

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of LED Monitoring Forum held at Online via Zoom app on 11 April 2023

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.38 pm

36 Public Speaking

A statement was read out on behalf of Hilary Davies, who sought to understand why discounted LED membership rates are available to some working people under Corporate or Blue Light concessions, expressing a view that this is unfair to members who work for employers outside of the schemes. They also referred to the LED CEO's response to a public speaker's question at the January Forum meeting regarding discounted membership rates for over-65s, and asked for further detail concerning the LED CEO's assertion that in East Devon, this demographic are reasonably well off.

The Chairman of the LED Board responded that the comments would be considered as part of the overall pricing strategy but it was not appropriate to enter into open discussion about what that would be in the future.

37 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 17 January 2023

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 17 January 2023 were noted as a true and accurate record.

38 Declarations of interest

Cllr A Dent: Minutes 42 – 51: Affects Non-Registerable Interest: Member of LED Community Leisure as a service user.

Cllr S Gazzard: Minute 41: Affects Non-Registerable Interest: He has attended some of the Exmouth Stroke Survivors Club events, in his capacity as Mayor of Exmouth

39 Matters of urgency

There were two matters of urgency (minutes 49 and 50 refer).

40 Confidential/exempt item(s)

There was one item to be considered in private session (minute 51 refers).

41 Presentation from Exmouth Stroke Survivors Club

Mr Stephen Beer spoke on behalf of the Exmouth Stroke Survivors Club. He outlined the very good work carried out by the Club to support stroke survivors, assisted by external supporters including LED. The Club has grown to have over 45 members, and is now in desperate need of more equipment, such as steppers. Mr Beer was grateful to LED and councillors for their continued support.

Both Cllr Hookway and Cllr De Saram had visited the Club on a number of occasions and remarked on the importance of the Club for stroke survivors in Exmouth.

42 **LED Facilities and Activities Update**

The LED CEO introduced the update report which provided a summary of the activities going on as well as a projects update, and invited questions.

Discussion and clarification included the following points:

- There is a lot of work around membership retention and interaction; an automated email system sends reminders to new members by email with a view to getting members engaged in a health and wellbeing programme within the first 13 weeks of their membership.
- Two small call centres have been set up at Exmouth Tennis Centre and Honiton Leisure Centre, with staff making contact with new members by telephone to check if there is any support they need. It is newer gym users in high risk groups who often lack some confidence and can benefit most from this follow-up, and the interaction seems to be helping with membership retention.
- Members congratulated the LED team on the positive national press surrounding the introduction of Deep Green's innovative technology at Exmouth Leisure Centre, reducing energy bills and carbon footprint. The LED CEO stated that the technology seems to be working well, and the Chair asked that LED report back to the Forum once it is known what the energy cost savings are.

43 **LED Community Engagement Report**

The LED CEO introduced this report which outlines the work of the LED Community Engagement team. He explained that the team are thriving and very excited about Shared Prosperity Funding being received via EDDC to the value of £38k per year for 3 years, which will be targeted towards initiatives aimed at getting new people into the leisure centres.

Clarification and discussion included the following points:

- The Chair suggested that at an appropriate juncture, it would be worth commissioning a further social value report to demonstrate the return on investment in leisure. It was noted that a previous report in 2019 demonstrated that every £1 spent on leisure returned £8 in terms of social value; this was mostly in terms of health savings but also savings from reduced antisocial behaviour and crime.
- In due course, the LED CEO will discuss with the EDDC Facilities Management team what funding is available to develop the GWR building next door to Exmouth Leisure Centre; it was noted that some positive conversations had taken place pre-Covid concerning that facility. Currently, a pop-up café bar within Exmouth Leisure Centre is proving popular.

44 **LED KPI Dashboard February 2023**

The Forum received and noted key details of the performance of LED Community Leisure for February 2023.

45 **Options to reduce energy consumption at EDDC swimming pools**

The Forum received an initial feasibility study report which detailed a range of options to reduce energy consumption at East Devon swimming pools.

The objective of the study was to develop and agree a medium to long term vision for the leisure centres within the LED Leisure Management Contract, and the Flamingo Pool in Axminster which sits outside of the Management Contract. Swimming pools are large energy consumers; EDDC are the landlords of the three public pools in Exmouth, Honiton and Sidmouth and see the need for them to be as carbon neutral as possible before the target date of 2040.

LED, who operate EDDC's three pools and the district's other community leisure centres, are experiencing a significantly increased financial burden from energy prices, which have had to be passed on to the Council.

It is for the LED and EDDC to work together on looking at the principles of change and what is involved with this process. The study report focused on current energy savings schemes/equipment and which sites would be best suited to which principal change.

The LED CEO summarised the key learnings from the feasibility study, and his recommendations:

- Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP) are not the panacea; Sidmouth Pool had modern and highly efficient boilers installed only a couple of years ago and there would be no financial savings to be had by replacing these with ASHP at the present time. When the boilers are due to be replaced in 10-15 years time, ASHP technology is likely to have improved and also be cheaper, and at that point it might be appropriate to consider heating the pool through ASHP.
- ASHP could be put into Exmouth Leisure Centre, and the Deep Green technology would complement the ASHP, but the recommendation that came out of the feasibility study is that boilers are still used for the domestic hot water system.
- No two pools are the same; all pools could benefit from the technology but a phased approach would be appropriate.
- There is an opportunity to apply for government funding from a £63 million support fund for public swimming pools announced by the Chancellor as part of the Spring Budget, £40 million of which is for decarbonisation of public swimming pools. An application would need to be submitted by July 2023.
- Since the Council have budgeted for consultancy support, the LED CEO was of the view that consultants could be appointed to come up with a timetable of technology improvements for the swimming pools, using this initial feasibility study as a starting point.

The Assistant Director Countryside & Leisure agreed it would be appropriate for consultants to help with prioritising the sites and supporting the Council to capitalise on available funding, which includes a tranche of money that has been launched through the England Rural Prosperity Fund.

The Principal Building Surveyor stated that it is the intention for consultants to put together a plan to decarbonise the sites in the first instance, which will then be used to secure funding for the works. It will be necessary to move quickly, and the process for securing funding is highly competitive.

The Director Housing & Environment remarked that experts at Exeter University could provide the consultancy support, and the Council is able to access this through its membership of the SW Energy and Environment Group.

Discussion and clarification included the following:

- LED has developed a good relationship with the board of Flamingo Pool; LED included the pool in the initial audit and has provided free advice up to this point. With their agreement, it is intended to incorporate the Flamingo Pool into the consultancy work on the understanding that they will pay a proportion of the cost. Thereafter, it will be for them

to decide if they can afford to go ahead with the recommendations. LED will try to help by signposting them towards funding opportunities. The Assistant Director Countryside & Leisure added that the Flamingo Pool is a much loved facility and the Council want to assist the board as much as it can.

- It is the understanding of the Finance Director and the Assistant Director Countryside & Leisure that whilst they became aware of Flamingo Pool's financial issues, no request was received for direct cash support. Cllr Arnott indicated that this is contrary to a public statement put out by Cllr Hall which reads 'When it was asked in 2022 for Axminster Swimming Pool to be financially supported equally, as is the case for other towns within East Devon, the independent administration said they could not afford to.'. Cllr Arnott wanted to put on record that this statement is completely untrue.
- Cllr Hookway proposed, seconded by Cllr Arnott, that the Forum recommends to Cabinet that consultants be appointed to advise Council and LED about the most appropriate way of moving forward for achieving carbon neutral swimming pools and leisure centres.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet:

That consultants be appointed to advise Council and LED about the most appropriate way of moving forward for achieving carbon neutral swimming pools and leisure centres.

46 **LED's Trading Subsidiary**

The LED CEO ran through this report which provided an explanation of the trading and financial relationship between LED Community Leisure Ltd and its trading subsidiary, LED Enterprises Ltd. LED Enterprises Ltd exists to deal with non-charitable turnover and income, with all the surplus on these activities gift-aided up to LED Community Leisure Ltd, as the parent charity of LED, helping to offset the costs of the facilities and the management contract.

47 **Update on Leisure Strategy delivery plan**

The Assistant Director Countryside & Leisure introduced the update on the Leisure Strategy delivery plan, outlining the progress made with the key actions on the spreadsheet.

The LED CEO summarised the progress with renegotiation of the dual use agreements, and the factors influencing the negotiations.

The Chair asked that the action plan update comes to the Forum as a standing item, and was encouraged to note the progress already made.

In discussion, it was noted that there were some actions on the delivery plan which had not yet started; the Assistant Director Countryside & Leisure highlighted that this is a ten year strategy and there is time to progress those actions not yet started. It was for teams to identify resources to move actions forward and to prioritise, in the context of capacity issues.

48 **Update on EDDC's Playing Pitch Strategy**

The Planning Policy Manager introduced the progress report on the production of the East Devon Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS). The PPS is concerned with sports that are played outside, with indoor sports and activities addressed through the Council's Built Facilities Strategy.

It was highlighted that to be effective, the PPS needs to have wide-ranging ownership; it is important that sports clubs and teams and pitch operators are happy with the content, and final sign off will be from Sport England. The PPS will also go to the appropriate committee(s) of the Council for formal endorsement.

Work on production of the PPS is progressing, with a projected completion in summer 2023.

Discussion and clarification included the following points:

- There is a key link and overlap with the Leisure Strategy work given that a lot of the sports that are dealt with in production of the PPS have both an indoor and an outdoor element to them. An important part of the Leisure Strategy is also about ensuring continued maintenance and upgrade of ATPs, and in this respect the PPS is helping to contribute to the delivery of the Leisure Strategy.
- It would be appropriate for the PPS to come to this Forum for comment, when it is in a near final position.

49 **Government funds to support public swimming pools**

The LED CEO and the Assistant Director Countryside & Leisure summarised the report, which detailed what is currently known about a £63 million support fund for public swimming pools announced by the Chancellor as part of the Spring Budget, and which will be distributed by Sport England. It was noted that full details have yet to be announced by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

Officers and the LED CEO outlined the complexities and challenges involved in ensuring the Council is in a position to take submit an application for funding, in the relevant timescales.

Following discussion, the Forum noted and supported the report.

50 **Property and FM Approach to Capital Works at LED Managed Dual Use Properties**

The Principal Building Surveyor introduced this report which summarised the Corporate Property and FM Team approach to capital works at LED managed dual use properties, within the context of impending management agreements negotiations.

EDDC has allocated capital funding for works at LED managed sites, but impending new management agreements renegotiations at some LED managed dual use sites to ensure that EDD's contribution toward maintenance costs better reflect the current share of the use have meant that some of the larger agreed capital projects at dual use sites have been put on hold.

The report outlined a number of important considerations from which it was concluded that there was little benefit from holding or deferring already approved capital work at dual use sites whilst waiting for current management agreements with lower cost implications to be negotiated. A significant consideration was the project costs increasing with inflation, therefore offsetting the expected savings arising from the adjusted share of the maintenance cost.

It was therefore the intention to progress capital works that have been on hold unless the new management agreement negotiations are well advanced and likely to be implemented in the short term.

The Forum acknowledged the approach and supported it.

At this point, members took the opportunity to thank officers, LED and fellow members for their contribution to this Forum over the last few years, in challenging circumstances, and recognised the work that has been achieved.

The meeting then went into private session.

51 **LED Leisure Contract Budget 2023-24**

The LED CEO introduced a summary of the budget for this year, showing how it breaks down against sites. Monitoring as the year progresses will be reported in the same style, and regular meetings held with EDDC officers to track progress.

The Finance Director commented that the paper is a useful summary for the Forum to monitor, in terms of transparency for LED.

The Chair remarked that it would be helpful going forward to have a paragraph outlining in percentages how the overheads are split across the sites.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

P Arnott
A Dent
B De Saram
S Hawkins (Chair)
N Hookway
G Jung

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

K Bloxham
S Gazzard

Representatives of LED Community Leisure in attendance:

Karen Best, LED Director of Finance
Peter Gilpin, LED CEO
Richard Purchase, Chairman of LED Board

Officers in attendance:

Simon Davey, Director of Finance
Jorge Pineda-Langford, Principal Building Surveyor, Property & FM
Charles Plowden, Assistant Director Countryside and Leisure
Sarah James, Democratic Services Officer
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer
Matthew Blythe, Assistant Director Environmental Health
Matthew Dickins, Planning Policy Manager

John Golding, Director of Housing, Health and Environment

Councillor apologies:

- P Hayward
- J Loudoun
- J Rowland

Chair

Date: