

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Board held in the Council Chamber, Knowle, Sidmouth on Wednesday, 2 March 2011

Present:

Councillors:

Sara Randall Johnson (Chairman)
Graham Brown
Geoff Chamberlain
David Cox
Jill Elson
Ray Franklin
Graham Godbeer
Mike Green
Andrew Moulding

Also Present:

Councillors:

Vivienne Ash
David Atkins
Iain Chubb
Andrew Dinnis
Paul Diviani
Chris Gibbings

Roger Giles
Steve Hall
Jim Knight
Graham Liverton
Frances Newth
Helen Parr
Pauline Stott

Also present:

Officers:

Mark Williams, Chief Executive
Denise Lyon, Deputy Chief Executive
Diccon Pearse, Corporate Director
John Golding, Head of Housing and Social Inclusion
Simon Smale, Head of Environmental Health & Health Equalities
Matt Dickins, Policy Manager
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer
Diana Vernon, Democratic Services Manager

Apologies

Councillors:

Stuart Hughes

**Non-Board
Members:**

Ray Bloxham
Peter Bowden
Bob Buxton
Stephanie Jones
David Key

The meeting started at 5.30 pm and ended at 6.15 pm.

***172 Public Questions**

The Leader welcomed members of the public present and invited them to address the Board

Mr James Semple referred to the Government's drive for increased transparency and the importance of giving citizens the opportunity to access and experience local democracy using modern communication methods, such as recording meetings, blogging and tweeting. The Leader had already referred this matter to Council (meeting of 23 February 2011) where she had advised that the new Council in May would review the current arrangements taking into account any legal implications. However she added that any change would need to be achieved without adding to the financial burden on the Council Tax payer.

***173 Declarations of interest**

Councillor/ Officer	Minute number	Type of interest	Nature of interest
Councillor Jill Elson	178	Personal	Governor of Exmouth Community College

***174 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Board held on 9 February 2011 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

***175 Exclusion of the Public**

RESOLVED: that the classification given to the documents to be submitted to the Board, be confirmed, and that the reports relating to exempt information, be dealt with under Part B.

***176 Forward Plan**

The contents of the Forward Plan for the period 1 March to 30 June 2011 were noted.

***177 Matters referred to the Executive Board**

There were no matters referred to the Executive Board by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees or the Council.

178 East Devon Local Development Framework – Key Decision

The Policy Manager confirmed that the Annual Monitoring Report 2009/10 and the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2010 were now available on the Council's website. The Council was required to produce these documents as part of the Local Development Framework. The report summarised these documents which addressed similar work areas including housing land availability and five year land supply. Members noted the key findings which were listed in the report including that the core strategy had benefitted from extensive consultation and a revised document would be considered by Council in late summer 2011. (The full feedback from consultation would be presented to a special meeting of the Development Management Committee on 15 March.) Land supply levels exceeded five years in East Devon other than in the West End of the District. The Policy Manager explained the land supply calculation and how this was measured against strategic requirements.

Following the presentation of the report by the Policy Manager, the Leader invited members of the public, who had indicated that they wished to speak, to put their questions.

Mr James Semple asked when the meetings of the Local Development Framework Panel would be open to the press and public. The Leader advised that the new Council would take this decision but that the minutes of these meetings were now available on line. She added that even when meetings were open to the public, there would be occasions when the meeting would have to go into private session (for reasons set out in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act).

Mrs Sandra Semple referred to the recent announcement that East Devon District Council was to conduct an exhaustive review of its latest blueprint for the district's development over the next 15 years. It was expected that the review would result in a significant reduction in the estimates for house-building and job creation in the district to 2026. The Policy Manager confirmed that the review would be all embracing and would look at changes in population and demographics.

Mrs Semple asked if residents could be assured that they would be consulted on the amended core strategy. The Leader confirmed that there would be statutory consultation and spoke of the welcome levels of public interest in recent consultations.

178 **East Devon Local Development Framework – Key Decision**

Claire Wright referred to the Council's change of emphasis from landscape protection to economic development and provision of affordable housing. In approving this change of emphasis, the Council had recognised that businesses were struggling to find homes for their employees; providing affordable accommodation meant that employment opportunities could be created for the benefit of the district.

The Portfolio Holder – Communities confirmed the difficulties businesses were having in finding homes for potential employees. Balanced communities could not exist without adequate employment and housing being available. She referred particularly to opportunities needed for young people and advised that due to low wages and proportionally high accommodation costs, young people had little option but to leave the district. She gave a recent example of the level of demand for family accommodation and emphasised the need for more affordable housing.

RECOMMENDED that the Annual Monitoring Report 2009/10 and the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2010 be endorsed as assessments to inform future policy making, including Local Development Framework work, and help inform determination of planning applications.

*179 **Financial Monitoring Report 2010/11 – Month 10**

Members considered the report of the Senior Accountants, which summarised the Council's overall financial position at the end of Month 10 (January 2011). Large, high risk and volatile budget areas had been particularly taken into account together with predicted spending patterns. Operational managers and finance staff had undertaken thorough risk assessments of material budgets. The variances in spending patterns would be considered as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Diccon Pearse, Corporate Director advised that the report did not include any areas of concern that had not already been addressed in previous meetings.

The report summarised predicted over and under spends to year end by Portfolio and indicated that the Council's balances and reserves were being maintained at or above the adopted levels. The Council had previously agreed to maintain the General Fund Balance at a higher balance than the adopted level because of the many financial uncertainties and risks facing the Council at the present time. The predicted General Fund Balance was reported as £1.972m above adopted level. The Transformation Reserve was also at a satisfactory level.

The Chief Executive advised that Devon County Council had yet to reimburse the Council for the cost of the June 2010 County elections but that this claim was not disputed.

The Portfolio Holder – Resources was pleased to confirm that Portfolio Holders and those responsible for budgets had continued to maintain a prudent stranglehold on finances. The Leader thanked Councillors and Officers for their efforts in achieving an encouraging balance.

RESOLVED that the variances identified as part of the Revenue and Capital Monitoring process up to month ten be noted and it be acknowledged that all the Council's balances and reserves were being maintained at or above the adopted levels and therefore no action was required;

REASON To update Members on the overall financial position of the authority. Monthly monitoring by the Board included recommendations where corrective action was required for the remainder of the financial year.

***180 Absence report – Quarter Three 2010**

Members had asked for quarterly reports on the organisation's absence levels for close monitoring. The report showed an overall improving trend with reasons identified in respect of variances. Members noted an increase in short term absence levels in quarter three compared with the previous two quarters - colds and flu were the main reasons given. Medium term absence was the lowest reported level in 4 years and long term absence was the second lowest level for 4 years. Members noted the effective strategies undertaken to reduce absence levels.

Members were asked whether they wished to continue with the quarterly absence reporting.

- RESOLVED**
- (1) that the overall trend of the Council's reduced absence levels, the reasons given and strategies adopted be noted.
 - (2) that quarterly absence reporting be continued for the next two quarters to monitor any effect on attendance during the current time of change and restructure within the organisation; thereafter exception reporting be used.

REASON To enable Members to monitor absence levels at EDDC as a result of past concern and to consider the effectiveness of adopted strategies during a time of changes within the organisation.

***181 BEE Project in The Byes, Sidmouth**

Members considered the joint report of the Park Development Officer and Deputy Chief Executive which advised of an enterprising local community volunteer group, the Byes Environmental Education (BEE) Project which intended to spend £50,000 Community Spaces Big Lottery grant money to provide trees, interpretation boards, gateways and other features to enhance biodiversity and educational opportunities in the Byes in Sidmouth. The group had the support of the freehold landowners (National Trust and Sid Vale Association).

The Council was responsible for managing the Byes and Mark Pollard, EDDC's Parks Development Officer had provided support and advice to the BEE Project. (The outline schedule of works was appended to the report.) The Project had asked the Council to give permission as landlord and act as the Accountable Body to facilitate the project, maximise the grant money and take responsibility for public liability insurance. The Council's liability in respect of a claim would be limited to £1000 excess. It was noted that the covering letter at Appendix E to the report needed to be corrected to read 'East Devon District Council'.

Members noted letters of support for the Project from Sidmouth Ward Councillors.

The Chairman of the Council spoke in support of the Project and what was being achieved. The Leader added that it was encouraging to see a community working together for the benefit of the area.

- RESOLVED** that, subject to an award of £50,000 from the Big Lottery Fund,
- (1) Permission be granted for the work to be completed by the BEE Project on East Devon land and, where applicable, East Devon managed land,
 - (2) The Council takes on the role of Accountable Body to enable the BEE Project to maximise its funding.
 - (3) The activities of the project be included under the Council's public liability insurance cover.

*181 **BEE Project in The Byes, Sidmouth cont/..**

- (4) Assistance be provided by the Council as outlined in the report under Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 in exercise of the well-being power.

REASON To progress improvements suggested for the EDDC owned/managed sections of the Byes – the works listed are of the type that would have been carried out by the Council's Streetscene Service in more favourable financial times.

*182 **Exemption from Contract Standing Orders**

Members considered the report of the Streetscene Manager seeking exemption from Contract Standing Orders to include a company not on the Council's approved list (Constructline), in the tender process for a particularly specified midi tractor to achieve best value for money.

RESOLVED that an exception be made from Contract Standing Orders (1.39) to enable an invitation be sent to Loxton Groundcare Limited to tender alongside suppliers on the approved list (Constructline) for a midi tractor and front mounted flail.

183 **Programme of meetings (Council, Executive Board and Committees).**

Members considered the draft meetings programme for 2011/12 including the proposed date of the Annual Council meeting of 25 May 2011. The draft programme, which would be referred to the Annual Council meeting, reflected the recommendation for one Scrutiny/Overview Committee to meet in advance of the Executive Board meeting each month.

RECOMMENDED that the Council be recommended:

1. To hold the 2011 Annual Meeting of the Council on Wednesday, 25 May, commencing at 6.30 pm,
2. To approve the draft programme of meetings, for submission to the 2011 Annual Meeting.

*184 **Exclusion of the Public**

RESOLVED that under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting as exempt information, is likely to be disclosed and on balance the public interest is in discussing the items in private session (Part B).

*185 **Exmouth Regeneration Programme Board**

Members considered the minutes of a meeting of the Exmouth Regeneration Programme Board held on 3 February 2011. The Programme Board had recognised the need to focus activities on key projects. On receipt of the Master Plan, it would be considered by this Council and Devon County Council. If adopted, this would be the subject of public consultation.

The valued efforts of the former town manager, Tony Collins, and former Corporate Director, Karime Hassan, were acknowledged.

***185 Exmouth Regeneration Programme Board (cont)..**

The Portfolio Holder – Communities advised that there was no longer a need to retain the Exmouth Town Management Partnership Board as the work of this body had been incorporated within the wider project work of the Programme Board.

The Leader stressed the importance of being aware of project deliverability and the need to monitor what was achievable. There was some orchestrated opposition to the Strand Enhancement Scheme apparently from local businesses fearing competition. However, the Chamber of Commerce was supportive of the inclusion of an information office and of the potential of the space.

Members questioned progress in respect of the bowling facility; an up-date would be given to the next meeting of the Regeneration Board.

- RESOLVED**
- (1) that the main priority be project delivery on the Royal Avenue site;
 - (2) that staff and financial resource be made available to see this project through;
 - (3) that the Master Plan be referred to DCC and EDDC for agreement, with public consultation in June/July (after the District Council elections) if the Master Plan was adopted by EDDC's Development Management Committee;
 - (4) that the Exmouth Town Management Partnership Board be dissolved at the Annual Meeting of the Council in May.

REASON To recognise the need to prioritise the work and resource allocation.
The work of the Exmouth Town Management Partnership Board was now incorporated within the wider project work in Exmouth.

***186 Minutes of the meetings of the Interviewing Committee**

Members considered the minutes of the meetings of the Interviewing Committee held on 1, 15 and 16 February 2011. The recommendations of the meetings had been referred to the Council meeting on 23 February where they had been approved.

The Chief Executive up-dated Members on the appointment of the Deputy Chief Executive – Development, Regeneration and Partnership. The Recruitment Consultant had shortlisted the applicants and would now meet with the Chief Executive and Denise Lyon, Deputy Chief Executive to determine the final shortlist for the formal interviews with the Interviewing Committee at the end of March.

Chairman Date.....