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OFFICE ACCOMMODATION WORKING PARTY ACTION POINTS FROM A MEETING HELD AT KNOWLE, SIDMOUTH ON WEDNESDAY 7 NOVEMBER 2012

Present:

Councillor Paul Diviani	PD	EDDC
Councillor Graham Godbeer	GG	EDDC
Councillor Jill Elson	JME	EDDC
Councillor Pauline Stott	PS	EDDC
Councillor Frances Newth	FN	EDDC
Councillor Douglas Hull	DRH	EDDC
Councillor Ian Thomas	IT	EDDC
Councillor Bob Buxton	BB	EDDC
Richard Cohen	RC	Deputy Chief Executive, EDDC
Steve Pratten	SP	Relocation Project Manager
Chris Lane	CL	Democratic Services Officer, EDDC
Chris Powell	CP	Corporate ICT Manager, EDDC
Karen Jenkins	KJ	Corporate Organisational Development Manager, EDDC

Apologies:

Councillor David Cox	DC	EDDC
Mark Williams	MW	Chief Executive, EDDC
Councillor Andrew Moulding	ATM	EDDC
Councillor Ray Bloxham	RB	EDDC
Councillor Steve Gazzard	SG	EDDC

The meeting started at 6.30pm and finished at 7.45pm.

Item	Notes/Decisions	Action
1.Introduction	Welcome and introduction.	
2.Notes of meeting held on 18 July 2012	The notes of the meeting held on 12 September 2012, were agreed as a true record.	Noted
3. Relocation Manager – Introduction and Project	a) Review to date	Noted

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Planning	<p>Members received the report of SP on the Office Relocation Project. He reported that much of the focus had been on the Outline Planning Application. Following additional submissions and other information received, a revised application had been made on 17 October 2012 to the Planning Authority.</p> <p>EDDC had also received Counsel's opinion in respect of several key matters related to the Knowle planning application. This Opinion had provided further certainty and confirmed the previous advice provided by EDDC Legal Dept.</p> <p>Communications from Members and members of the public had continued, with the main topics to do with the Knowle Outline Planning Application.</p> <p>SP reported that preparation of the Clients Brief had continued. Some particulars from the Clients Brief remained to be formally advised. In particular details of storage for the new building and briefs for Exmouth and any "One Stop Shops" to be located in principal satellite towns. Members noted that the issue of "satellite offices" was dependent on changes to EDDC working practices and how customers were serviced.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">b) Programme</p> <p>It was understood that the revised Planning Application would now be heard by the Development Management Committee on 4 December 2012. The aim was to report to Cabinet in January 2013 and Council on 20 February 2013.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">c) Budget</p> <p>SP reported that the Relocation Budget for the Financial Viability Gateway continued to be reviewed, with costs being finalised following the appointments of the further Consultants. Currently the cost was £314,354. The costs to 26 October were £176,552. Leaving a balance of £137,802. Including a contingency of £19,752.55.</p>	
4. Knowle Progress	<p style="text-align: center;">a) Survey and other information update</p> <p>SP reported that all initial surveys had now been commissioned and final reports and survey information received, with the exception of Devon Wildlife Consultants Winter Bat count. This would take place as soon as possible after 1 December 2012. This was a requirement of Natural England.</p>	

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Kensington Taylor had prepared a spatial analysis sketch which had been considered by the SMT and elements of the comments added to the sketch. The design was based upon an area of 8.3m² per desk for users and direct circulation. The overall gross internal floor was 4,695m². It incorporated 356 desks and 172m³ of document storage (reduced by two thirds from Knowle). The cost for this design was currently being reviewed and the final design in terms of area per desk and GIA may well differ from that currently advised.

The Economic Impact Assessment had also been reviewed in the light of further information provided. As a result some changes were made by Peter Brett Associates, with particular focus on the longer term (10 years) potential job losses through natural turnover and the effect to the Sidmouth's parking due to the loss of Knowle Car Park at weekends.

b) Market Interest

Thomas Lister, the appointed Commercial Land Agent had now provided their valuation reports for the several Honiton sites as well as Manstone depot. The valuations contained a number of variables – and Davis Langdon were currently analysing this information and holding further discussions with the Consultant before being able to report on the matter or utilise the information within their viability report.

Lister's had also been required to update their initial valuation for Knowle following the revision to the Masterplan. Due to the area of affordable housing being increased. This report was seen as being central to the financial viability of the project.

Following submission of the Knowle OPA there were some 1500 notifications of objections from Members of the Public and Other Organisations. Bell Cornwall EDDC's Planning Consultants had advised that none of the matters raised in the objections caused them any particular concern.

The formal period for consultation for the revised planning application would end on 16 November 2012. SP confirmed that it was currently anticipated that the viability report would be issued on 17 December. He reported that there had been a number of phone calls from developers expressing interest in the Knowle site but further interest depended upon planning permission being granted.

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5. Honiton Progress	<p>SP reported that all associated initial surveys for Heathpark had been commissioned and final reports and surveys received. Expressions of interest had continued to be advised during the period regarding the Heathpark site. It had been agreed that any meetings with Developers expressing an interest would only take place once final valuations had been received from Thomas Lister. Another meeting was planned with the owner of a potential other Honiton site to discuss details of their possible requirements.</p>	
6. Exmouth	<p>Identification and evaluation of options regarding EDDC presence in Exmouth were pending a better understanding of the value of Knowle and Honiton developments. EDDC remained committed to a significant presence in Exmouth.</p> <p>RC reported that he met with DCC representatives to discuss their intentions in Exmouth and specifically the need for a new library in the town. The possibility of a community hub had also been discussed, possibly as an element within the Estuaryside regeneration area.</p>	
7. Other actions	<p>a) <u>New HQ Internal Arrangements</u></p> <p>RC gave members details on the new HQ internal arrangements planning. The Spatial Analysis Plans had been prepared by Kensington Taylor based on Heathpark, Honiton. They had been tabled at meetings for consultation between department heads and at SMT meetings. The purpose of these layouts was not to design new offices but to calculate space and new facilities requirements as a means of determining build costs.</p> <p>b) <u>Document Management Update</u></p> <p>Members received the progress report on the Electronic Data/Document Management System (EDMS) from CP. The aim was to make all Service Transactions electronic and back scan 'live' documents. All services had now been engaged.</p> <p>Progress had been made on large areas such as Housing and a 'mop up' process was being carried out to move all services forward. The rollout was currently on track and each service should be scoped by the end of November. By December a figure should be available for what it would cost to back scan all documents that needed to be scanned.</p>	

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	<p>Members questioned whether it would be cheaper to secure external storage facilities rather than provide 172m² in the new office development.</p> <p>c) Communication update</p> <p>Members discussed the Sidmouth demonstration on Saturday 3 November. KJ reported on the two East Devon Extra publications produced in order to put across EDDC's view and also ways the Council were trying to improve the District.</p> <p>During discussions the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ the need to be mindful not to be too defensive in press releases;❖ that Tim Borrett had joined EDDC as Communications & Public Affairs Manager and had already been effective in dealing with several reputational issues, along with other members of the Communications Team;❖ it was important to illustrate to objectors that Knowle was not suitable as a modern office building for Councillor or Officers;❖ the importance of getting across the Council's message positively;❖ it was considered that some misinformation had been given out about the Council's plans the and it was important to give the public the correct facts;❖ a press release would be issued refuting allegations made by external campaigners;❖ the march had contained a number of different groups with various agendas;❖ the public should be reminded of the cost of the upkeep of Knowle and future repair costs.❖ the importance of the Council getting its message across the whole District;	
8. Dates and times of future meetings	Future meetings to be held on Wednesday 16 January, 27 February, 24 April, 12 June, 7 August, 2 October and 27 November 2013.	All