

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Environment Overview Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on Thursday, 26 February 2004.

Present:



Councillors:

G K Liverton (Chairman)

G P Chamberlain

T A Cope

A E J Dinnis

A R Giles

B O Ingham

H J Jeffery

R Mudge

Mrs H E Parr

A S Pascoe

A W J Reed

N J Spence

C H Wale

Dr H W Waterworth

S C Wragg

Also Present:

Councillors:

Mrs M Boote

Ms S M Merritt

T G Reeves

Mrs L A Roden

A J Wilkinson

Apologies:

Councillors:

D G Button

S C Luxton

R C Peachey

N Rogers

P J Skinner

The meeting commenced at 8.08pm and terminated at 9:15pm.

*56 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Environment Overview Committee held on 22 January 2004, were confirmed and signed as a true record.

*57 Service Plans 2004/07

Consideration was given to a booklet of Service Plans for the Planning, Streetscene and Countryside services. The Service Plans looked back at performance during the financial year ending 31 March 2004, and set out plans for the next three years. These had been prepared by the Heads of Service, at the same time as establishing financial estimates for the following year. The Corporate Director – Environment outlined the significant changes to the format of Service Plans for 2004/07.

The Head of Planning and Countryside Service addressed the Committee on the Planning Service Plan. Members noted the key achievements in 2003/04 and the key issues to be faced in 2004/07. Major projects were going forward, a new Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act would be coming through, an appeals officer had been appointed and a new Building Control manager had commenced employment at the beginning of January 2004. Consideration was also given to key outcomes planned for 2004/07.

*57 **Service Plans 2004/07 (Cont'd)**

Planning services was commended for the way it had coped with the transitional changes it had faced. It was felt the general public should be made aware of the department's excellent performance.

The Corporate Director – Environment reported that the Streetscene service had experienced a very demanding year. Major restructuring had taken place and this had coincided with an acute shortage of staff. It was noted that two mechanical sweepers urgently needed replacing. Concern was expressed that replacement resources for street cleansing had not been considered at the time of the original purchase. The Head of Streetscene reported that a procedure was now in place to ensure that this did not happen in future. It was also reported that Streetscene would be working in partnership with ENCAMS to develop a street-cleansing programme.

The Chairman conveyed the Committee's thanks to all the Streetscene staff and thanked the Head of Streetscene.

The Head of Planning and Countryside explained that the Countryside Service was a new team that had a great many strengths. The key outcomes, planned for 2004/07 were all related to assisting the rural community, as well as promoting the district in terms of tourism. There had been cuts to the service budget for the forthcoming year and there was a need for the service to draw funds from other sources. It was noted that there were currently no national performance indicators, not even for trees for the Countryside Service. The Head of Planning and Countryside advised that to re-survey all TPOs and trees in the district was an enormous task and that it would not be easy to have a performance indicator to evaluate how many trees had been 'saved'.

RECOMMENDED that the Service Plans for Planning, Streetscene and Countryside for 2004/07 be approved.

*58 **Building Control Best Value Review Report**

The Chairman welcomed Gary Charles, the newly appointed building control manager to his first meeting of the Environment Overview Committee.

Consideration was given to the report of the Policy Manager concerning a summary of the Building Control Best Value Review Report. The full report was contained in a separate booklet that had been circulated with the agenda. The report proposed fifteen recommendations which fell under the main headings of costs, internal working arrangements, quality of service, and new ways of working, and marketing. It was noted that the Council had generated high 'surpluses' (excess of income over total expenditure), mainly due to the rise in the number of applications and the non-filling of staff vacancies.

On behalf of the Committee the Chairman thanked the building control service for all its hard work.

RECOMMENDED that the following recommendations of the Review Team be approved;

- 1) to examine the accounting system, identify and clarify accurate service expenditure costs;
- 2) to review the formulation of the Building Regulation Charge account;
- 3) to establish job cost monitoring using the *Uni-form* computer system;
- 4) to review team structure, grading, capacity and recruitment;
- 5) to prepare training and development plans for team members;

*58 **Building Control Best Value Review Report** (Cont'd)

- 6) to review and revise the current office layout to unify the team;
- 7) to introduce and implement a formal Building Control operational policy;
- 8) to seek adoption of the National Building Control Performance Standards;
- 9) to introduce Quality systems and seek accreditation;
- 10) to investigate strategic partnership/Joint commissioning of the Building Control Services;
- 11) to investigate alternative service delivery/working arrangements;
- 12) to seek implementation of the Development Team Approach;
- 13) to prepare and implement a marketing plan for the service;
- 14) to establish a customer database;
- 15) to introduce a twice annually Newsletter for customers and service stakeholders.

Chairman Date.....