

Date: 24 December 2010
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To: Members of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Councillors: Helen Parr (Chairman), Darryl Nicholas (Vice Chairman), Peter Burrows, Vivien Duval-Steer, Roger Giles, Marion Olive, Philip Skinner, Pauline Stott, Graham Troman, Mark Williamson)

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Meeting of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 12 January 2010 – 6.30pm. Council Chamber, Knowle, Sidmouth

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting.

- A period of 15 minutes has been provided at the beginning of the meeting to allow members of the public to raise questions.
- In addition, the public may speak on items listed on the agenda. After a report has been introduced, the Chairman (Leader of the Council) will ask if any member of the public wishes to speak and/or ask questions.
- All individual contributions will be limited to a period of 3 minutes – where there is an interest group of objectors or supporters, a spokesperson should be appointed to speak on behalf of group.
- The public is advised that the Chairman has the right and discretion to control questions to avoid disruption, repetition and to make best use of the meeting time.

A hearing loop system will be in operation in the Council Chamber.

AGENDA

Page/s

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|---|--|-------|
| 1 | Public question time – standard agenda item (15 minutes)
Members of the public are invited to put questions to the Committee through the Chairman.
Councillors also have the opportunity to ask questions of the Chairman and/or Portfolio Holders during this time slot whilst giving priority at this part of the agenda to members of the public. | |
| 2 | To confirm the minutes of the meeting of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 20 October 2010. | 5 - 8 |
| 3 | To receive any apologies for absence. | |
| 4 | To receive any declarations of interests relating to items on the agenda. | |

- 5 To consider any items which, in the opinion of the Chairman, should be dealt with as matters of urgency because of special circumstances.

(Note: such circumstances need to be clearly identified in the minutes; Councillors please notify the Chief Executive in advance of the meeting if you wish to raise a matter under this item. The Chief Executive will then consult with the Chairman).

- 6 To agree any items to be dealt with after the public (including the press) have been excluded. There are no items that the officers recommend should be dealt with in this way.

- 7 **Community Groups in East Devon – Villages in Action** – Roger Werner

Members will hear a presentation from this community group that is part-funded by EDDC The groups will explain how the EDDC grant is spent, how accessible their service is to the community and those in need, and what measureable differences is their service making.

- 8 **Presentation from Member Champion for Culture**

Members will hear a presentation from Councillor Vivienne Ash on her work as Member Champion for Culture.

- 9 **Community Transport Groups in East Devon**

Members will hear presentations from community transport groups that are part-funded by East Devon District Council;

Axe Valley Ring & Ride – Sandra Ward
Exmouth Ring and Ride – Jill Elson
Honiton TRIP – Neil Hurlock

These groups will explain their how the EDDC grants are spent, how accessible their services are to the community and those in need, what measureable difference are their services making?

- 10 **Review of Home Safeguard Charges** 9 - 14

Members to consider the report of the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion

- 11 **Diversity Peer Challenge Report – For Members' information only.** 15 - 26

- 12 **Forward Plan 2010/11** 27

The Committee to agree items for consideration at future meetings of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Members remember!

Members remember!

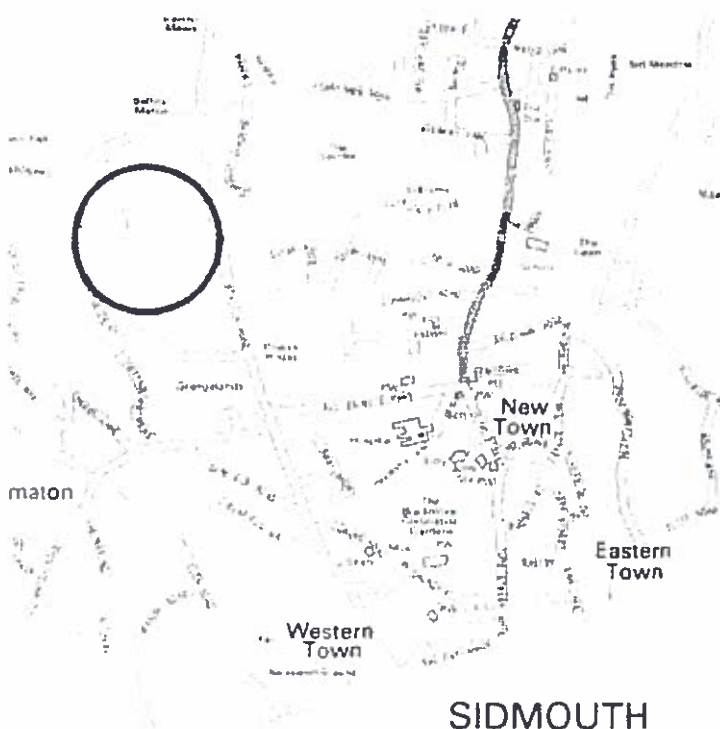
- You must declare the nature of any personal or prejudicial interests in an item whenever it becomes apparent that you have an interest in the business being considered.
- Where you have a personal interest because the business relates to or is likely to affect a body of which you are a member or manager as an EDDC nominee or appointee, then you need only disclose that interest when (and if) you speak on the item. The same rule applies if you have a personal interest in relation to a body exercising functions of a public nature.
- Make sure you say the reason for your interest as this has to be included in the minutes.
- If your interest is prejudicial you must leave the room unless
 - a) you have obtained a dispensation from the Council's Standards Committee or
 - b) where Para 12(2) of the member Code of Conduct applies. [Para 12(2) allows a Member with a prejudicial interest to stay for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to the business but only to the extent the public are allowed the same rights. If you do remain for these purposes, you must not exercise decision-making functions or seek to improperly influence the decision; you must leave the meeting room once you have made your representation, answered questions or given evidence.]
- The Code states that any member of the Executive Board or other decision-making committee or joint committee or sub-committee attending Overview and Scrutiny committees has a prejudicial interest in any business where that member was a member of the committee at the relevant time and present when the decision was made or other action was taken (whether or not implemented). Members with prejudicial interests should declare them and are allowed to remain in the meeting for the limited purposes set out in the Code para 12(2) – see last paragraph.
- You also need to declare when you are subject to the party whip before the matter is discussed.

Suggestions for questioning during an Overview and Scrutiny meeting

Below are some prompts which may help you to form your own questions to ask at an Overview and Scrutiny meeting. Your questioning technique is crucial in creating an atmosphere conducive to open answers. Avoid excessive interrogation and treat those being questioned with courtesy and respect; however don't be afraid to ask supplementary questions if you feel that you haven't been given a clear answer.

- ❑ **IS IT REQUIRED?** (do we have this, does it make sense to tackle it, do we really need it)
- ❑ **IS IT SYSTEMS THINKING?** (is it evidence based and designed around the customer demands)
- ❑ **IS THE INTENTION CLEAR?** (what are we actually trying to achieve)
- ❑ **ANY REAL OUTCOMES?** (are we actually, and measurably, achieving things for our customers).
- ❑ **WHAT IS THE COST?** (both time and money)
- ❑ **DOES IT COMPLY?** (have we checked that it meets our obligations, the law, any formal guidance, and any Council policy or resolutions).
- ❑ **OTHERS DO WHAT?** (how do other organisations tackle this, best practice)
- ❑ **EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT?** (how do we know we're doing things well, in a timely fashion, and at "best value")
- ❑ **WHAT IS THE RISK?** (any areas of risk for the Council)
- ❑ **ANYONE LOSE OUT?** (are there sections of the community who might be disadvantaged by this approach, or be less able to take advantage, than others)
- ❑ **DOES IT LINK?** (have we linked this to other, similar, pieces of work within or outside the Council)

Getting to the Meeting – for the benefit of visitors



The entrance to the Council Offices is located on Station Road, Sidmouth. Parking is limited during normal working hours but normally easily available for evening meetings.

The following bus service stops outside the Council Offices on Station Road:
From Exmouth, Budleigh, Otterton and Newton Poppleford – 157

The following buses all terminate at the Triangle in Sidmouth. From the Triangle, walk up Station Road until you reach the Council Offices (approximately ½ mile).
From Exeter – 52A, 52B
From Honiton – 52B
From Seaton – 52A
From Ottery St Mary – 379, 387

Please check your local timetable for times.

The Committee Suite has a separate entrance to the main building, located at the end of the visitor and Councillor car park. The rooms are at ground level and easily accessible; there is also a toilet for disabled users.

Visitors please note that the doors to the civic suite (meeting rooms) will be opened ¼ hour before the start time of the meeting. Councillors are reminded to bring their key fobs if they wish to access the area prior to that time.

For a copy of this agenda in large print, please contact the Democratic Services Team on 01395 517546

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on Wednesday 20 October 2010

- Present:** Councillors:
Helen Parr (Chairman) Marion Olive
Darryl Nicholas (Vice Chairman) Pauline Stott
Vivien Duval-Steer Graham Troman
Roger Giles
- Officers:** Peter Jeffs – Corporate Director
Rachel Perram – Democratic Services Officer
- Visitors:** Jayne Carroll, Director of Strategic Commissioning, NHS Devon
Jay Talbot, Community Council of Devon
Chris Griffiths, East Devon citizens Advice Bureau
Noel Finnegan, Citizens Advice
- Also Present:** Councillors:
Ray Bloxham
- Apologies:** Councillors:
Mark Williamson Steve Hall

The meeting started at 6.35pm and ended at 9.10pm.

***15 Public question time**

There were no questions from members of the public.

***16 Introductions and Welcome**

The Chairman welcomed Jayne Carroll from NHS Devon; Jay Talbot from the Community Council of Devon; Chris Griffiths and Noel Finnegan from Citizens Advice.

***17 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 8 September 2010 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

***18 Declarations of Interests**

Name of Councillor	Type of Interest	Nature of Interest
Cllr Pauline Stott	Personal	Employed as Community Care Assistant for Devon County Council
Cllr Frances Newth	Personal	Member of Sidmouth Locality Care Team Member of Sidmouth Comforts Fund

The Committee received a presentation from Jayne Carroll, Director of Strategic Commissioning, NHS Devon that expanded on the Government's White Paper and on the Government's proposals to transform community services.

Transformation of community services looked to put clinicians in control at the point of care via a network of GP Consortia. This would happen with a handover from Primary Care Trusts (PCT) to GP Consortia Groups in 2013.

Transforming Community Services

Members heard about Transforming Community Services, a national programme launched by the previous government. This focussed upon health provision in the community with PCTs developing a commissioning strategy aimed at offering patient care as close to home as possible. This was assisted by the provision of integrated 'clusters' of health and complex care teams - helping to deliver a complete service for patients.

Members were advised that NHS Devon had completed consultation and had made recommendations for interim arrangements for the provision of healthcare services in Devon. Eastern Devon would be controlled by Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust and would incorporate East, Mid Devon and Exeter areas. The decision to use North Devon to control the area had been largely based upon experience that they had in vertical integration – offering a wide range of services.

Members discussed this matter in some depth with the following items raised:

- The Committee had genuine concerns over the decision to hand over budgetary control to GP consortia. Feedback received from residents and GPs in East Devon had been negative and there was a genuine lack of certainty surrounding Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust's ability to make informed decisions for East Devon.
- Concerns were raised over the consultation process, which was carried out in a short time frame, making it difficult to put in place long term arrangements. The decision to adopt 'interim measures' was in some part made due to uncertainty and lack of information available to consultees. EDDC were not consulted as part of this process.
- A commissioner (currently NHS Devon) will oversee the handover to the new arrangements and a discussion was taking place at Government as to who this might be after 2013.
- Members requested that they receive reassurance from NHS Devon that community hospitals in East Devon would not face closure because of the new proposed arrangements. Members also agreed that they would like EDDC to be engaged in future decision-making.

- RECOMMENDED:**
- (1) that EDDC is concerned that North Devon Trust may not understand, and may seek to adversely direct, the work of the local community hospitals.
 - (2) that EDDC receive information upon the performance and services of North Devon Trust during its transitional management period, and to have any concerns from this fully considered;
 - (3) That EDDC be engaged in setting the permanent arrangements for management of local community hospitals, and reserving the right to tender to host them if legally permitted. (EDDC also expects the Leagues of Friends and all local GPs to be fully engaged in this process).

Community Groups in East Devon

Community Council for Devon (CCD)

Members heard a presentation from Jay Talbot, of the CCD and received a paper outlining the work undertaken by the CCD as well as information that related specifically to East Devon.

The CCD were involved in many areas and worked with a number of outside bodies for the betterment of the people of Devon. Five main areas were identified as:

1. Parish Plans – giving advice and support to communities in their production.
2. Village Halls – the CCD offered many areas of support to halls. These included accessibility improvements for disabled users, promoting the use of green energy and assistance to hall committees in promoting their use to reach out to vulnerable members of the community. It was felt that halls could look to home 'Big Society' ventures in rural communities.
3. Housing – 84% of Community Plans highlighted the need for affordable housing in East Devon.
4. Parish Councils – the CCD worked with Councils to advise and to increase interest from members of the community to stand as councillors. Councils were encouraged to engage and consult with their communities in decision-making.
5. RILF Loans (Interest Free) – 3 parish councils in East Devon had benefitted from receiving interest free loans in 2009/10.

Members were advised that a Service Level Agreement was in place between CCD and EDDC.

In response to a query over which Authorities helped to fund the work of the CCD, Members heard that EDDC, Torridge, Mid Devon District Councils and Dartmoor National Park provided funds. EDDC benefitted as a major funder of their work.

The Chairman and Members thanked Jay for his interesting presentation and for the continuing work of the CCD, which provided excellent service and value for money for the residents of East Devon.

RECOMMENDED: that the Committee endorse funding the CCD and that funding also assists the post of Rural Enabling Officer at the CCD.

REASON: To promote the 'Localism Agenda' and work carried out by the CCD on Local Plans and village halls.

East Devon Citizens' Advice Bureau (EDCAB)

Members received a presentation from Chris Griffiths that gave information on the work of the CAB in East Devon. A report was circulated to Committee members providing a summary of activity and benefits to the residents of East Devon.

Funding was received from two main sources: EDDC £58,823 and DCC £54,000. Services to residents were supplied free of charge to every user.

There were a number of new systems in place that helped to provide better accessibility to the public. These included a website (www.eastdevoncab.org.uk) and 'gateway assessment' that was designed to clarify clients' needs so that advice could be better directed. This system had seen improvements in the speed of advice given. Opening hours had been increased and Seaton was opening a new centre which would have a 'self help' advice kiosk. This format would be trialled for 18 months. A new telephone advisor system was being investigated which was different from the face-to-face advice offered at present.

20 **Community Groups in East Devon**

The CAB had good brand awareness, research had established that over 97% of people in the UK had heard of the organisation and 41% had used their services at some point. 12.5% of the population in East Devon had been clients of the EDCAB since 2004.

The Chairman and Members thanked Chris Griffiths and applauded the work of the EDCAB in offering a vital and good value for money service to residents in East Devon.

RECOMMENDED: that the Committee endorse funding the East Devon Citizens Advice Bureau.

*21 **Update from Member Champion for Equality**

Members received an update on the outcome of Equalities Assessment of EDDC held in September 2010 from Vivien Duval-Steer, Member Champion for Equalities.

Members heard that EDDC was now in receipt of the final report, which would be distributed to Members for information.

The Council had failed to reach 'Achieving' level in its first inspection. Assessors noted that the speed of change in the organisation was good and that serviced services had shown good initiative towards improvement, however there was a need to embed an 'equalities ethos' into the organisation. The introduction of an External Equalities Forum group, which included Members and officers and outside bodies was a good start, however this needed to be widened in membership and remit.

RESOLVED: that Members receive a summary of the findings from the Equalities Assessment 2010.

*22 **Forward Plan 2010/11**

The Committee noted items for consideration at future meetings and the Chairman encouraged Members to send items for inclusion to the Lead Officer.

Chairman Date.....

Agenda Item 10

Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

12 January 2011

jg



Home Safeguard review 2010

Summary

This report is a midyear review of the position on Home Safeguard becoming self-financing, a challenge we set for this financial year. Over many years Home Safeguard have issued free alarms to particular clients which meant that the service had to be subsidised by the Council Tax payer. A fundamental review of our charging policy was undertaken in 2009 and after careful consideration it was decided that we should increase our income by charging all customers and that this level of additional income should enable the service to be self-financing.

The report shows that we are making good progress towards achieving a self-financing position and have carefully balanced a more businesslike approach with the needs of our vulnerable client group.

Recommendation

That the position on the Home Safeguard budget is noted and the service be encouraged to ensure that it achieves the budget set for 2010/11.

a) Reasons for Recommendation

Members sought a midyear report on how Home Safeguard was progressing towards being self-financing during 2010/11.

b) Alternative Options

There are various charging options available to the service.

c) Risk Considerations

Operating the service as a business unit has risks where income may not cover costs and the business approach fails to recognise the vulnerability of some clients. The risk to clients is that vulnerable customers are disadvantaged by the introduction of a charging regime and cease to use the service.

d) Policy and Budgetary Considerations

These are set out in the report.

Positive Impact Overall

Safe Environment.

Inspirational Council.

Meeting our Diversity and Equality duties.

Providing same service at less cost.

e) Date for Review of Decision

At the end of the financial year.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Home Safeguard alarm system is essentially a telephone based emergency call monitoring service. The service has in excess of 5,000 customers and was originally conceived to provide a telephone connection to the council's sheltered housing and was supplemented by the Warden Service. It consists of a control centre based at Lymebourne Park, Sidmouth, Tunstall PNC6 software, telephony equipment, and eight Operators (plus some casual or agency staff) working a shift pattern to ensure 24/7 response for customers.
- 1.2 A comprehensive review of the service was undertaken and reported to the Executive Board in July 2009. This led to the self-financing proposals and the decision to charge all customers from April 2010, including those private sector customers who had been issued a free alarm.
- 1.3 The service has expanded over the last twenty years in terms of the volume of calls/contacts received. We operate a complex four shift pattern with a system of early shifts (07.45 hours – 12.45 hours), mid shifts (12.30 hours – 17.30 hours), late shifts (17.15 hours – 22.15 hours) and night shifts (22.05 hours – 07.55 hours). This pattern is repeated over an eight week cycle and over this period our Operators typically work one night shift a week, plus up to four other shifts during the week. We have one Operator on duty during nights, late shifts and weekends, otherwise the system is normally run by two Operators.
- 1.4 We operate a Tunstall PNC6 system and use Chubb (Initial) or Tunstall hardware. The system contains a database of client details and their nominated contacts. When a client triggers their telephone, pull cord or pendant the call connects to the control centre and the Operator can talk to the customer to determine whether there is a problem. The Operator can respond by reassuring the customer and/or making a call to a relative, neighbour, Doctor etc. as appropriate. Test calls are made from the control centre or through the Scheme Manager/Mobile Support Officer to ensure that the client is well and/or the system is working properly. Some installations are 'hard wired' into our buildings and some operate as 'dispersed alarms' through the telephone system.
- 1.5 The Home Safeguard service has been reliable, professional, and has provided good value for customers. It is closely linked with the housing support service provided through our Scheme Managers and Mobile Support Officers.
- 1.6 We have refurbished the Home Safeguard offices and introduced a business continuity or disaster recovery system, which enables us to transfer the operation to an office in Burnside, Exmouth should a problem occur with the office and/or the telephone system at our Sidmouth base. We can switch the calls and dispatch an Operator to work in Exmouth. We also have an uninterrupted power supply (UPS) at Sidmouth and a lone worker alarm for night shifts. All calls received are recorded and call answering performance automatically monitored.

- 1.7 Operators use a manual, containing advice on what to do in particular situations and contact numbers. The manual contains details of the 'out of hours' procedures and contacts, plus guidance on how to deal with various situations when they occur. We have been attempting to improve the format and content of the Manual, making it electronic and easier to update.

2. Financing the Home Safeguard service

- 2.1 The cost of the Service is split between the Housing Revenue Account (the part of the service that supports council tenants) and the General Fund (the part that supports the private sector, provides council out of hours calls and protects officers who are lone working etc.). For 2010/11 we agreed a self-financing budget for the first time for Home Safeguard.
- 2.2 Since 2003 Home Safeguard has been partly funded through the Supporting People grant, which is a revenue payment we claim and receive quarterly from a 'county wide pot'. We transfer 20% of all claimed Supporting People grant to Home Safeguard, which is currently equivalent to £102,000 per annum. Our income projections each year are based upon existing customers, group connections, and contracted organisations who subscribe to the service, plus amounts for recharges to the Housing Revenue Account to run the Council's out of hour's service.
- 2.3 We fund Home Safeguard through the General Fund, although a significant proportion of our customers are council tenants. Our costs are predominately employee costs associated with running a 24/7 operation, premises, and the cost of maintaining and providing telephony equipment, software, equipment installation and maintenance.
- 2.4 We have attempted to make Home Safeguard cost effective in recent years and reduced the General Fund contribution from £143k per annum to £80k in 2009/10. However, in the past we found it difficult to reach a breakeven position because of the need to invest in upgrades to software, equipment purchases, and the decision to continually uphold the policy of providing free alarm installations and monitoring for those who are over 80 and in receipt of Housing or Council Tax benefits in the District.
- 2.5 We concluded that the only way of making the service self-financing was to charge the existing (1400) customers who received a free service a monitoring fee, recognising that we would lose some customers and ensuring that no vulnerable customers terminated their service because they could not afford to pay the cost. No other community alarm service to our knowledge provides a free service.

3. The 2010 review

- 3.1 Home Safeguard started the year with 3 major projects to complete, and the remit of becoming a self-funding business unit of the Council. The projects were the installation of new control centre equipment, Tunstall PNC6, managing the free to chargeable project, and to gain Telecare Services Authority (TSA) accreditation.

- 3.2 We have now successfully completed the installation of the new control centre equipment Tunstall PNC6, which is proving to be a very useful system that can perform a lot more tasks for us and allows us to be a more professional service with the data that we can now produce in report format. Throughout the changeover and data transfer process we needed to maintain the service and for a while during testing was running two systems.
- 3.3 In September we gained TSA accreditation which is the professional body who set the standards for our industry, and is a requirement usually specified for us to be able to gain further external contracts in the future.
- 3.4 In accordance with the Executive Board authority, in September 2009 we started to charge for the Home Safeguard Service, with new customers being charged from September 2009 and existing private sector customers being charged from April 2010. We decided to incorporate the installation charge in the monitoring charge during 2010. Our charge for private sector customers was set at £3.17p (excluding VAT) per week or £164.65 per annum (excluding VAT).
- 3.5 To achieve charging of existing customers we committed to visit 1149 customers, the team have visited and signed up 693 of the free existing customers. We had a number of customers who decide they no longer required the service, also a number of customers had either moved on or gone into care and some had passed away but as the equipment was free the service was not contacted. So we have had 343 units either removed or lost to us.
- 3.6 During these visits to our customers we established that we had 71 customers who wished the unit removed because they couldn't afford the payments, but were considered vulnerable so the units have been left in place. We have approximately 70 customers left to visit who are proving to be the more difficult customers to make contact with. This project should be completed by the end of January 2011.
- 3.7 As can be seen from the budget position set out below the challenge of becoming a self-funding service is also proceeding well. We budgeted to have income from customers of £347,740 and to date we have receipts of £325,858. Installations for the rest of the year could bring in approximately £20,000 additional income. With the recharge from the HRA and Support Services we stand to have a total income of £648,930. Much of our income has been received as the majority of customers have paid their annual cost.
- 3.8 In the first 6 months of the year we installed 270 new units in the private sector, taking into account the installations we removed we have gained (net) 17 new customers.
- 3.9 A summary of the 2010/11 budget position as of month 8 (end November) is shown below:

Description	Annual budget	Year to date actual	Year to date variance
Employment costs	£322,320	£216,451	£751
Premises costs	£8,980	£6,692	(£508)
Transport costs	£7,730	£8,298	£3,178
Supplies and services	£166,440	£126,462	£16,882
Non government grants and contributions	(£104,810)	(£76,937)	(£7,097)
Customer receipts	(£347,740)	(£325,858)	(£94,018)
Internal recharge expenditure	£65,920	£65,920	£0
Internal recharge income	(£196,380)	(£196,380)	£0
Capital charge	£69,740	£69,740	£0
Total	(£7,800)	(£105,611)	(£80,811)

- 3.10 In terms of budget pressures we have one member of staff absent due to long term sickness at the moment, and also a member of staff going on maternity leave who is also currently off sick. Bringing in cover for the rota is essential to keep the service running 24/7 and this increases our employment costs. We also have a number of customers who have signed a new lease, but are now saying that they cannot afford to pay their invoice.
- 3.11 We have identified a quantity of equipment in the field which needs to be changed. When the digital replacement for CN21 comes in this equipment is not compatible, we have at least 800 of these units in the field. We need to factor into future budgets a larger amount for equipment renewals.
- 3.12 We have produced a draft budget for 2011/12 that shows an increase in the surplus. We are trying to keep costs down, provide an excellent service to customers and attract more business. We have factored into our budget a 2% increase in monitoring charges.
- 3.13 We are still learning how to run the service on business unit lines whilst trying to ensure that we balance the need to be self-financing with the fact that we are a social service with vulnerable customers.

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications on which to comment.

Financial Implications

The financial implications are as indicated in the report.

Consultation on Reports to the Executive

None.

Background Papers

- Executive Board report reviewing Home Safeguard charges 15th July 2009.
- Monthly budget monitoring reports.

John Golding
Head of Housing and Social Inclusion

Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee
12 January 2011.

Diversity Peer Challenge
8th and 9th September 2010

East Devon District Council

Report



EQUALITY
FRAMEWORK
FOR LOCAL
GOVERNMENT

1. Background

This report is a summary of the findings of a Diversity Peer Challenge organised by the Local Government Improvement and Development and carried out by its trained peers. The report satisfies the requirements of the Equality Framework for Local Government for an external assessment at the Achieving level. The Peer Challenge is designed to validate a council's own self-assessment at the Achieving Level by considering documentary evidence and by carrying out a series of interviews and focus groups with employees and other stakeholders.

The basis for the Peer Challenge is a benchmark against five areas of performance. They are:

- Knowing your communities and equality mapping
- Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- Community engagement and satisfaction
- Responsive services and customer care
- A modern and diverse workforce

The Peer Challenge is not an inspection, rather it offers an external assessment of a council's own judgement of itself against the Equality Framework benchmark, by critical friends who have experience of delivering an equality/diversity agenda in their own councils.

Peers were:

Cllr Julie Young, Colchester Borough Council
Angie Sarchet, Buckinghamshire County Council
Chris Badger, Hertfordshire County Council
Louise Sboui, Huntingdonshire District Council
Gill Elliott, Local Government Improvement and Development

The team appreciates the welcome and hospitality provided by the council and would like to thank everybody that they met during the process for their time and contributions.

1. Executive summary and recommendations

Following this Diversity Peer Challenge, we have reached the following conclusion:

The peer challenge of East Devon District Council was unable to fully validate the council's self assessment against the criteria for 'Achieving' level of the Equality Framework. Our main conclusions and recommendations are as follows:

- EDDC has recently emerged from two years of addressing the "Unitary" issue within Devon County. This has clearly taken up considerable management and political energies and meant that earlier impetus around equalities and diversity was not always sustained. Appointment of a part time diversity officer over the last twelve months has strengthened the focus of the authority on equalities and diversity, particularly around issues such as community engagement; data mapping and preparation for external assessment at the Achieving level of the EFLG and it is

hoped that this momentum will continue in the future despite the recent ending of this fixed term post.

- Through our interviews we found some good examples of services taking the initiative and engaging innovatively with different communities, and tailoring services to meet needs of those deemed marginalised or vulnerable. However, a more coherent corporate approach is needed. Specifically, this will help services share intelligence to develop better understanding of customers and target interventions appropriately.
- Stronger corporate leadership will be required to coordinate activity on clearer shared priorities and maintain momentum, given the departure of the equalities and diversity officer who had provided a focus to this activity.
- The Council's workforce broadly reflects the demographic profile of the Community, although there is a lack of women in senior posts. The Council has invested in training for staff on Equalities and Diversity, and shows notable practice on raising awareness of domestic violence. More systematic and rigorous monitoring of the workforce profile will help them understand inadvertent impacts on different groups of new policies or workforce changes.
- The Council has developed a systematic approach to impact assessments, and there is evidence of these leading to changes. Procurement practice is developing. Customer care has clearly improved through the use of 'Systems' thinking, and this has led to a more sophisticated understanding of customers' needs, and how best to meet those needs.
- The Council has taken steps to improve community engagement recently, with notable practice around Section 106 work and engagement in regeneration projects. The Council should do more to communicate when it has taken onboard feedback, and coordinate consultation activity even more strongly across the Council and with partners.
- There is evidence of the Council using community data to inform strategies and action, with agreed protocols for sharing data. More effective sharing of intelligence and data across services, and with partners, would help the Council meet its aspirations for a more sophisticated understanding of its customers' needs. From April 2011 new specific equality duties will require councils to publish equalities data relating to services and workforce that is transparent and gives a full picture of equality in these areas.
- To help the council improve and reach the Achieving level we have made a number of recommendations. These are:
 1. Develop the Corporate Equality Group (CEG) into a more strategic group, focusing on providing strategic coherence and coordination across the Council, with an internal and external focus.

2. Use the CEG to coordinate how data and intelligence on communities is shared between services, so the Council's understanding of its customers can become more sophisticated.
3. Communicate more clearly and frequently when the Council has listened to communities and taken action accordingly.
4. Ensure plans to develop more systematic workforce monitoring are implemented, so the authority can monitor the impact of strategic decisions, transformation and policy on different groups within the workforce.
5. Ensure plans to develop procurement practice are taken forward, with meaningful engagement with suppliers.
6. Ensure decisions about future cuts in service and transformation are made with a full understanding of their impact on communities, and the different equality strands. Summaries of this analysis should be made public.
7. Develop further ways to improve Member's understanding and leadership of equalities and diversity, making appropriate links to customer service.
8. Continue to develop the external Equality Forum, and develop ways of engaging with a wider range of diverse groups across all relevant equality strands.

2. The Council made the following observations upon the impact the peer challenge has had: -

It has proven useful to have an external view of our work on equalities and diversity, and the conclusions provide a useful external insight into other people's perceptions. The self assessment exercise itself was helpful in demonstrating the wide range of equality and diversity activity we have been involved in, and sometimes overlook as just 'the day job'.

Equally it is useful to have an external view as a benchmark against what others are doing. Undoubtedly after all of the work there was some deflation at the result and findings of the review, and we will now need to try to pick up the momentum and motivation again and tackle the recommendations.

3. Detailed findings

3.1 Knowing your communities and equality mapping

Strengths:

- There is evidence that EDDC is collecting relevant and appropriate information using a range of techniques and that this data is being used to identify equality gaps and inform service provision. The Council has used data collected on domestic

violence statistics in the area to establish a women's refuge and a sanctuary scheme. Neighbourhood Assessments are a good example of how data gathering direct from service users and residents. Suggestions get fed back to the services for improvements. EDDC have recently started a further Benefits Take-up Campaign following a review of data held by the county council on its MOSAIC database.

- The Housing Department in particular uses a wide range of data gathering mechanisms to understand its customers. These include customer satisfaction surveys, tenant profiling, STATUS surveys, mystery shoppers; tenant profiling, complaints. It also monitors against the council's Customer Charter.
- Members are beginning to understand the role that new technology and social networking such as Facebook and Twitter can play as an engagement mechanism. E.g. Local Development Framework consultation.
- "Open Door" in Exmouth is a valuable resource. Although not funded by the council, members are very aware of its role as a good source of local intelligence.
- EDDC is working with parish councils to establish the needs of villages and hamlets.

Areas for consideration:

- There needs to be more co-ordination and sharing of equalities information, data and intelligence across the organisation to avoid duplication of effort. EDDC could also make better use of partnership data to improve its knowledge and intelligence/profile of East Devon.
- Members have considerable knowledge of their community, but this not being captured and shared by EDDC. In particular opposition members feel that their point of view is not listened to by officers.
- EDDC need to use customer insight data to understand whether particular segments will be more or less impacted upon by budget cuts. This needs to include budget cuts planed by partners, the wider economic environment and national government policy.
- EDDC is working on creating a corporate approach to understanding customer needs – asking frontline staff about information they hold on customers; what they do with it and how it is used. When this is complete it will be promoted as good practice.

3.2 Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment

Strengths:

- Members clearly understand the demographic and economic issues in their areas and the equalities implications for the local population. Some members have struggled with the concepts of equal opportunities in the past but they are beginning

to appreciate that equalities and diversity is not "just about race or political correctness."

- The Chief Executive has a clear vision for East Devon and he is keen for members and officers to appreciate the need for greater sophistication in service delivery. The council has traditionally had a strategy of being a low council tax council providing a good service to everyone.
- The Equalities Champion gives impetus to the council's equalities work which keeps the agenda in sharp focus. She sees her role as keeping the subject alive and she is passionate about this. The Equalities Champion is also a member of CEG and the external equalities forum.
- There are a broad range of objectives in the integrated equality scheme and good mechanisms for members to monitor performance on equalities priorities. Results from Systems Thinking are fed back to portfolio holders and members. Other members also have an opportunity to comment. EqIA progress reports go to service performance/ scrutiny committee. Members were aware of the performance framework regarding EqIAs.
- The external diversity forum is seen as a positive step forward. The work done by the temporary diversity officer in setting this up is recognized. The Corporate Director was also praised for his commitment to the forum. However it should be noted that the forum is relatively new and not all community groups were aware of its existence.
- The Council has not shied away from its responsibilities towards the provision of travellers sites and has taken positive action to iron out community tensions. The approach from the Members was positive on this issue.
- EDDC is working to attract more young people to become involved as Members. Democracy days and speed dating events have taken place. There is a Youth Parliament and a Youth Champion.
- EDDC makes good use of its positive links with the local press for publicising initiatives and projects.

Areas for consideration:

- The understanding and views of the Members the peer team spoke to about equality and diversity varied. e.g. some expressed complete resistance to the need for monitoring.
- Equalities training for Members is offered but take-up has been quite low -only twelve out of fifty nine members have attended. However a recent coach trip attracted 30% attendance by members visiting the Open Door Project and Salcombe House which provides services for people with learning disabilities. More learning opportunities like this for members might prove more effective than traditional equalities training courses.

- Procurement processes still need to be embedded. The training is being provided for staff on procurement includes equalities and diversity implications and requirements. The Council has some good plans for procurement with questionnaires for suppliers.
- Financial commitment to equalities and diversity is under scrutiny due to budget cuts. E.g. there is no commitment to the equalities officer post beyond the end of the temporary contract. However HR stated that equalities would be an area of responsibility for a director under the new shared services.
- EDDC should consider how it can raise its profile and that of the area across a range of issues affecting the area. E.g. the profile of EDDC in campaigns against closures of job centres and rural post offices is perceived to be low. We understand that EDDC has been active in these campaigns but this was not the perception of the community groups peers spoke to.
- Membership of the LSP appears to have dwindled and become "EDDC dominated". Comments made to peers included:
 - "EDDC does not understand partnership working. They do their own thing and ignore partners in the County council and other organisations. This culture has existed for a long time".
 - " Meetings are very formal and there is no clear strategy. Meetings jump from one topic to another. Partners feel that it's almost like a scrutiny committee."
 - "Too dis-jointed - no maturity of partnership working. Council needs to be more collaborative"
 - "The districts direction of travel is the right one but there is still a lot to do – it's about letting down the barriers"
- Peers found little shared understanding amongst the partners they spoke to about their role in delivery of the Sustainable Community Plan. There needs to be a clearer shared strategy and vision for diversity and equality with objectives and targets. Communication needs to be improved with partners. E.g. Partners were unaware that the free swimming is offered in council leisure centres on the second Sunday of each month.
- There is a perception of a poor relationship between EDDC and some community groups. Work needs to be done to improve this with better self awareness by EDDC.
- The equality officer has refocused the work of the Corporate Equalities Group and the group has made good progress on EqIAs. The group also highlighted its influence over the use of language and accessible logos which appear on all documents. However the group's remit is still too narrow. It needs to have a wider community focus on diversity priorities for East Devon. CEG members were committed and energetic but this energy needs to be harnessed more effectively.

3.3 Community engagement and satisfaction

Strengths:

- EDDC is committed to improving consultation and engagement with the community. Representatives from the voluntary and community sector felt that EDDC now listened more than it used to. The external diversity forum was seen as a constructive development for getting feedback from community groups e.g. Community transport has been included in planning discussions about new housing developments
- The council has identified young people as a significant minority. Consultation has been carried out with young people to ascertain what their needs are. The Switch Project gives opportunities for young people to volunteer. Members were enthusiastic about consultation with young people that helped to shape the provision of play facilities.
- The Tenant Participation Team has been pro-active in getting a more representative tenant's forum. A community development worker in housing department concentrates on youth issues.
- The Housing Department tries hard to engage with its tenants eg via road shows, coffee mornings, e-mail groups. New tenants are involved in choosing colours of walls and types of kitchen doors in their homes during the preparation of voids properties. Housing staff use community walkabouts to identify tenant issues. The Housing department uses community centres as out-reach hubs for its staff to provide advice about housing services. Work by officers in the community was well received particularly the housing officer working out of Exmouth Town Hall

Areas for consideration:

- The external diversity forum is at an early stage. Representation could be widened and it needs to have some links with the corporate equality group. There is concern that the loss of the equality officer might result in the forum being less effective.

3.4 Responsive services and customer care

Strengths:

- Service plans are developed involving a cross section of staff and sometimes users. E.g. tenants have been involved in the planning days to develop service plans for housing.
- The Silver Surfers Project is helping the elderly to cope with the requirement to use IT for choice based letting. Silver surfers training with ICT targeted at older people has been delivered by four members of IT staff in a partnership between housing and IT. Two hundred residents were involved during 2009/10.
- The revenues and benefits team highlighted examples of good practice including work around 'deprivation' that is, a focus on early intervention and understanding

customer needs; the benefit take up campaign which involves targeting those who fall into arrears with Council tax. A variety of payment options are available including on-line 24/7, by phone and free at the post office. Home visits and help to complete applications over the telephone are offered. Benefit surgeries around the district are advertised and promoted amongst stakeholders

- The countryside service highlighted work with schools focusing on an environmental education programme. Good links are established between the countryside team and the Otter Hays Trust (charity working with learning disability clients). Rangers are trained to work with this group. Given the difficult topography of East Devon the Council are working on increasing access projects such as the Ax-Estuary wetlands where they are involving a disability group to ensure work done will meet their needs.
- Countryside opportunities are widely promoted by corporate publications. Volunteering in countryside and the arts is strong and the profile of volunteers and users has changed from what was predominately older people to across the age range from sixteen to ninety-two. The Arts Service has good links with local schools and the national curriculum
- Other examples of responsive services include: problems of understanding about refuse and recycling issues from a Bengali resident was resolved by a home visit with no need for translation; health walks have been established and promote health and wellbeing benefits; the council are constructing two bungalows suitable for those with physical disabilities.
- EqIAs have led to positive outcomes including the issue of a multi faith calendar to environmental health officers, tenant profiling has led to equality training for tenants and a change in procedure over sickness reporting for female members of staff who prefer to speak to another female member of staff.
- The Council is fully aware of the of the obstacles people face due to the lack of public transport which is particularly relevant to young people who need to travel to school and college and the barriers that young people encounter to accessing after school activities as a result of this.
- As a result of representation from groups and individuals and after reviewing county council data ,EDDC took the decision to enable carers to travel free on public transport. At the time this initiative went beyond the stance taken by other district councils in Devon.

Areas for consideration:

- EDDC needs to publicise and celebrate its successes more. E.g. The Revenues and Benefits Service employment support process
- EDDC needs to demonstrate more clearly how resident's involvement in systems thinking has made a difference i.e. "You said, We did".

- A recent meeting about the Gypsy and Travellers site identified the need for more education to challenge prejudice amongst residents on this issue.
- EDDC needs to consider how it can improve the understanding of its officers about issues such as "rurality" in order that customers' needs are taken into account more fully.

3.5 A modern and diverse workforce

Strengths:

- Employees like working at EDDC. They have seen big improvements in communication between managers and employees. There is better two way communication. Senior managers have been encouraged by the Chief Executive to take a greater role. Happy Health Audits investigating levels and causes of employee stress have led to focus groups to explore how the council can address this issue.
- The Human Resources team recognized from its equal pay review that although equal pay wasn't an issue, job segregation between men and women was a feature of the workforce. Career job profiles have been established for different types of job to start tackling this issue.
- Street Scene Staff have benefited from numeracy and literacy training offered by EDDC.
- EDDC has a range of flexible working policies including homeworking and partial home working.
- Equality and diversity training is mandatory for all staff. Tenants have also been able to access the training. Various departments also running specific training. E.g. Housing staff also have "Respect" Training. Training is also made available for members, although take-up is low. An identified need resulted in assertiveness training being offered to some female members.
- EDDC's support for employees suffering domestic violence is very positive. Managers have received training on the issue and a network of employee contacts has been set up.

Areas for consideration:

- EDDC does not have up to date workforce monitoring data so is unable to set meaningful objectives. Data held on employees has not been updated for the last two years. HR will shortly be asking employees to update the data held on them. Questions on Sexual orientation and religion/belief will be asked for the first time,

although there has been little work done on preparing the workforce for this question.

- HR is currently not using on-line recruitment so it has difficulty gathering data on recruitment and selection. An exercise to gather data from the last year will be undertaken shortly.
- HR has been advertising all its vacancies in Black Britain magazine for the past two years. Whilst positive action is to be encouraged it needs to be based on up to date community and workforce data and to be targeted where it can be most effective, possibly only being used for senior posts where there is the biggest likelihood of relocation.
- HR produces an annual workforce report which includes discipline and grievance cases but the statistics do not appear to be disaggregated against any equality strands.

4. Examples of innovative projects and initiatives

- Improvements in customer care and "Systems" thinking has delivered a more sophisticated approach to customers and has meant a better understanding of diverse identities of customers. It has meant revisiting how EDDC does business. The starting point is the customer and identifying their needs. Staff in Customer Services have received "sign post" training enabling them to identify when a customer is eligible for other help. Minor errors in planning applications are now discussed with the applicant to avoid the need for re-application and to reduce the time taken to process the application. Benefit assessors now support some clients to complete application forms over the telephone or by a home visit.
- The Council supports the Thelma Hulbert gallery which has continued to extend its service in terms of access and what is provided with the provision of more gallery space, a community cafe and shop including a hearing loop and physical changes to ensure the building is accessible. They have increased visitor numbers and have been recognised for their good work with providing after school activities for those young people. The gallery has displayed art work created by people with a learning disability.

5. Signposting to areas of good practice from Local Government Improvement and Development

Examples of councils that have developed a comprehensive picture of their areas and what diversity means to them are Nottingham City Council and Cornwall Council. When developing their single equality scheme, Nottingham Council mapped out their area and on a ward by ward basis by thinking about the specific needs of that community's populations (www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=5036). Cornwall Council have developed the 'Big messages for Cornwall' summary diagram (www.cornwall.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=24507) based on a wealth of evidence

provided across the council (www.cornwall.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=24160). These examples have enabled decision makers to get a better understanding of the issues in their areas and to work together within the councils and with partners more efficiently and effectively.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) recently published a quick start guide on EqlAs (www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/PSD/equality_impact_assessment_guidance_quick-start_guide.pdf) to enable public bodies to integrate EqlAs into their policy making and review.

The EHRC have also published a short guide on taking equality and diversity into account when making financial decisions.

Examples of positive action campaigns relating to getting BAME staff into senior management are available on Local Government Improvement and Development's website (www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageld=14797113). The council may also wish to learn about the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead's programme 'Ways into work' that helps disabled people into sustainable employment and training (www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/social_learning_disability-ways-into-work.htm)

Local Government Improvement and Development are organising a series of five regional events over the forthcoming year. It is hoped that these events, and the ongoing dialogue around them, will form a hub for our support activities; strengthening the business, legal and moral case for equality, and building competence and confidence across the sector. The events will focus on how the sector can work with the Equality Frameworks:

- build a better understanding of how equality and cohesion can improve efficiency
- help local authorities understand their communities and deliver appropriate, high quality services
- empower local authorities to work more effectively in complying with the Equality Act.

Local Government Improvement and Development
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Communities Overview and Scrutiny Proposed Forward Plan 2011

Month	Topic	Lead
16 February 2011	Affordable Housing Exmouth Street Pastors Members to hear of the work of this group	John Golding N/A
	Community Engagement Members to hear of successful community engagement projects (such as Exmouth model)	Peter Jeffs
	Children and Young Peoples' Facilities Continued debate	Peter Jeffs

Suggestions for Future topics:

- Scrutiny of Mental Health Provision in East Devon
- Presentations from Member Champions – what work is being done for communities and how can the Council assist further?
 - Post Offices Champion
 - Community Safety Champion
 - Sustainability Champion

