

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a joint meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 13 January 2016

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 9am and ended at 12.33pm.

***15 Election of Chairman**

Councillor Peter Bowden was elected Chairman of the joint meeting.

***16 Appointment of Vice Chairman**

Councillor Roger Giles was appointed Vice Chairman of the joint Committee.

***17 Public speaking**

There were no public speakers.

***18 Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Jill Elson – Min no. 20

Personal interest

Reason: Member of Exmouth and District Community Transport

Cllr Graham Godbeer - Min no. 20

Personal interest

Reason: Chairman of AONB; Member of Axminster Town Council.

Cllr Alan Dent – Minute no. 20

Personal interest

Reason: Member of Exmouth and District Community Transport

Cllr Cherry Nicholas – Min no.20

Personal interest

Reason: Member of Exmouth and District Community Transport

Cllr Peter Bowden – Min no. 20

Personal interest

Reason: Dispensation obtained to discuss flooding issues

Cllr Matt Booth – Min no. 20

Personal interest

Reason: Director Sidmouth Drill Hall Hub Community Interest Company

***19 Exclusion of the public**

RESOLVED:

that the classification given to the documents to be submitted to the Cabinet be confirmed; there were no items which officers recommended should be dealt with in Part B.

20 Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets 2016/17

The Chief Executive and the Strategic Lead for Finance set the scene for the committees, illustrating the presented balanced budget which included a council tax increase of 1.99%. The committees were asked to bear in mind the impact that the future Recycling and Refuse contract would have on the council's finances, in terms of actual savings delivered. With this in mind, the committees were asked to consider alongside the draft budgets, special item bids.

The Housing Revenue Account was also in a good position and would be considered by the Housing Review Board for recommendation to Council.

The following special item bids were presented to the committee, debated and recommended:

1. Exmouth Beach Management Plan at £50k

The plan was already in place and endorsed by the Overview Committee; the bid was clarified as covering improved monitoring of the site and works to help maintain coastal defence assets as a one-off cost for that financial year. There was a mixed response from Members as to the merits of the plan and what work should take priority for the site; overall the bid was recommended by the committees to be included in the budget for 2016/17.

2. Seaton Beach Management Plan at £50k

This bid was to work towards and create a beach management plan, which, when in place, enabled the council to bid for money from DEFRA for works to the beach. The bid would cover the cost of technical advice and research that the council does not have in-house. The Vice Chairman commented on the need to invest in this now in order to bring more funding to the project in the future. The committees agreed to recommend inclusion in the budget.

3. Seaton East of West Walk gabions at £5k

Original gabion baskets had been destroyed in the storms of 2014, and needed replacement to maintain coastal defence and before on starting on the production of the beach management plan. The committees agreed to recommend inclusion in the budget.

4. Trimble GEO 7X asset surveying tool at £8k

The committees agreed to recommend inclusion in the budget.

5. Exmouth Orcombe Point steps at £5k

The committees agreed to recommend inclusion in the budget.

6. Annis's Knob Beer Cliff works at £15k

An outline of the issues at this location was given to the committee. The bid included improved monitoring and installation of arrest fencing part-way up the cliff to help mitigate impact should the cliff collapse. The committees agreed to recommend inclusion in the budget.

7. Sidford Rugby Club rabbit fencing works at £4k

Funding had already been committed against the works required by the rugby club on council owned land. The installation of rabbit proof fencing was considered the most expedient way of dealing with the problem following the success of installation at other grounds. The committees agreed to recommend inclusion in the budget.

8. Recycling and Refuse assuming new scheme roll out to mirror success of trial experience at £172k

This bid would only apply if the new Recycling and Waste Collection contract option chosen matches the trial method recently tested. The committee were reminded of the success of the recent trial at Feniton and the Colony Exmouth, due to a combination of communications, branding, staff in the area of the trials and contribution from the current contractor. The committees agreed to recommend inclusion in the budget.

9. On site building manager at Younghayes Centre at £10k

The site at Cranbrook required an on-site presence outside of normal office hours, both for security of the site and to manage the cleanliness of the building and its facilities. It was hoped that in the future this resource would be funded by the Town Council if they agreed to take that on. The committees agreed to recommend inclusion in the budget.

10. Regeneration & Economic Development – request for 3 additional staff (Development Surveyor, Research & Funding Officer and Senior Economic Development Officer. In addition extension to temporary contracts and additional hours. Also a request for initial budget of £150,000 to buy in additional skills (Total bid £288K).

Whilst there was a strong support for the bid to help progress the economic status of the District, some councillors argued that the total bid figure was high and would impact greatly on the draft budget. The committees were also advised to bear in mind the impact of the new recycling and refuse contract in terms of what may be delivered in savings from that contract, currently only predicted. Advice was given that the committees may wish for further debate on the requirements of the service after that contract was in place and other key financial risks and uncertainties listed in the budget report were more certain.

The committees discussed what other factors influenced the economic status of the district and individual settlements, other than the input from the economic development service. How planning applications for industrial sites were handled was another factor that the Council could examine in order to help facilitate the growth of business. Members discussed phased options to start to bring in additional resource to the service to allow some service improvements to take place, such as the preparation of bids for external funding. Additional discussion could then take place on further enhancing the service once other outcomes, such as the recycling and refuse contract, and the enterprise zone status, were known.

With differing opinions, the committees undertook separate recommendations on this

special item bid.

11. Gov Delivery - multi media messaging system at £9k

Following a suggestion by the Vice Chairman of Overview, the committees agreed to recommend the project be funded from the transformation budget.

12. Implications of National Living Wage – implementation of grade differentials and implications with apprentices at £18k

The proposal was explained to cover some savings at the national minimum wage level but to increase the level at the scale 2 point of the pay scale by one increment to help the differential between that and the lower level. The committees agreed to recommend inclusion in the budget.

13. Additional one FTE recourse in the tree service at £27k

Previous work both in a systems thinking review of the service, and an extensive Task and Finish Forum on the evaluation and protection of trees, had produced a number of policy aspects that now needed implementation. The aspirations of the TaFF, supported by the Cabinet and Council, could not be achieved without additional resource. The committees agreed to recommend inclusion in the budget.

Capital Budget

The Capital budget was outlined to the committees as in a healthy position, with the caveat that the position may shift depending on any change in decision nationally on the new homes bonus.

Service Plans

Questions were put by the committee on some aspects of the draft service plans presented. In respect of the Finance service plans, some performance monitoring indicators were now deemed no longer necessary to report to the Scrutiny Committee because service changes had now been put in place and established over a long period that they were no longer required. The Scrutiny committee retained the right to call to committee any service aspect that they felt needed investigation if required.

An amendment to the period of reporting relating to performance management indicators for the Growth Point service plan was requested, as it was felt that reporting “as required” left the option vulnerable to infrequent reporting. The committees were advised that the work of that team was on a project basis, so specified frequency for reporting was not always relevant, and the team regularly report progress on projects to the Growth Board.

Council Tax level

The committees also discussed the options on increasing the level of Council Tax, anywhere between 0% and the £5 (equivalent to a rise of 4.1%) limit imposed. Concern was expressed on recommending the maximum increase in light of no increase in council tax over the past five years. Any increase in council tax level would not provide “reserves” but enable a smaller draw on the funding from the new homes bonus. Members would be in a position to debate the level further at full Council in February, when the position over a preferred contractor for the recycling and refuse contract would be known.

RECOMMENDED by both the Overview Committee and Scrutiny Committee

1. That the Council increases the Council Tax for 2016/17 by £5 per year (equivalent to 4.1%);
2. That the draft revenue budget be recommended to Council with the following inclusion of special item bids:
 - a. Exmouth Beach Management Plan at £50k
 - b. Seaton Beach Management Plan at £50k
 - c. Seaton East of West Walk gabions at £5k
 - d. Trimble GEO 7X asset surveying tool at £8k
 - e. Exmouth Orcombe Point steps at £5k
 - f. Annis's Knob Beer Cliff works at £15k
 - g. Sidford Rugby Club rabbit fencing works at £4k
 - h. Recycling and Refuse assuming new scheme roll out to mirror success of trial experience at £172k
 - i. On site building manager at Younghayes Centre at £10k
 - j. Implications of National Living Wage – implementation of grade differentials and implications with apprentices at £18k
 - k. Additional one FTE recourse in the tree service at £27k
3. That the special item bid for the Gov Delivery - multi media messaging system at £9k e funded from the transformation budget.
4. That the service plans be recommended to Council with the following amendment with a minor amendment to reporting of two performance indicators within the Growth Point Team service plan;
5. That the draft Capital budget be recommended to Council

RECOMMENDED by the Overview Committee

That the additional post of Research and Funding Officer, at £29,588 per annum plus 25% on cost, be made to the Regeneration and Economic Development service, and the remaining elements of the bid with additional staff and purchase of additional skills for the service be further debated by Cabinet

RECOMMENDED by the Scrutiny Committee

That the proposal of three additional staff and purchase of additional skills for the Regeneration and Economic Development service be debated further by Cabinet

Attendance list

Overview Committee members present:

Peter Bowden
Graham Godbeer
Ian Hall
Rob Longhurst
Peter Faithfull
Matt Booth
John Humphreys

Scrutiny Committee members present:

Roger Giles
Alan Dent
David Chapman
Simon Grundy
Maddy Chapman
Cherry Nicholas
Dean Barrow

Other Members present:

Jill Elson
Tom Wright
John Dyson
Geoff Jung
Ben Ingham
Megan Armstrong
Ian Thomas
Andrew Moulding
Phil Twiss
Paul Diviani
Mike Howe
Pauline Stott
Phil Skinner
Brian Bailey
Helen Parr

Officers present:

Henry Gordon Lennox, Strategic Lead Legal Licensing & Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
Simon Davey, Strategic Lead Finance
John Golding, Strategic Lead Housing and Environment
Andrew Hancock, Service Lead Streetscene
Karen Jenkins, Strategic Lead Organisational Development and Transformation
Laurelie Gifford, Financial Services Manager
Charlie Plowden, Service Lead Countryside and Leisure
Mark Williams, Chief Executive
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer

Committee Members apologies:

Overview

Maria Hale
Mike Allen
Christopher Pepper

Scrutiny

Marcus Hartnell
Brenda Taylor

Marianne Rixson
Cathy Gardner
Alison Greenhalgh
Bill Nash
Val Ranger

Other Member apologies:

Chairman Date.....