

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview Committee held
at Knowle, Sidmouth on 27 September 2016**

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 6.00pm and ended at 8.25pm.

***9 Public speaking**

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

***10 Minute confirmation**

The minutes of the Overview Committee held on the 28 June 2016, were confirmed as a true record.

***11 Declarations of interest**

Councillor Ian Hall

Minute 13

Personal Interest – Chairman of Cloakham Lawns Sports Centre

***12 Housing Delivery – discussion paper**

The Committee received a joint report from John Golding, Strategic Lead – Housing, Health & Environment and Ed Freeman,- Service Lead Planning & Strategy & Development, which set out the challenges faced in maintaining housing delivery in the district to meet housing needs, and in particular the need for affordable housing.

It recognised the success that had been achieved in recent years and considered ways in which the Council could continue to deliver the homes required in a new national housing policy context and changing housing market conditions. The discussion could influence housing and future planning policies and guidance documents, the current operating environment, and opportunities in the East Devon housing market.

Members noted that the housing market had complex interactions with many factors that the Council was unable to control. The Council's policies had to be based on sound evidence of local market conditions and housing need, in order to use the National Planning Policy Framework and discretionary housing policies to best effect for our residents.

It was noted that in exploring the subject the Committee may wish to adopt an ad hoc Select Committee approach and gather evidence from expert witnesses to help in formulating recommendations. John Golding, Strategic Lead – Housing, Health & Environment, reported that the Council started from a position of strength as it had been successful in delivering opportunities for EDDC residents to secure suitable housing at an affordable price. The District was currently delivering 250 affordable homes per year, but it was expected that this total would reduce in the next few years, due to reductions in delivery of affordable homes at Cranbrook.

The Chairman introduced a presentation prepared by Andy Wood, East of Exeter Projects Director, which raised a number of important issues regarding housing delivery in East Devon, including: a) control of land; b) freedoms arising from the Housing & Planning Act; c) supply chain of labour – particularly the affect of Hinkley Point C on the labour force; d) direct delivery of housing by the Council and e) raising the standards for delivery of housing development in the district.

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

- How can we use current planning and housing policies to deliver what we want?
- What actions could be undertaken in the district to encourage development, such as canvassing the Government to develop sites ourselves and alter Government policy;
- It was suggested that some local authorities had found a way around the Government thresholds of 6 dwellings in rural areas and 10 in urban areas below which affordable housing could not be sought and that this should be investigated to see if a similar case could be made in East Devon;
- What evidence was there that the affordable homes provided in East Devon were accessible and adaptable dwellings that were 'lifetime homes'?
- Importance of developers providing affordable homes and not a monetary replacement;
- Interference of land values in affordability of Affordable Housing;
- Investigate cheaper non standard forms of construction;
- Changing the mindset of young people who often feel the need to have home ownership straight away. Other countries had a higher percentage of rented housing occupation compared with the UK;
- The average price of a house in East Devon was £265K meaning a joint income of £60K was needed to afford to buy a house in the district.
- Need to look at achieving better paid employment for local people;
- Importance of affordable houses to provide employees for local businesses;
- EDDC no longer has a land bank, the last was used at Stowford Rise;
- Need to overcome the viability clause inserted into developments, which was used to reduce affordable home requirements.

RESOLVED

1. that a politically balanced Housing Delivery Taff be established, comprising a minimum of 7 members to be drawn predominantly from the membership of the Overview Committee but wider if necessary;
2. that the Taff have a minimum of three meetings to hear and consider evidence based on the following themes which needed to be scoped:
 - a) Local Plan/ Government Policy 9to possibly cover areas such as appraisal of land values, types of housing being delivered and service provision impact on rural areas)
 - b) EDDC and other Initiatives (to possibly cover areas such as options for purchasing and and/or building, impact of the welfare regimes and improving affordability
 - c) Alternative structures & options (to possibly cover areas such as looking at partnerships, alternative delivery models and the impact of devolution
3. that the first meeting to be held in the evening at a date to be decided in early October at which the specific themes be fully scoped..
4. that at the conclusion of the Taff a report with recommended actions be forwarded to Cabinet.

13 Quality of house building in East Devon

(Councillor Graham Godbeer took the Chair for this item)

Members received a report from Ed Freeman, - Service Lead Planning & Strategy & Development. This followed a Strategic Developments and Partnerships Think Tank that

had been held on the 24th August 2016 to consider the poor quality of finish of house building in the district and what if anything can be done to address these issues, quality had given rise to the concern of residents of a number of modern developments in the district. The report summarised the discussion highlighting the limitations on the council's powers to influence the quality of the cosmetic finish and internal fit out of houses as these areas were not covered by building Regulations or Planning. The report also recommended a response to a report prepared by the Government's All Party Parliamentary group for Excellence in the Built Environment.

Councillor Douglas Hull requested that a report be sent to all Councillors regarding the powers available to the Council's Building Control Officers to properly check new homes. There had been a number of problems with the quality of new homes built in Axminster and the response of the NHBC had been felt to be less than satisfactory. He stated that EDDC should be encouraged to take its own stance on what was expected of developers and there should be independent surveys and legal advice available for purchasers. The Strategic Lead – Legal Licensing & Democratic Services questioned whether EDDC should be issuing leaflets giving advice on things for which it was not responsible.

RECOMMENDED

1. that the response to the All Parliamentary Group for Excellence in the Built Environment report entitled "More Homes, Fewer Complaints" attached as Appendix 1 to the report be sent to encourage the Government to take action on the issues raised in the report and the additional concerns expressed at the Member's Think Tank.
2. that the Officers consider the resource and financial implications for EDDC on the production of a leaflet giving advice to purchasers of new homes on options available to them if issues arise regarding the quality of the build. .

*13 **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:

29 November 2016 – Economy and Street Trading (designation of streets).

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

28 March 2017 – Tourism economy and cultural enhancement of natural environment.

Attendance list

Councillors Present:

Peter Bowden (Chairman)

Graham Godbeer (Vice Chairman)

Mike Allen

Peter Faithfull

Maria Hale

Ian Hall

Rob Longhurst

Councillors Also Present:

David Barratt

Jill Elson
Douglas Hull
Geoff Jung
Andrew Moulding
Pauline Stott

Officers

John Golding, Strategic Lead – Housing, Health & Environment
Ed Freeman,- Service Lead Planning & Strategy & Development
Henry Gordon Lennox, Strategic Lead - Legal, Licensing & Democratic Services
Chris Lane, Democratic Services Officer

Councillor Apologies:

Pat Graham
Christopher Pepper

Officer Apologies:

Mark Williams, Chief Executive
Andy Wood, East of Exeter Projects Director

Chairman Date.....