

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL
Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Board
held in the Council Chamber, Knowle, Sidmouth
on Wednesday, 6 January 2010

Present:

Councillors:

Sara Randall Johnson (Chairman)
Jill Elson
Ray Franklin
Stuart Hughes
Andrew Moulding

Also Present:

Councillors:

Iain Chubb
Andrew Dinnis
Paul Diviani
Malcolm Florey
Chris Gibbings
Roger Giles

Also present:

Officers:

Simon Davey, Head of Finance
John Golding, Head of Housing and Social Inclusion
Christopher Holland, Democratic Services Officer
Peter Jeffs, Corporate Director
Paul Lowe, Housing Enabling Officer
Denise Lyon, Deputy Chief Executive
Diccon Pearse, Corporate Director
Charlie Plowden, Countryside Manager
Mark Williams, Chief Executive

Apologies

Councillors:

Graham Brown
Geoff Chamberlain
David Cox
Mike Green
Peter Halse

**Apologies
from non
Executive
Board
members**

Ray Bloxham
Christine Drew
Steve Hall
Douglas Hull
David Key
Ian Thomas
Pauline Stott

The meeting started at 5.30 pm and ended at 6.00 pm.

*125 **Public Questions**

There were no questions from the public.

*126 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Board held on 2 December 2009 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

*127 **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.

*128 **Forward Plan**

The contents of the Forward Plan for the period 1 January 2010 to 30 April 2010 were noted.

*129 **Matters referred to the Executive Board**

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

*130 **Minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees**

The Board noted the minutes of the meeting of the Housing Review Board held on 26 November 2009.

RESOLVED: (1) that the following decisions be noted:

Minute 36 that the proposed redesign of the Housing Service, as recommended from the Systems Thinking Review, following a period of experimentation and evaluation, be approved.

Minute 37

1. that progress on the implementation of the Devon Home Choice scheme be noted,
2. that the Housing Needs Manager give a presentation and demonstrate the new Devon Home Choice system at the next meeting of the Board.

Minute 38 that a review of the Housing Review Board be conducted at a separate meeting facilitated by Sally McAuley, EDDC's Learning and Development Manager.

Minute 39 that collaboration with Mid Devon District Council Housing services be supported.

Minute 40 that the findings of the 'Getting to know you better' survey be noted.

(2) that the following recommendations be approved:

Minute 35

1. that the £5,000 2009/10 budget provision for Tenant Inspectors be included with funds acquired through savings made in other areas of the Tenant's budget (Tenant Participation, Tenant Training and Inspectors),
2. that subject to the changes in (1) above, the draft budget be approved.

*131 **Recycling and Refuse Partnership Board**

Members noted the minutes of the meeting of the Recycling and Refuse Partnership Board held on 25 November 2009.

*132 **Draft Revenue and Capital Estimates 2010/11 – Key Decision**

Members considered the report of the Head of Finance setting out the draft revenue and capital estimates for 2010/11 for adoption by the Executive Board prior to them being considered firstly by the Service Planning and Budget Task and Finish Forum on 18 January and then by the Overview and Scrutiny Service Planning and Budget meeting on 27 January. Members noted that the Housing Review Board would undertake a similar exercise in respect of the Housing Revenue Account.

The Executive Board would consider the subsequent recommendations at its meeting on 10 February when the budget proposals and service plans would be finalised and would recommend the 2010/11 Council Tax requirement and Council House Rent level to the Council.

Presenting the report, Diccon Pearse, Corporate Director stated that the net General Fund Budget was £0.737M below that of 2009/10 largely due to the Council's decision to hold posts vacant and other identified savings. Further savings of £0.893M were being proposed from next year's budget to reduce the amount needed from balances. These additional savings were detailed in Appendix B to the report and were likely to have a more immediate impact on service provision.

It was anticipated that savings would be achieved through the employment of a full time procurement officer and shared services/officers.

Members noted the list of special item bids as detailed in Appendix C to the report totalling £0.411M which were currently not included in the draft budget.

Members were aware of the financial difficulties that the Council was facing and acknowledged the difficulties in preparing the estimates which were based on the assumption that East Devon District Council would continue to exist despite uncertainties as a result of the Local Government Review. Members' attention was drawn to the Government's powers available to 'cap' an authority's budget and noted that the Government was expecting a rise of less than 3%.

It was noted that there was a funding deficit for next year's capital programme and earmarked capital reserved would be used to fund the gap together with prudential borrowing, with capital schemes needing to be prioritised.

The Leader of the Council requested that the authority aim to limit any Council Tax rise to be in line with inflation. She also asked that the Chief Executive examine further methods to reducing spending before the Executive Board considered the matter at the February meeting.

RESOLVED: that the draft revenue and capital estimates be adopted and forwarded to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

*133 **Council Tax Base 2010/2011**

Members considered the report of the Revenues Manager setting out the tax base for each parish, expressed in terms of Band D equivalent properties on which the 2010/2011 Council Tax would be based.

RESOLVED: that the tax base for 2010/2011 at 56,869 Band D equivalent properties be agreed.

*134 **Financial Monitoring report 2009/10 – Month 8**

Members considered the Accountants' report summarising the Council's overall financial position for 2009/10 at the end of Month 8 (November) which included areas that could require corrective action during the remainder of the financial year. Members noted the summary of the predicted over and under spends to year-end and their effect on the Council's General Fund Balance. Members were made aware that in January 2010, £6.0M would be withdrawn from the externally managed investments held by Investec in order to keep within the Prudential Indicator boundaries.

A sum of £0.120M had been included in the 2009/10 budget for receipt of Housing and Planning Delivery Grant but the provisional allocation announced recently was only £0.010M. When confirmed this would be reported to a future meeting of the Board.

- RESOLVED:**
- (1) that the variances identified as part of the Revenue and Capital Monitoring process up to Month 8 be noted,
 - (2) that the low level of Housing and Planning Delivery Grant would be reported to a future meeting of the Executive Board.

*135 **CAA Organisational Assessment**

Members considered the report of the Communications and Improvement Manager setting out the outcome of the Council's Organisational Assessment 2008/09 which was part of the Comprehensive Area Assessment. The Organisation Assessment was made up of the following:

A use of Resources Assessment (included management of finances and management of human resources) which focused on the present and on outcomes for local people and the achievement of the Corporate Strategy and was carried out in March/April 2009 by the Council's auditors, Grant Thornton, and,

A Managing Performance Assessment (similar to the Direction of Travel Assessment of the previous Comprehensive Performance Assessment) which focused on the future and was conducted in June by the Audit Commission.

The Audit Commission drafted the Council's Organisational assessment using both the Use of Resources Assessment and the Managing Performance Assessment. The Council scored Level 2 – performs adequately, across the board. The Audit and Governance Committee had already considered the detailed Use of Resources report produced by Grant Thornton at its meeting on 3 December 2009. The report included an Action Plan covering areas for improvement.

- RESOLVED:** that the Council's Organisational Assessment for 2008/09 be noted.

*136 **Local Government Review – Boundary Committee Advice**

Members noted the Boundary Committee's advice which was included in summary with the agenda papers. The full version was available on the Council's web site.

- RESOLVED**
- (1) that receipt of the Boundary Committee's advice to the Secretary of State on unitary local government in Devon be noted,
 - (2) that delegated powers be given to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader to send the Council's formal response to the Secretary of State by 19 January 2010.

*137 **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).

*138 **River Otter Cycle Path and Footbridge Scheme**

Members considered the report of the Countryside Manager which up-dated Members on the progress of the River Otter Cycle Path and Footbridge scheme and sought guidance in respect of progressing the overall scheme. Members were reminded of the project's partnership arrangements and the Council's role as host authority. A tender process had taken place but there was now uncertainty that the scheme could be delivered within budget.

A letter of support for the scheme had been received from Kings School and this had been circulated to Executive Board members.

RESOLVED: that a capital bid be made for a further amount, as set out in the report, as EDDC's share of the additional scheme costs; tenders shall not be sought until the planning permission for the Town Mill site has been clarified.

(Councillor Roger Giles declared a Personal interest in this item as a Devon County Councillor, an Ottery St. Mary Town Councillor and a Governor of the Kings School, Ottery St. Mary. Councillor Stuart Hughes declared an interest in this item, as a Devon County Councillor)

*139 **Request to approve the terms of sale of land identified at Stowford Rise, Sidmouth for the provision of affordable and open market properties.**

Members considered the report of the Housing Enabling Officer which sought approval to sell land at Stowford Rise, Sidmouth for a capital receipt from the Devon and Cornwall Housing Association for the provision of 133 properties at Stowford Rise – 67% of which would be affordable homes. The sale of land would be less than market value but would allow for the provision of a significantly higher percentage of affordable homes.

Members noted the advantages of the scheme and the potential risks to be considered.

If approval was granted and the Devon and Cornwall Housing Association was successful in its Homes and Communities Agency grant funding bid, work could start on site within 6 weeks.

RESOLVED

- (1) that the terms of sale for the land at Stowford Rise, Sidmouth, be agreed as set out in Option D of the report, under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 1988, being a disposal at less than best consideration to promote the statutory objectives of improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of East Devon residents in need of Affordable Housing,
- (2) that the valuation advice detailed in the report be noted.

Chairman Date