

Agenda for Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 14 April 2016, 6.00pm



[Members of the Scrutiny Committee](#)

Venue: Council Chamber, Knowle, Sidmouth, EX10 8HL

[View directions](#)

Contact: Debbie Meakin, 01395 517540 (or group number 01395 517546): Issued 5 April 2016

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- 1 [Public speaking](#)
- 2 To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2016 (pages 3 - 6)
- 3 Apologies
- 4 [Declarations of interest](#)
- 5 [Matters of urgency](#) – none identified
- 6 To agree any items to be dealt with after the public (including press) have been excluded. There are no items that officers recommend should be dealt with in this way.
- 7 Decisions made by Cabinet called in by Members for scrutiny in accordance with the Overview Procedure Rules. There are no items identified.

Matters for Debate

- 8 **Broadband update** (pages 7 -13)
Update from the Portfolio Holder for Central Services, Councillor Phil Twiss.
- 9 **Scoping future work – community engagement and consultation** (pages 14 - 17)
In the agenda papers is a report prepared by the Strategic Lead – Organisational Development and Transformation. On the basis of this report, the recommendation of the Democratic Services Officer is that, as a review of all community engagement and consultation is too wide a scope, the committee consider what specific examples of consultation have already taken place that they would like to review, with a view to making recommendations for future work on the same related issue. One example that the committee may wish to consider is the Exmouth master plan consultation undertaken in 2011, with a view to recommendations to be considered when this master plan is being refreshed.
- 10 **Scoping future work - website** (pages 18 - 28)
In the agenda papers is a report covering the creation and subsequent development of the website in its current form. The original request by the committee to review the website appears to be more related to how the site is used as a councillor resource,

rather than for the public. With this in mind, the officer recommendation from the Democratic Services Officer is for the committee to consider setting up a dual member working group to look at what specific examples councillors have where information has not been easily available.

11 Scrutiny draft Annual Report (pages 29 -30)

The draft annual report for presentation to Annual Council in May is presented for comment. It is recommended that the report be finalised by the Chairman and Vice Chairman on behalf of the committee prior to submission for Annual Council. Areas shaded in grey in the report will be expanded after the completion of this meeting.

Under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, any members of the public are now allowed to take photographs, film and audio record the proceedings and report on all public meetings (including on social media). No prior notification is needed but it would be helpful if you could let the democratic services team know you plan to film or record so that any necessary arrangements can be made to provide reasonable facilities for you to report on meetings. This permission does not extend to private meetings or parts of meetings which are not open to the public. You should take all recording and photography equipment with you if a public meeting moves into a session which is not open to the public.

If you are recording the meeting, you are asked to act in a reasonable manner and not disrupt the conduct of meetings for example by using intrusive lighting, flash photography or asking people to repeat statements for the benefit of the recording. You may not make an oral commentary during the meeting. The Chairman has the power to control public recording and/or reporting so it does not disrupt the meeting.

[Decision making and equalities](#)

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EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 17 March 2016

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 6pm and ended at 8.08pm.

***54 Public speaking**

There were no public speakers at the meeting.

***55 Minutes**

The minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on the 18 February 2016 were confirmed as a true record. An update report on the queries raised on the quarterly monitoring report had been circulated to members.

***56 Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Geoff Pook – Personal interest – beach hut tenant.

57 Beach hut update

The committee received an update report showing progress since the decisions by the Cabinet on 7 October 2015. The standard hire charges had been increased for 2016/17 with the aim to work towards market rates in future years. Existing tenants had received an explanation letter setting out the results of the consultation exercise and the current situation with long waiting lists for some areas.

The Chairman of Asset Management Forum, Councillor Geoff Pook, addressed the committee on the background to and the present actions on the rental level of the huts and sites owned by the council. He agreed that the issue was emotive but directly impacted a small percentage of the population of the district; whereas realising a better return on assets helped towards a stronger overall budget that benefitted the whole district.

The issues discussed with officers by both Ward Members and the committee included:

- Provision of beach huts and sites was a discretionary service;
- Testing the market by auction was discounted by members;
- Research had covered six other coastal authorities and a wide range of asset ranging from site only through to luxury permanent buildings;
- Some members challenged the speed in trying to reach market rates over a two year period and felt that a more graduated increase in rent over a longer period would have been better received by tenants. Members were reminded that Cabinet had directed the service to move towards market rates in the medium term which had to fit in the longer term aim of asset transfer negotiation with town and parish councils;
- The decision on raising rent to estimated market value over a two year period was made in collaboration with the Portfolio Holder. Some members challenged if this level of detail should have been consulted with local ward members before the decision was taken;
- Level of uptake for renewal of rents would be monitored and if it was found that the huts or sites were not being rented by either existing tenants or by those on the waiting list, the charge would be reviewed;
- Discussions on asset transfer and management of beach huts had started with town councils through a meeting with the relevant clerks. This would be progressed

further and there were still negotiations to work on with the practicalities of how the sites may be run in the future;

- Concern by some members over the legal complexities of a shared asset between the district and a town council;
- Members required a better explanation of the associated service charges relating to beach huts, in particular with the NNDR element;
- Members would welcome the numbers on individual waiting lists to be published;
- Should more beach huts be made available in areas of high demand where space and constraints permit?

The Chairman voiced concern over how the recommendations of the committee on the 17 September were handled at the meeting of the Cabinet on 7 October 2015, at which he was present. The committee debated a recommendation for Cabinet to help ensure that future recommendations of the committee were received and dealt with efficiently at Cabinet.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment reminded the committee of the value of the beautiful coastline the District enjoyed and that members should therefore not undervalue the assets that it held.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the number of people on individual waiting lists for beach huts and beach hut sites as at 10 March 2016 be published;
2. the Scrutiny Committee expresses concern that its recommendations regarding beach huts, arrived at following detailed consideration at its meeting in September 2015, were not explicit in the officer report to the subsequent Cabinet meeting. Scrutiny Committee therefore recommends that good practice is to include any recommendations from committees who have considered the matter prior to a Cabinet decision, in the report to Cabinet;
3. the Scrutiny Committee reiterates its view that there must be early involvement of relevant Ward Members and Parish or Town Councils in issues concerning them, particularly with regard to what may be contentious issues;
4. that officers explore any potential to expand on beach hut provision where demand is high, bearing in mind the usual constraints of environmental factors and planning considerations.

RESOLVED:

That the committee receive a further explanation of the breakdown of associated service charges for beach huts and beach hut sites

58 Scope for Dunkeswell and Chardstock Built-up Area Boundary (BUAB)

Representatives of Chardstock Parish Council had previously asked members to undertake a review of the decision to include Chardstock and Dunkeswell in the list of settlements (within the Local Plan) with a BUAB. The Committee had agreed that this review would take place when the Local Plan had been adopted. The matter had been scoped by the committee at their last meeting on the 18 February and the committee now had the opportunity to debate lessons to be learned from the previous decision.

The committee had received a written submission from Councillor Andrew Moulding, who had given his apologies for the meeting, which covered his involvement including at Council on 26 March 2015 where the proposal to include Chardstock in the BUAB list was carried on vote.

Former councillor Bob Buxton had also submitted a letter for the committee to consider which outlined his involvement and his understanding that in 2014 there was support for the building of a free school in Dunkeswell.

Councillor David Everett from Chardstock Parish Council addressed the committee about the impact on the parish in the interim period between the decision by the Council to include that settlement in the BUAB and the Planning Inspector's decision. In that period, members had disagreed with officer recommendation on a planning application for five houses in the parish that the parish could not sustain. He advised that, had the parish council been aware that their status would be discussed at full Council, they would have attended to speak to the Council under public speaking to put their view.

The Service Lead Planning Strategy and Development Management reminded the committee that the Development Management Committee and subsequently Council at a special meeting were being asked to comment on amendments to the Local Plan before its submission to the Inspector, and these amendments followed on from further work on sustainability. After the decision by Council, the Local Plan was subject to further consultation, including with town and parish councils, with their responses being sent to the Planning Inspector for his consideration alongside the amendments to the plan. In respect of Dunkeswell, the evidence did not show that a school was imminent to the settlement; even if a school was in prospect, it would not have changed the position because until the school was built, there was no certainty of delivery.

The Vice Chairman spoke of the work of the Development Management Committee and how the perception by members of what was sustainable had changed over time. There was now in place clear criteria to assess sustainability. He felt that as members, they had been persuaded by speakers and made an emotive decision rather than on the evidence provided to them and the officer advice given.

During debate members agreed that decisions should be made based on evidence but had differing views on what action could be taken to ensure that robust decisions were taken without interfering with the sovereign right of elected councillors to make a decision.

RECOMMENDED:

1. the Scrutiny Committee expressed concern with how Development Management Committee (on 23 March 2015) and Council (at extraordinary meeting on 26 March 2015) agreed to designate Chardstock and Dunkeswell in Strategy 27 of the Local Plan, contrary to long standing officer advice. The committee recommends that in similar cases where there is an argument against officer advice, the onus is on councillors to produce evidence to support their motion;
2. that Chairmen and Vice Chairman be offered training and support to help ensure robust decision making which is based on evidence occurs at meetings;
3. that Chairmen seek to ensure the committee or council are aware of who public speakers are, and if they represent a body or organisation, before that individual addresses the meeting.

***59 Scrutiny Forward Plan**

The proposed forward plan for Scrutiny was considered. Portfolio Holder for Economy, Councillor Skinner, had confirmed he would attend the next meeting of the committee.

Scoping work was still to be undertaken on the topics listed on the forward plan, with reports coming back to the committee at future meetings. This included on the council

website, where work had already begun on a paper and the Vice Chairman had already been in discussion with officers on an approach. Members were asked to report any difficulties they had in locating information on the website so that action could be taken where necessary.

Cost implications for towns and parishes in responding as consultee on planning applications was requested for inclusion into the report of the Economy Practice Manager.

Members also requested that the final accounts of the Parliamentary Election be pursued with the Chief Executive for the committee to consider.

Attendance list

Scrutiny Members present:

Roger Giles
Alan Dent
Dean Barrow
David Chapman
Maddy Chapman
Cathy Gardner
Alison Greenhalgh
Simon Grundy
Cherry Nicholas
Val Ranger
Marianne Rixson
Brenda Taylor

Other Members present:

Iain Chubb
Geoff Pook
Megan Armstrong
Colin Brown
Pauline Stott
Tom Wright

Officers present:

Richard Cohen, Deputy Chief Executive
Henry Gordon Lennox, Strategic Lead Legal, Licensing and Democratic Services; and Monitoring Officer
Ed Freeman, Service Lead Planning Strategy and Development Management
Donna Best, Principal Estates Surveyor
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer

Scrutiny Member apologies:

Marcus Hartnell
Bill Nash

Other Member apologies:

Ian Thomas
Andrew Moulding
Geoff Jung
Councillor Tim Clewer from Dunkeswell Parish Council

Update to EDDC scrutiny committee (14th April meeting) re Broadband provision

You will be aware that EDDC submitted a bid for funding to the Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) South West Ultrafast Broadband fund in respect of a technical solution (EDDC in conjunction with Broadway Partners) to provide wider provision of Broadband in East Devon “not spots/white areas” where the current Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS)/British Telecommunications (BT), BT commercial or any other provider has any current plans to do so. The application was for £2 million.

I regret that our application was unsuccessful as you will see from the two letters that are appended to this update.

The reasons given for refusal to progress our application are disappointing given there is no comment on the validity or otherwise of the technical solution proposed in the application and mainly relates to tax payers money potentially double funding the project and EDDC’s unwillingness to share data with CDS to avoid this.

EDDC has never been unwilling to share data with CDS as is acknowledged by CDS and as recently as 4th February 2016 in the E Mail below from me to CDS which again sets out our position. BDUK has assumed a view on data sharing without asking EDDC if this was actually the case.

The refusal was appealed by the EDC CEO and the second letter as attached maintains the position where for reasons best known to BDUK suggests that in order to avoid double funding an NDA (non-disclosure agreement) would need to be signed with CDS whereby no details of where, when or how tax payers money could be published by EDDC in terms of openness and transparency. To date EDDC has refused to sign an NDA with CDS for either phase 1 or going in to phase 2 delivery of Broadband where the explanation given is on grounds of commercial confidentiality; difficult to comprehend given no contracts have been agreed for phase 2 delivery of service!

Dear Mr Field,

Thank you for your letter of the 16th February. Its contents are a disappointment to the Council.

As regards the points you make I would ask that the matter is reconsidered in the light of the following:

- 1. If I understand your assessment correctly you are stating that our request for funding from the SWUF is inappropriate or unnecessary because of the private sector led initiative we have proposed? The implication is that the DCMS prefers a subsidy led approach involving further funding to BT or whatever future partner CD&S secure. Is this correct?*
- 2. The reference to a lack of coordination with CDS is perplexing. There is a fundamental point of principle that CDS will only engage on the basis of a NDA. It is my understanding that the Government has confirmed that this is inappropriate, yet you seem to be endorsing it?*

Furthermore we have sought meetings with CDS and each time an arranged date has been cancelled. We were finally due to meet next Tuesday the 23rd but this now seems redundant bearing in mind your letter?

- 3. You refer to project finance experts in HM Treasury. Do you have a contact I can liaise with?*

From: *Cllr Phillip Twiss*

Sent: *04 February 2016 10:04*

To: keri.denton@devon.gov.uk; andrew.leadbetter@devon.gov.uk; *Cllr Paul Diviani; Mark Williams; Simon Davey*

Cc: PZRoberts@somerset.gov.uk; Thomas.Satterly@devon.gov.uk

Subject: *EDDC bid for BDUK funding*

Hi Keri,

You will no doubt be aware that EDDC (as attached in report going to the EDDC Cabinet on 10th Feb 2016) have applied to BDUK for part funding of a BB solution to fill the likely gap in Superfast/Ultrafast Broadband delivery in East Devon after December 2017 utilising a variety of technologies. Our view remains as it always has been is to deliver to the hardest to reach areas in our significantly rural part of the world and work back towards the commercial/CDS-commercial delivery; we believe this is possible as part of a public/private enterprise.

In order to quite rightly avoid double funding of areas likely to be left without provision post December 2017 BDUK have asked us to share data with CDS which we are very happy to do unconditionally. For the avoidance of doubt any sharing of data should not include an NDA as was requested in phase 1, particularly given BT ultimately were the only game in town. EDDC among many others regarded this as totally unnecessary and as you know is now subject to government scrutiny and probable claw back of funding in some contracts because of this.

We need to go back to BDUK confirming our willingness to share data with CDS in a totally open and transparent manner and it would be very help to meet up with you as soon as possible to establish how this can be achieved working with CDS. It would clearly make life easier if we could do this as either a joint letter or individually if you prefer with agreed similar content.

This is naturally time sensitive as every day that ticks by is another day without Superfast Broadband for very many of our residents in increasingly socially and economically deprived rural areas and with the exception of Wednesday AM my diary is cleared to meet up with you to discuss further, Tuesday or Wednesday PM as preferred first choices.

I would like EDDC write back to BDUK in the interim confirming our willingness to co-operate as they require and it would be helpful to let them know we are meeting CDS to discuss this issue. I look forward to hearing from you in the near future and might I suggest the East Devon Business Centre in Honiton as the venue for ease of access and parking etc.

Kind regards

Phil

Phil Twiss

EDDC Councillor

Honiton St Michael's ward, Portfolio holder, Corporate Services

Telephone: 01404 891327

E Mail: PTwiss@eastdevon.gov.uk



Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail

At this stage and having no clarity as to know where phase 2 tax payers money will be spent in East Devon I do not consider it sensible to “gamble” on borrowing £2 million from H.M. Treasury or another source as BDUK suggests until such time as the position of phase 2 delivery by CDS become clearer; I understand the tender process for this will be complete by early summer.

Having met with CDS recently we have been assured by them that if EDDC were to change position in committing funds in phase 2 and signing an NDA we would be able to know exactly where EDDC tax payers was being spent in improving Broadband service in East Devon and in addition that the proposed EDDC/Broadway Fibre to the premises (FTTP) and fixed wireless is a viable one that differs to the current Fibre to the cabinet (FTTC) CDS/BT model.

This has severe limitations of service over a copper cable from the green roadside cabinet meaning that even if an exchange is “enabled” and premises “passed” via the cabinet there is no certainty that a service can be provided (the service failing after 1.2/1.4km at best) unlike the EDDC proposal where reduction of speed is not an issue despite distance.

Phil Twiss

EDDC Portfolio holder Corporate Services

Background links:

[LGA Broadband conference summary](#)

[Extending to the final 5% powerpoint presentation](#)

[BDUK powerpoint presentation](#)

[Broadband for Rural Devon and Somerset powerpoint presentation](#)

[Cybermoor powerpoint presentation](#)

[Essex Cllr Penny Channer powerpoint presentation](#)

BDUK
4th Floor
100 Parliament Street
London SW1A 2BQ

www.gov.uk/dcms

Mark Williams
Chief Executive
East Devon District Council
Knowle
Sidmouth
EX10 8HL

16 February 2016

Dear Mr Williams

SOUTH WEST ULTRAFast FUND

Thank you for your application on behalf of East Devon District Council (EDDC) to the SW Ultrafast Fund.

We understand from your proposal that the proposed project would be implemented via a private sector-led initiative managed by the East Devon Broadband Company, which would be a co-investment between EDDC and Broadway Partners Ltd. The proposal also anticipates that the active network will be provided through ViaEuropa and the fixed wireless element through White Space Technology Ltd.

The proposal also sets out that the preferred approach would not involve State aid, with funding being provided under the Market Economy Operator Principle. This approach is also proposed as a means of avoiding 'double funding' premises supported through Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS). A no State aid approach would be required in any case given that some of the project partners would be private bodies not appointed through a public procurement process, which would not be allowed if State aid were to be used.

To avoid using State aid, it would be necessary to ensure that any public funding be provided on the same basis as commercial finance, in other words, via a loan or similar with commercial rates of interest. As such, there may be more appropriate approaches to accessing the necessary project finance, including via commercial lending, or possibly via the proposed Broadband Infrastructure Fund that was announced in last autumn's Spending Review.

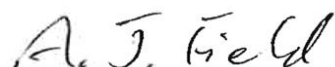
We are also concerned about the lack of coordination with CDS, including the absence of an agreement to share data between CDS and the EDDC project and to avoid any overlap. While it would be permissible to use funding which is not State aid to overlap with another project, it would still be inefficient use of public funding to provide double funding for the same premises. Any double funding would also have



negative impacts on take-up.

Given these considerations, your proposal has not been approved. We would however propose a discussion with EDDC and Broadway Partners and project finance experts in HM Treasury to explore other options for providing access to the necessary project finance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A. J. Field". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'A' and 'F'.

Andrew Field
Superfast Broadband Programme Director
BDUK



BDUK
4th Floor
100 Parliament Street
London SW1A 2BQ
www.gov.uk/dcms

Mark Williams
Chief Executive
East Devon District Council
Knowle
Sidmouth
EX10 8HL

4 March 2016

Dear Mr Williams

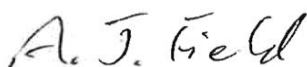
SOUTH WEST ULTRAFast FUND

Thank you for your letter dated 18th February 2016.

DCMS has awarded South West Ultrafast funding based on the merits of the individual bids. Regarding the East Devon bid, any funding would have to be provided on a commercial basis to avoid being state aid. As such, we believe an alternative source of funding would be more appropriate. We would be happy to facilitate a meeting with HM Treasury to discuss the Broadband Investment Fund, and we will follow this up to confirm.

We also could not have two publicly funded projects targeting the same intervention areas. Such a situation could only be avoided by EDDC and CDS sharing each others' data to avoid any overlap. This would almost certainly require signing an NDA and I am not aware that DCMS has said that would be inappropriate.

Yours sincerely



Andrew Field
Superfast Broadband Programme Director
BDUK

Engagement and consultation – paper for Scrutiny Committee

Introduction

1.1 This short paper provides information on consultation and how this is managed by the council.

1.2 It is important to emphasise that the need for consultation may be statutory or may be a matter of good practice. By its nature, consultation is very ‘service and mission’ specific and for that reason responsibility for framing consultations lies with the Strategic management team for corporate consultations and the Deputy chief executive and Strategic leads for specific, service related consultations. In essence the content of the consultation and who is consulted is dependent upon the nature of the matter being consulted upon. It is not possible to draw up prescriptive rules because of this.

1.3 It should be noted that the way the council carries out consultation is informed by our consultation guide which was approved on x date. This guide was presented initially as a policy but members requested that it be called a guide. This was developed by Devon County Council with input from the district councils.

1.4 The organisational development team advises senior officers on implementing good practice through the consultation that is carried out.

1.5 There are legal requirements regarding how consultation exercises inform decision making which must be adhered to and the Council ensures that these obligations are met in each individual case.

2 Examples of regular ‘channels’ for public input

2.1 Residents

2.1.1 The Viewpoint survey, which was agreed by Cabinet and Full council, is designed to help the council continue to improve its services by gaining feedback from residents in relation to service delivery. It was sent out in 2013, 2014 and will be sent out again in 2016.

2.1.2 The survey is sent out to 3,000 randomly selected households from throughout the district. To gain a more rounded picture we also send the survey out to Town and Parish councils, children and young people and equality groups.

2.1.3 There is also the Cranbrook Community Questionnaire, which is sent out to residents of Cranbrook every year which is similar in purpose and design.

2.2 Other sectors

2.2.1 We engage with the Voluntary and Community Sector at our annual 'Working together for the future of East Devon' event which held annually.

2.2.2 There are regular meetings for council partners and equality groups to foster good relationships and maintain good dialogue.

2.3 Businesses

2.3.1 The council's Economic development manager and Section 151 officer continue to develop links with local businesses.

2.4 East Devon editors

2.4.1 We have set up a customer reading panel called the East Devon Editors; this is a group of residents who have volunteered to look through council documents etc and improve them. This group assisted us in the development of the website.

2.5 Participatory budgeting with Section 106 money for play and sport

2.5.1 This involves extensive community engagement so our residents can decide how money is spent on play and sport in their area. This is an innovative approach as the vast majority of other councils decide themselves how to spend this money.

2.6 Systems thinking

2.6.1 Services regular ask customers their views on specific services through 'what matters surveys'.

2.7 Tenants

2.7.1 There is a whole tenant participation team, including the Tenant Panel. Tenants make decisions on Council Housing Policy and regulations, they are involved in designing the service.

2.8 Neighbourhood Assessments

2.8.1 Environmental Health lead Neighbourhood Assessments, visiting locations throughout East Devon and door knocking to talk to residents. Common concerns are answered and actions may be taken on the results.

2.9 Elected Members

2.9.1 Elected Members clearly play a key and fundamental role in regularly engaging with their communities.

3 Examples of recent consultations

3.1 Local Plan

3.1.1 The recently adopted Local Plan, led by Planning Policy, has had several rounds of public consultation. Changes have been made as a result at every stage.

3.2 Cranbrook Community Questionnaire closed December 2015

3.2.1 We send out and analyse an annual questionnaire to all residents of Cranbrook, this year we set out over 1,200. We included questions on behalf of a variety of partners including EDVSA, Cranbrook Town Council, The Growth Point Team, Devon County Council and the NHS. We needed to find out from residents what it's like to live in Cranbrook at the moment and how they want organisations to plan the future of Cranbrook.

3.2.2 We are currently in the process of finding out what the various organizations are going to do with the results, we will then feed this back to residents and others.

3.3 Moving and Improving - November 2015

3.3.1 Members have made the decision to move from Sidmouth to offices in Honiton and Exmouth. We completed a series of consultations to find out which services residents and others want us to provide from Honiton and Exmouth and how else they would like us to deliver services to them. Separate consultations were carried out with:

- Residents
- Businesses
- Voluntary and community groups
- Town and Parish Councils
- People with equalities characteristics, including two face to face discussions with people with visual impairments

3.3.2 The results of this extensive consultation are currently being used to help us decide how and where to deliver services when we move.

3.4 Recycling and waste - November 2015

3.4.1 A questionnaire was sent out to all 1,362 households that took part in the recycling and waste trial in New Feniton and The Colony in Exmouth. The trial collected cardboard and mixed plastics as part of the kerbside recycling collection and collected landfill waste once every three weeks. The questionnaire was to find out what they thought about the trial and help us make a decision on any future changes to the current recycling and waste service.

3.4.2 The results on the whole were very positive and residents embraced the changes. There was a minor area of concern with the new recycling bag not being

sealable. The same scheme as the trial, with the addition of the collection of tetrapak cartons will now be rolled out across the whole district. The design of the new recycling bag is being reviewed.

3.5 Spending £118,000 on improving two Exmouth play areas consultation closed July 2015.

3.5.1 There was £188,000 of Section 106 money from new homes created in the area to spend on improving play areas in Exmouth. The Town Council made the decision that £70,000 should be spent on improving Imperial Recreation Ground play area and £48,000 on Phear Park. Two stages of engagement were undertaken with hundreds of local children at three local schools and Exmouth Children's Centre. They got to decide what types of equipment went in and also got to vote on the final design.

3.5.2 The Imperial Recreation Ground play area is now installed as per the childrens chosen design and is ready to play on. The Phear Park improvements are currently taking place.

3.6 Public Space Protection Order at Shelly Beach and Belshers Slipway closed September 2015

3.6.1 Residents of nearby properties were concerned about uses of Shelly Beach and Belshers Slipway in Exmouth. We consulted residents, individual users and user organisations about the impact of us bringing in a Public Space Protection Order to limit the uses of the beach and slipway. There were nearly 800 responses.

Background information

1 Open for Business project – content review

In 2014 I took on this project as project sponsor. As a team we reviewed website content in 2014 and redesigned the website based on the principles used by gov.uk. Our premise was that we are a district council and do not need to waste money by reworking the wheel and researching latest thinking on websites but should use the same principles as the award winning gov.uk website.

These principles are:

- Based on customers' needs
- Clear
- Simple
- Fast
- Organised
- Rational

The other principle that is often forgotten is “design with data”, which means that a claim such as “people don't like it” needs to be supported by evidence.

Our approach was to take out as many PDFs as possible as customers cannot search PDFs and these quickly become outdated. We removed lots of pictures on the basis that gov.uk research showed that people come to find information and not to ‘hang out’ on our website looking at pictures.

I recruited web authors around the council and gained SMT agreement that the content for each service area is the responsibility of the Strategic Lead. This was an important cultural shift as it was important that all officers started to see the web channel as an important customer channel.

I developed clarity around web author responsibilities and those of the communications manager – see appendix one. Lisa Mansell worked to organise the review of the content and Strata trained our web authors in the use of UMBRACO. The web authors did an excellent job in rewriting the vast amounts of content.

2 Open for Business project – review of online transactions

At the same time we have worked with Strata and continue to do so to develop more web based transactions and on line forms.

- Total NEW forms live or in progress: 47
- Total PRE-EXISTING forms that were revisited/improved/integrated: 47

Karen Jenkins Strategic Lead v1.2

- Total number of forms that have been/will be created or improved as part of Open for Business: 154
- Total number of services that can be fulfilled digitally (new or pre-existing): over 200

To put into perspective: Exeter have 35 online forms, plus some functionality offered by the council tax portal and some licensing forms through GOV.UK

Here is an update on the Open for Business – we are developing 70 forms (Appendix Two) currently across all services and gained SMT agreement to develop forms in the areas of highest customer demand. Highlights from our most recent meeting include:

Countryside booking system

The highlight for this month however is the creation of a new Event Booking system for the countryside team, with associated online forms, which will bring huge benefits to the customers as well as the council.

Customers will be able to view live place availability on the EDDC website for each event, and they will be able to book online. This is a great improvement as previously customers had to phone in to book and this did not allow for last minute or weekend arrangements. As a result of customers self-serving online, we expect the number of phone calls to book a place at events to drop, which in turn will reduce the pressure on the Countryside events officer who previously had to spend a lot of time catching up on voicemail and calling the customers back.

To completely free up the events officer from the admin task of managing the bookings, the council can also consider moving this process to the CSC, which would be very straightforward thanks to the new system.

Building control

Also, Building Control have requested to use internal versions of the online forms to log requests while on the phone to customers. This is in an effort to be more proactive with customers during phone enquiries, as Building Control realised that they are increasingly losing customers to the private sector.

The online form would guide the building control officers through all the necessary questions in a structured way, something that CAPS Uniform would not allow in the same way.

Benefits

Similarly, the Benefits section uses the online form to fill out applications when reaching out to customers.

In both these cases the work done on the online forms has improved the way the EDDC back offices work, and could also produce an increase in revenue.

Integrations

Finally, it is also worth mentioning that the integration work done for the online forms (specifically to report noise complaints and breaches of dog control orders) has now been

extended to the forms logged by the CSC over the phone. The implications of this are that, while the CSC keep working as normal, the Environmental Health team no longer need to manually transfer the information relating to these case types into uniform.

3 Regular review of content

It is important to understand that the website continues to evolve and will never be finished. It needs constant attention and on that basis the communication team and web authors meet regularly to share good practice and review changes to the website.

Our site improve tool provides us with regular alerts to highlight out of date content and broken links and these are picked up by our communications team who prompt the web authors to make any necessary corrections or update the content.

4 Freedom of information requests on the website

Here is the link to the most recent monitoring report for FOI <http://eastdevon.gov.uk/media/1208363/150715-combined-agenda.pdf> (item 27) which shows that 41% of requests in 2014/15 were from commercial organisations. These requests often ask for detailed information about council contracts/suppliers or about business rates accounts and we also receive a lot of requests from property search companies (land charge requests) under the Environmental Information Regs. Much of this information is not appropriate for online publication and would need continually updating if it was online.

These requests are numerous but very specific in the nature and timing of the information they want.

Our responses to the majority of FOIs are published here <http://eastdevon.gov.uk/access-to-information/freedom-of-information/freedom-of-information-published-requests/> but we do not publish those where there are large attachments (because the system does not allow us to do so at the moment).

Our new FOI officer has been working on the new Access to Information pages <http://eastdevon.gov.uk/access-to-information/> and is currently working her way through historic part B reports with a view to publishing these online where appropriate. These pages include the re-location documents and our aim is to incorporate more information relating to the transparency code as and when required.

5 Complaints

From a complaints point of view our FOI officer does not recall any formal complaints about the content of the website. There is regular feedback coming through from LAGAN and now that our communications manager is in place it will be her responsibility to review this and

to make sure that the web authors address the issue. As discussed in point 3 this will be a regular and iterative process.

6 Summary

In summary it is not in our workplan to review the fundamentals of the website design but to continue to work with our residents and others to take on board any issues they have with finding information and to work with our web authors to continuously improve accessibility to important information. If evidence shows we need to revisit design features then we will look at that.

Our work with Strata over the next few months will be to deliver Gov.delivery which allows people to effectively sign up to receive information from our website.

Appendix Three outlines some positive feedback for the website.

For information in 2015 our website activity was in total:

- 570,037 visits
- 2,399,138 page views
- 289,087 unique visitors

Appendix One

Communications Manager responsibilities:

- To manage the style of the content of the website - making sure web pages are in plain English, meet the fog test (easy to read) and are timely, accurate and relevant
- To co-ordinate and develop web authors to ensure they are able to manage their pages effectively and promote best practice
- To work with web authors to help them identify and develop web content according to gov.uk principles
- To provide ongoing coaching for web authors to enable them to provide online information that meets corporate style and standards
- To establish and maintain a web authors' support network

Web author responsibilities:

Web authors will be given all the support (including practical training – content management system and writing for the web) they need to fulfil their role, which includes:

- To oversee the development of web pages for their designated service area
- To maintain and revise, where required, the navigational structure of the service area
- To edit, write or re-write content of web pages to ensure they are in plain English, are easy to read, timely accurate and relevant
- To regularly review content to ensure copy is fresh and up to date
- To keep up to date with content management system and develop personal competency using this tool
- To attend regular meetings with the content manager, communication team and webmaster to ensure content meets the shared principles of our communications, ICT and customer plans.

Appendix Two

Building Control	Request for bespoke quote
Corporate	Standards/code of conduct complaint
Democratic Services	Council committee enquiry
Economy	Request regarding availability of property to rent or sell
Economy	Request to purchase/lease council owned land (open space)
Electoral Services	Apply for postal vote
Environmental Health	Notification of new premise (Licensing Act 2003)
Environmental Health	Assisted burial enquiry
Finance	Request to tender for council work
Human Resources	Recruitment enquiry
Income & Payments	Invoice query
Income & Payments	Setup direct debit payment
Income & Payments	Debtor reminder query
Income & Payments	Query a payment owed
Income & Payments	Creditor change of bank details
Income & Payments	Creditor change of payment method
Income & Payments	Creditor ceased trading
Legal Services	Restrictions on council houses sold under right to buy (S157)
Licensing	Hackney carriage driver licence renewal
Licensing	Hackney carriage licence renewal
Licensing	Lottery return form
Licensing	Disclosure of convictions and declaration form
Licensing	Application for a personal licence
Licensing	Interested parties representation form
Licensing	Application for permission to erect monument
Licensing	Notice of interment (Sidmouth, Sidbury, Seaton)
Licensing	Supply a return for a street collection
Licensing	Application to licence a street collection
Licensing	Licensing enforcement action
Parking Services	Cones request
Parking Services	Parking enquiry
Planning Practice	Apply for copies of plans/documents
Planning Practice	Planning appeal
Property Services	Book a council room enquiry
Revenues & Benefits	Council Tax application form for disablement
Revenues & Benefits	Council Tax application form for empty property discount Class C & D
Revenues & Benefits	Council Tax application form for disregards (generic)

Karen Jenkins Strategic Lead v1.2

Revenues & Benefits	Benefits review form	
Revenues & Benefits	Benefits form for those renting from a relative	
Revenues & Benefits	Benefits certificate of earnings form	
Revenues & Benefits	Council Tax application for annexe discounts	
Revenues & Benefits	Benefits Application form for Housing Benefit on two homes	
Revenues & Benefits	Benefits second property form	
Revenues & Benefits	Benefits capital form	
Revenues & Benefits	Benefits questionnaire for returning British Nationals	
SS Project Engineering	Play area fault	
SS Project Engineering	Car park fault	
Street Scene Ops/Admin	Request tree maintenance	
Street Scene Ops/Admin	Request hedge maintenance	
Street Scene Ops/Admin	Request grass cutting	
Street Scene Ops/Admin	Request public toilet cleaning	
Street Scene Ops/Admin	Enquiry as to position on beach hut waiting list	
Street Scene Waste Management	Request excess waste collection	
Street Scene Waste Management	Recycling box change request	Cancelled
Street Scene Waste Management	Food caddy change request	Cancelled
Building Control	Report dangerous structure	In progress
Countryside	Book place at countryside event	In progress
Revenues & Benefits	Council Tax application form for exemptions (generic)	In progress
Revenues & Benefits	Benefits proof of rent form	In progress
Revenues & Benefits	Benefits application form for Discretionary Housing Payment/Exceptional Hardship	In progress
Revenues & Benefits	Benefits childcare form	In progress
Revenues & Benefits	Benefits self-employed business income sheet	In progress
Street Scene Waste Management	Request gull sack	In progress
Street Scene Waste Management	Request replacement clear sacks	In progress
Street Scene Waste Management	General waste management help	In progress
Revenues	Request for small business rate relief	Live

Revenues & Benefits	Shortened Council Tax Support application form	Live
Revenues & Benefits	Business Rates Rate relief application forms	Live
Street Scene Waste Management	Request new property containers	On hold
Street Scene Waste Management	Wheeled bin change request	On hold

Appendix Three

The hard work that Fran has done behind the scenes to give East Devon a cutting edge website has been rewarded by the latest speed test by Jumoo.uk which in the last month scored East Devon's as the fastest website in the local government category.

- The *Page Speedy* component of *Jumoo* uses the [Google Page Speed](https://developers.google.com/speed/api/) API, an open source Accessibility checker, and other scripts detection tools, to check sites and return information about their performance and what type of things they are running.
- These reports are used by Socitm to contribute to the final score of a website.

Customer Web Journey Top Score for EDDC

Every year, SocITM (Society of Information Technology Management), produces a survey to assess all councils websites and online services in the UK and NI.

They have published the result of the first test which examined the customer journey "Report missed bin" nationwide.

I'm pleased to let you know that we have achieved 4 out of 4 stars, the top scoring possible.

In the words of the reviewer:

"Excellent. From start to finish. Every step of the task was perfectly executed. Mobile-friendly."

Congratulations to all particularly our Recycling and Waste Team and the Open for Business team.

In details, the standard for 4 stars is:

☑ minimum 10 of 12 task questions with the correct answer: we scored "correctly" in 12 of 12.

☑ 'essential question' answered correctly: and indeed we answered correctly.

☑ No out of date content found for the task: content was up to date.

☑ Promotion of task rated very good (ie 3 on 0-3 scale): we achieved 3.

☑ Customer journey rated very good (ie 3 on 0-3 scale): again, we achieved 3.

To put things into perspective, only 1.9% of other councils nationwide have performed like us on this task, with the average score for all tested of 2.

Review undertaken by Devon County Council

Devon's website is full of useful information which is clear to read and understand. The use of Plain English means that it is accessible to everyone and there isn't any jargon or 'Council speak' to confuse residents.

The use of a consistent colour scheme, font and layout create a cohesive site which is easy to navigate around. No graphics distract from the information which keep the site clear.

The search function is fairly good, with relevant information showing first, meaning that you can find information quickly and easily, without the need to reword or look manually.

Waste collection services											
3	Collection Day Checker	What Goes Where ?	Missed Collections	Assisted Collections	Order New Bins/Boxes/Sacks	HWRCs	Bring Banks	Composting	Junk Mail	Real Nappies	Reuse
East	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

2	A-Z of Recycling	What Happens To Recycling/Waste ?	Commerical/ Business	Bulky Waste	Hazardous Waste	Clinical Waste	General School info.
East	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Using WRAP’s evaluation matrix¹, the above tables show what is included on the East Devon website.

Below will go into more detail on each ticked box as well as offering suggestions for improvement on this website:

3s:

- All of the chosen 3s are on this site which shows how East Devon are giving information about how to reduce, reuse and recycle,
- Collection Day Checker – Easy to find and use with clear instructions,
- What Goes Where? – Clear and easy to read with a working link to the service leaflet for extra information,
- Missed Collections – clear information with links included where relevant and a easy to find and use form,
- Assisted Collections – Lots of information, easy to use form to request and also to cancel,
- Order New Bins/Boxes/Sacks – Very easy to see what you are requesting, clear and easy to use form with handy table at the bottom telling you what you need, what’s next (after form submitted) and other ways to apply,
- HWRCs & Bring Banks – Working link to DCC HWRC page, clear and detailed information with link to directions to Bring Banks,
- Composting, Junk Mail, Real Nappies, Reuse – Lots of relevant information and links to requesting items/equipment.

2s:

- All but one of the chosen 2s are on the site, which is good but leaves room for improvement,
- A-Z of Recycling – A useful tool with is missing from the site,
- What Happens To Recycling/Waste? – Fairly difficult to find (a few ‘layers’ of pages to go through) but lots of information on the page,
- Commercial/Business – Good information, charges listed and working links,

¹ <http://www.wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/2012%2004%2013%20Website%20Guidance%20FINAL.pdf>

- Bulky Waste – Lots of useful information including ways to dispose through reuse, charges, request forms and lists of what can and cannot be taken,
- Hazardous Waste – Although it's been ticked, the only hazardous waste information is on what cannot be taken in a bulky waste collection. Asbestos is this only item mentioned, with links to DCC's asbestos disposal form,
- Clinical Waste – Lots of information on what clinical waste is, how to request a collection, what the charges are, how to cancel and how to report a missed collection using simple and easy to use forms. One broken link however on the reporting of a missed collection – the link doesn't take you to the missed collections page (it stays on the missed clinical waste collection page),
- General School Info. – Information on how to request a school waste collection, how to organise and educational visit, links to external sites like DCC's The Zone and Recycle Now as well as information on how to organise an educational visit from the Waste Management Team, information on Community Composting and Recycling Credits.

Recommendations:

From the above the following suggestions are made to improve East Devon's website:

- Ensure all links work on each page – a few broken links were found e.g. on the Clinical Waste pages,
- Ensure search bar brings up information that may be written in a slightly different way than how it is on the website so information is easier to find,
- Add an A-Z of Recycling, linked from Recycle Devon, to add more information to the site but also link County with district,

Overall this site is really good and offers a lot of relevant information to the residents of East Devon. Out of all of the websites researched, this is one of the best.

Annual Report of the Scrutiny Committee 2015/16

Changes to the overview and scrutiny structure has reintroduced a separate Scrutiny committee, operating task and finish forums for specific issues. The Committee has continued to work in alignment with the Council's corporate priorities and regularly receive performance monitoring data. Topics have also debated following decision by the Cabinet and Portfolio Holders, as part of the scrutiny role as the "critical friend".

The civic term began with the completion of the evaluation and protection of trees task and finish forum. The report proposed a number of recommendations which ultimately had resource requirements for implementation, because of the small size of the aboricultural service. The recommendations were incorporated into service plans for 2016/17; and the budget request for additional staff resource for 2016/17 was recommended by the committee and subsequently adopted.

Work continued in lobbying both local MPs and the County Council in respect of protecting community hospital bed numbers.

The committee continued to be involved, alongside the Overview Committee, in preparations for relocating. This included involvement in a consultation questionnaire, and regular updates on progress

The topic of beach huts was extensively covered by the committee this year, following the Cabinet resolutions of 7 January 2015 and subsequent public consultation on reaching market value rents. The committee heard from both public speakers and from their own membership including research by Scrutiny councillor into prices and demand in other coastal authorities. A further update was made in March 2016 on the implementation of the Cabinet decisions. The committee continued to push for the early involvement of local Ward Members and relevant town and parish councils in any matters that impact on their local area.

A crime and disorder update was provided to the committee as required under Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Concern was raised about budget cuts impacting on level of PCSOs. There continued to be issues with the 101 reporting service despite actions being taken, so the committee resolved to invite the Police and Crime Commissioner to a future meeting after the election for the position in May.

The committee made a recommendation, in the interests of transparency, for the Asset Management Forum to be held in public, with an option for public speaking. This has now been put in place and the Forum meets in public session.

Chardstock Parish Council called on the committee to review how the decision to include Chardstock and Dunkeswell in Strategy 27 of the Local Plan (as sustainable and having a built up area boundary) was made at such a late stage of the Local Plan process. The committee was unable to deal with it without impacting on the pending local plan, but once adopted, the committee worked swiftly to scope the issue and debate it, along with the assistance of a representative of Chardstock Parish Council. The committee recommended

that where there is a proposal contrary to officer advice, the onus is on the councillor to produce supporting evidence to their motion. The committee also called for further training for Chairmen and Vice Chairmen to help ensure robust decision making.

Following an issue raised with a press release relating to Mill Street, Sidmouth, the committee endorsed the existing media protocol and welcomed the use of a press release template.

The committee received an update from the Portfolio Holder – Economy

Broadband was again discussed this year following an update from the Portfolio Holder – Central Services

Joint debates with Overview Committee included:

- Devolution;
- Improved recycling trial feedback and informing the shape of the new recycling and refuse contract;
- Draft budget and service plans for 2016/17, including a recommendation for further investigation by Cabinet into requested additional staff resource for economic development.

Work for the coming civic term following scoping exercises includes