

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 22 March 2016

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 6.00pm and ended at 9.30pm.

***30 Chairman's introduction**

The Chairman welcomed the Committee members to the meeting

***31 Public speaking**

There were no public speakers at this point of the meeting.

***32 Minute confirmation**

The minutes of the Overview Committee held on the 26 January 2016, were confirmed as a true record

***33 Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Coastal Protection**

Members received an update on the implementation of the Devon Local Flood Risk Management Strategy from Martin Hutchings, Flood and Coastal Risk Manager, Devon County Council, and information on coastal protection locally from David Turner, Engineering Projects Manager.

Members noted that East Devon was the designated Coastal Protection authority under the 1949 Coastal Protection Act and had the powers to protect land against coastal erosion and to control third party activities on the coast. East Devon had no duty under the Act to protect against coastal erosion and flooding

Martin Hutchings reported that there was major progress being reported with flood defence schemes at Axminster and Uplyme. The District Council was also working on a flood defence scheme at Feniton, The DCC Action plan for 2016/17 was being finalised and for East Devon, there were a number of schemes being developed and progressed, as listed below:

- Axminster Millbrook Phase 2.
- Uplyme Flood Improvements.
- Ottery St Mary flood improvements works and land management initiatives.
- Old Feniton – surface water investigations in partnership with SWW.
- Sidmouth Surface Water Improvements – Design.
- East Budleigh minor flood improvements.
- Lympstone flood improvement.
- Exmouth surface water optioneering.
- Whimble, subject to scheme viability.

During discussions, the following points and questions were raised:

- How successful had flood barriers been? They were satisfactory in the short term for water deflection but not good for dealing with standing water as they could allow seepage;
- importance of not building in flood risk areas
- What was the relationship between landowners and farmers and water run off? DCC were looking at the type of crops that would better absorb water and also looking at encouraging farmers to allow their fields to flood;

- How have budget cuts impacted on flood management at DCC? The budget for flood protection work had not been affected;
- A buffer strip around fields was proven to slow down run off;
- Both DCC and the Environment Agency adhered closely to the EU water directive;
- How has the reduction in lengthsmen impacted on flooding issues? The management of ditches was the responsibility of landowners. There was the need to put pressure of landowners and farmers to maintain ditches;
- EDDC accessed DEFRA funding through the Environment Agency for SMP schemes;
- The coastal erosion issues at Pennintgon Point, Sidmouth (and subsequent flood risk to the eastern part of Sidmouth) were acknowledged and interim remedial works were being looked at;
- Possibility of dredging the River Exe to reduce the possibility of flooding in Exmouth and importance of Pole Sands as natural flood prevention barrier.

Martin Hutchings and David Tuner were thanked for their reports.

RESOLVED

1. that the following comments be noted and supported:
 - a. the loss of lengthsmen had been keenly felt.
 - b. The Environment Agency had been far more proactive leading to vital and successful small works, such as that at Lympstone
 - c. The issue of non sustainable development not meeting thresholds that require improved protection;
 - d. The need for a flood resistance action plan is recognised and must be better supported.
2. that the report be noted.

***34 Local Government Boundary Committee for England Electoral Review Programme 2015 - 2019**

The Committee received a report from Mark Williams, Chief Executive, asking the Committee to consider the proposed draft submission to the LBGCE recommending minimal change to the current number of councillors representing the District Council. He explained that further work was needed on the electorate projection figures but wanted to hear members' views on the draft submission at this stage.

Members noted the survey of Councillors' hours per week spent on East Devon District Councillor business that was reported to Cabinet on 17 November 2015. It was noted that this survey was undertaken very early in the life of the new Council and that there was possible scope for a refreshing the survey of Councillors to provide a more current and accurate picture of the hours Councillors (particularly those Councillors newly elected in May 2015) spent on EDDC work.

Members considered the ratio of electors to Councillors in wards; current and projected and the rationale behind some of the figures presented. Although based on the newly adopted Local Plan they also needed to take account of other projection figures. The Chief Executive also referred to latest electoral registration date and confirmed that the table would need to be further assessed.

During discussions, the following further points and questions were also raised:

- Issues around the figures for Ottery St Mary Rural and Town and whether the boundary for both wards had been correctly considered ;

- Need to increase the number of Councillors in some wards to reflect increases in population (particularly in Cranbrook) and also change ward boundaries in rural areas;
- Expectation from the Boundary Commission that Councillors would be expected to represent 10% more electors in future.

RESOLVED

that the Committee consider an updated copy of the draft submission to the Boundary Committee when further investigation has been undertaken regarding the electorate projection figures.

***35 Business engagement update**

Consideration was given to the report of Rob Murray, Economic Development Manager, which updated his presentation to the Committee in September 2015, where it was shown that early progress was being made to meet the objectives of the proposed Business Task & Finish Forum. This report updated on further progress in line with the agreed Overview recommendations. It highlighted tangible business benefits of the Council's improved engagement as well as what further growth and development would follow from improved investment.

During consideration of the item, Councillor Mike Allen presented a report entitled 'East Devon Economic Development Policy in Rural Areas' which gave a number of recommendations for the development of businesses in rural areas. Due to the detailed nature of the report, it was not considered appropriate for the report to be considered at the meeting but Councillor Andrew Moulding, Strategic Development & Regeneration Portfolio Holder suggested that it be considered by a Joint Economy and Regeneration Think Tank meeting on 21 April with Councillor Allen being invited to present to this meeting.

During discussions, the following further points and questions were raised:

- EDDC was now engaging with business far more effectively and with complete transparency;
- Desire to see improvements to the Economic Development role in East Devon, including the appointment of an additional member of staff;
- Acknowledgement of the excellent work undertaken by the Economic Development Manager so far;
- Limited capacity with the Economic Development service to carry out a number of the proposals presented to the meeting;
- The rural economy issue was important for East Devon;
- The Budget Working Party would be asked to consider a recommendation for additional member of staff for the Economic Development Service.

- RESOLVED**
1. that Councillor Mike Allen be invited to present his report entitled 'East Devon Economic Development Policy in Rural Areas' to a meeting of the Joint Economy and Regeneration Think Tank on 21 April;
 2. that the updates on progress made within the report by the Economic Development Manager be noted.

***36 Draft Annual Report**

Members were asked to note the annual report of the Overview Committee which highlighted the achievements and detailed the work undertaken by the Committee over the last year. The report would be referred to the annual meeting of the Council in May.

The Strategic Lead, Housing, Health and Environment thanked the Democratic Services Officer, Debbie Meakin, for her report and commented that it was a good discipline for the Board to annually review the work it had undertaken.

RESOLVED: that the annual report of the Overview Committee be noted and included within the agenda for the annual meeting of Council.

***37 Overview forward plan**

The Committee discussed items for the forward plan, and agreed the following topics to be scoped before further consideration on how to proceed:

RESOLVED

That the forward plan include:

28 June 2016 – Policy review on provision of affordable homes and Local Government Boundary Committee for England Electoral Review.

11 January 2017 – Draft budgets and service plans 2017/18.

Attendance list

Councillors Present:

Peter Bowden (Chairman)

Graham Godbeer (Vice Chairman)

Mike Allen

Matthew Booth

Peter Faithfull

Rob Longhurst

Councillors Also Present:

Megan Armstrong

David Barratt

John Dyson

Geoff Jung

Dawn Manley

Andrew Moulding

Marianne Rickson

Tom Wright

Officers

Anita Williams, Principal Solicitor

Mark Williams, Chief Executive

Alison Hayward, Regeneration Manager

Rob Murray, Economic Development Manager

Chris Lane, Democratic Services Officer

David Turner, Engineering Projects Manager

Martin Hutchings, DCC

Councillor Apologies:

Jill Elson

Pat Graham

Maria Hale

Ian Hall
Phil Twiss
Christopher Pepper

Chairman Date.....