

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Notes of a Meeting of the Leisure East Devon Joint Working Group held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 24 February 2015

Present: **Councillors:**
Tim Wood
David Chapman
Tony Howard

Also Present: **Councillor:**
David Cox
Nigel Halford - Chairman of LED Board

Officers:
Mark Williams – Chief Executive
Simon Davey – Strategic Lead - Finance
John Golding – Strategic Lead – Housing & Environment
Charlie Plowden - Service Lead - Countryside and Leisure
Chris Lane – Democratic Services Officer
Peter Gilpin – Chief Executive, LED

Apologies

Councillor
Pat Graham
Andrew Moulding
Geoff Pook

The meeting started at 4.30pm and ended at 5.50 pm.

1 Notes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2014 were received, subject to the words 'Man Shed' in line 4 Minute 4 being changed to 'Men's Shed'.

2 To note the scope and terms of reference of the Joint Working Group

The following terms of reference had been previously agreed:

- To recommend a new or revised strategy for the LED funding agreement for the period 2015 – 2020.
- To make recommendations regarding the future leisure provision (including dual-use) within East Devon.
- To consider the advantages and disadvantages, and make recommendations, in respect LED taking on the management of the Council's three main cultural facilities (Exmouth Pavilion, Sidmouth Manor Pavilion and the Thelma Hulbert Gallery).
- To consider LED's contribution towards the Council's

4 **Grounds Maintenance costs**

Peter Gilpin, Chief Executive, LED reported that as requested at the last meeting (minute 6 of 25 November 2015 refers) he and his team had been looking at Grounds Maintenance costs for the four facilities that were particularly expensive but which EDDC had maintained for historic reasons, these were: Phear Park Bowling Green; Phear Park Pitch and Putt; Coburg Lawns, Haydons Lane, Sidmouth and Putting Green, Church House, Sidmouth. Members received a table showing a number of these costs by business segment for these facilities.

It was noted that in a number of bowling clubs in other parts of the country maintenance of greens had been handed over to the members to maintain, who were often keen gardeners. This could be a way of reducing costs for Phear Park Bowling. However, there was not considered to be much savings to be made to grounds maintenance costs for Phear Park crazy golf or pitch and putt. The later being a well used facility during the summer months.

Peter Gilpin, Chief Executive, LED reported that the maintenance requirements at Seafeld Gardens, Seaton may reduce due to extra hard standing surfacing being introduced. The facilities at Coburg, Sidmouth may have more opportunities of realising savings. The remaining lawn tennis courts could be relayed as hard courts and the bowling club members could take over maintenance of the bowling greens.

Members discussed whether there was any financial benefit for LED taking over the maintenance of these facilities or should EDDC look at more local ownership. If there was an appetite for these facilities to be provided then they should be more locally maintained.

- RESOLVED**
1. that the lease arrangements for the facilities mentioned above be investigated;
 2. that Charlie Plowden, Service Lead - Countryside and Leisure be requested to approach Sidmouth Cricket & Croquet Club to investigate whether they could maintain the Coburg facility cheaper than the current Street Scene cost.

5 **Building Maintenance Costs**

Members noted that the most expensive leisure centres to maintain were the dual use centres. Peter Gilpin, Chief Executive, LED emphasised that LED were looking at various initiatives to make these centres more efficiently run. The building maintenance was currently dealt with by Simon Allchurch's property maintenance team and LED was looking at these budgets to investigate whether there could be savings.

The Working Group asked whether there were maintenance activities that LED would be better to undertake it elf on its facilities. But it was noted that LED was limited in the amount of building and grounds maintenance it could undertake due to lack of resources.

6

Financial modelling for the 2016 SLA

Peter Gilpin, Chief Executive, LED produced a budget and forecast figures for LED for the period 2014-2021. It was noted that the predicted budgets had changed since the autumn due to a number of adverse financial events and were showing potential losses. These included a Local Government Pension deficit expected to increase by £120k per annum, the need to increase infrastructure costs and an annual figure for the replenishment of reserves. Nevertheless, the need for a contribution to funds of £901,400 per annum for a 6 year period was questioned.

Peter Gilpin, Chief Executive, LED, emphasised that LED had produced real savings to EDDC of 25% over the last 5 years, by changing employment terms where possible and also increasing income and memberships. He considered that LED was not in a position to take a 5 %or 10% reduction in subsidy over the new contract period.

Simon Davey, Strategic Lead – Finance reported that the LED financial modelling for the years 2014-2021 showed a very high contribution to reserves and he would like to know further details behind the policy and strategy reasons for this. He accepted that the figures presented showed a prudential forecast for LED. Mark Williams, Chief Executive, emphasised that EDDC had other priorities for spending in its budgets and the £901,400 figure in the Budget forecasts for 2015-2021 was an issue. Members noted that it would be necessary to get agreement of budgets by October 2015 at the latest as the new contract came into effect from April 2016.

Peter Gilpin, Chief Executive, LED, reported that the lease with Ocean Blue was very close to being signed with only two outstanding points to be overcome, the main one being the removal of the covenant on trading alcohol on the top floor. Also operating facilities on behalf of SSDC was starting to make an operating profit for LED but were not shown in the figures presented.