

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Asset Management Forum held online via zoom on 13 March 2023

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 4.25 pm

22 Public speaking

None.

23 Notes from the previous meeting

Agreed.

24 Declarations of interest

Minutes 28 and 29; Cllr Bruce De Saram: Affects Non Registerable Interest, representative on the Queens Drive Delivery Group;

Minute 31; Cllr Geoff Pratt: Affects Non Registerable Interest, Ward Member for Ottery St Mary.

25 Matters of urgency

None.

26 Confidential/exempt item(s)

None.

27 Estates Team update

The Forum received a report highlighting:

- the reduction in the backlog of cases, since the team had been able to recruit;
- recent rent review of the East Devon Business Centre in line with lease agreements;
- Demand continues to be high for industrial space and cafes/kiosks.

In response to questions from Members, it was confirmed that the market rate for rent was sought at the renewal stage. Any assets being considered for disposal by sale would be directed through to Cabinet for decision.

RESOLVED that the Forum noted the report.

28 Place & Prosperity Team update

The Forum receives updated on the following projects:

- Seaton Jurassic
- Public toilets at the Esplande, Sidmouth – now with approval from Cabinet for acceptance of the officer from Rockfish;

- Axe Valley Levelling Up Funding Bid being unsuccessful, but work still continued in preparation should future monies be available, for sites located in Colyford Road and Harepath Road in Seaton, and Cloakham Lawns in Axminster;
- Seaton Moridunum;
- Devon Place Urban Renewal Project had been recently reported to Cabinet. meetings of the Renewal Boards would continue on a regular basis;
- Depots review.

The Portfolio Holder for Tourism, Sport, Leisure and Culture confirmed his continued attendance at the Renewal Boards, which was welcomed by the Chair.

Questions covered:

- E-bikes at Axminster and Seaton. The E-bikes project in Axminster was confirmed as being under the wing of the Town Councils working with their Chamber of Commerce and Network Rail. The consultant, Hardisty Jones, is preparing a business case for the E-bike delivery in Seaton;
- Negotiations continue with Seaton Tramway in respect of the Jurassic Centre. The expectation was that the centre would not open under new management until Easter 2024 at the earliest;
- Work was underway to appoint an agent for the marketing of the Moridunum site.

RESOLVED that the Forum noted the report.

29 **Progress in Placemaking in Exmouth**

The Project Manager Place and Prosperity (Exmouth) gave an update on progress on placemaking in Exmouth. The report outlined the next steps:

- To provide Approval of Terms of Reference for place making first half of 2023;
- Draft options to Delivery Group Summer 2023;
- Further consultation on the options;
- Cabinet and Council approval to move to detailed design and costing;
- Implementation phase begins early 2024 subject to budget constraints.

The report also outlined the planning application submission for the Strand's table and chairs.

The levelling up bid success for the area delivered a total of £15,765,899 which would be split £13.19m for the Dinan Way Extension and £2.5m for Destination Exmouth/Gateway project. Some Members voiced concern about the delivery of the project, in respect of increasing materials costs – but the project was dependent on both elements being delivered to meet the criteria of the project.

RESOLVED that the Forum noted the report.

30 **Development of the Place and Prosperity Framework**

The Forum had previously requested a review of the Place and Prosperity Framework. This interim report set out the work to date in reforming the framework to have a single fund of circa £20M investing as a first tranche borrowed from the Public Works Loan Board. The reviewed framework will be used to direct the funding for investment in:

- Service delivery
- Economic regeneration

- Preventative action.

The model for delivery suggested was based on a model used successfully in other authorities, including delegation of the decision to invest to an Investment Board. The process will still include consultation with the appropriate Ward Member(s).

The revised Framework in full will come before the Forum after the May elections for consideration, with a view to recommendation to Cabinet and Council. Training for Investment Board Members would also be undertaken.

The Chair welcomed reference to training, and reminded the Forum of the care needed in handling the Framework, in that it was still a vehicle for borrowing money that had to be paid back. He also highlighted the need for the Framework to include not just economic benefit, but social and environmental benefit too.

Discussion from the Forum included sufficient robustness of the criteria and scoring matrix, which would include as a golden thread the need to include environmental factors in the matrix.

RESOLVED that the Forum noted the report.

31 **Asset Register**

The Forum were shown a demonstration from the Performance and Data Analyst on the Asset Register, which has been developed alongside Strata and the Place, Assets & Commercialisation Service. Some information had been available on the Council's website for some time, but this system brought about the aggregation of data from various sources to deliver a system that could easily produce specific requests.

The Register was welcomed by the Forum. In response to questions, there was acknowledgement that there may be further tweaks as more information becomes available, but the version that would be available to Councillors would give them the ability to drill down into specific information. The detail on lease or concession contracts cannot be included because of the commercial information being protected.

The two versions of the register would be:

- Public version: covering a table and map of the assets
- Councillor accessible version: as above, also including the valuation and financials of the asset.

The information would be updated as per the regular asset valuation assessment undertaken annually. The register was planned for a June live date.

RESOLVED that the Forum noted the report.

32 **Community Asset Transfer proposal - Land at Canaan and Land at Millcroft, Ottery St Mary**

The report set out the first application under the recently approved procedure for Community Asset Transfer. The application covers two areas of land in Ottery St Mary. Consultation is currently underway with officers of the relevant council services and the Ward Members.

The application was before the Forum for their views on the application.

The Chair, as the Portfolio Holder under the approved procedure who would make the decision whether to invite the applicant to submit a business case on one or more sites, did not take part in the discussion.

Comments from Members on the application included:

- Benefit in a transfer to Ottery St Mary in respect of the mill leat, but concern about the business case stacking up against the loss of revenue from the car park, and that the play area was not included in the application;
- Noted the capital investment planned for the refurbishment of the play area in the capital programme;
- Mill croft parcels of land were steep and needed work, so would be an advantage to transfer;
- Need to look at alternative value of site to balance against the loss of revenue for the car park;
- How would the maintenance of the car park be factored in;
- Care in not using a “cherry pick” approach to applications – there may have to be give on both sides to reach a satisfactory outcome.

RESOLVED

1. That the Forum notes the report and has offered initial thoughts on the application, as part of the consultation process;
2. That the Forum notes that following completion of the consultation, that in accordance with the Procedure, officers will make a recommendation to the Portfolio Holder Economy and Assets on whether the applicant should be invited to submit a business case for one or both sites;
3. That the Forum notes that, should the recommendation be that this application does not progress to the Business Case stage, officers will contact the Town Council to discuss their proposals and identify whether there is scope for a collaborate approach to achieve some of their objectives set out in the Expression of Interest.

Post meeting edit: The play area is included in the application as it is within the Title Number stated in the EOI. It was excluded from the site plan in error when it was included in the report to Asset Management Forum. Officers have now confirmed that it is to be included within the application.

33 One Public Estate draft Public Land Protocol proposals

The report set out to the Forum the current consideration of a public sector Land Protocol under the One Public Estate Board. If adopted, it would be proposed by the partners in the Devon and Torbay OPE Partnership on behalf of the Devon County Deal. As landowner, the Council would not lose sovereignty over its asset if signing up to the Protocol.

The potential benefits were set out in the report, including helping to facilitate new partnerships and joint ventures. The proposal was still in a draft stage not yet in the public domain. The report sought to inform the Forum of progress to date.

RESOLVED that the Forum noted the report.

34 Update report on Activities by Property and FM Team

The Forum welcomed the detailed report on the planned preventative maintenance and compliance works undertaken between October 2022 and February 2023; as well as the planned works for March 2023 to June 2023.

The large difference in contractors in relation to Led properties was again highlighted – the reactive work showing an increase.

The Forum welcomed the detail in the report showing the breakdown of the work and recognised that some works were picked up through planned maintenance checks; and items being put through for the capital programme where some assets have elements that have come to the end of their lifespan.

The Chair thanked the team for their continued work to keep those assets open and safe for public use.

RESOLVED that the Forum noted the report.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

P Hayward (Chair)

P Arnott

J Rowland

G Pratt

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

O Davey

B De Saram

N Hookway

G Jung

D Ledger

G Pook

Officers in attendance:

Tim Child, Assistant Director Place, Assets & Commercialisation

Simon Davey, Director of Finance

Rob Harrison, Senior Estates Surveyor

Alison Hayward, Project Manager Place & Prosperity

Gerry Mills, Project Manager Place & Prosperity (Exmouth)

Jorge Pineda-Langford, Principal Building Surveyor, Property & FM

Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer

Councillor apologies:

E Rylance

Chair

Date: