service Plans in financial terms. It reflected the findings of the prioritisation process, recognised that the general fund balance was low and was based on the expectation of matching income with expenditure. The likely increase in Council Tax would be just under 6%.

Members made the following comments:

- Page 5: 46 Civic Expenses – amend comment as £8,000 was inclusive of a civic dinner and should not all be attributed to the Sidmouth Folk Festival,
- Page 7: 50 needs reference to Job Evaluation training costs,
- Page 9: include reference to anticipated wage settlement
- Page 36 – disappointed that the new Community Fund budget had been set at £12,000 and hoped that this could be reconsidered although the financial reality of budgets being even tighter in future years was acknowledged,
- Page 36 – need an explanation of why a decision was made to increase the Citizens Advice Bureaux budgets by £6,000 – why this was given special consideration when it is not a statutory requirement?
- Page 38: 51 Employer’s responsibilities – delete wording after comma and include explanation of discrepancy.

**RECOMMENDED** that the draft Revenue and Capital Estimates for 2005/06 relevant to this Committee be approved subject to the comments raised by Committee during its deliberations.

Chairman .....

Date.....