

**EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held at**  
**Knowle, Sidmouth, on Wednesday, 26 February 2014**

**Present:**

**Councillors:**

Graham Godbeer	(Chairman)
Christine Drew	(Vice Chairman)
Mike Allen	Ben Ingham
David Atkins	John Jeffery
Ray Bloxham	Stephanie Jones
Susie Bond	Sheila Kerridge
Roger Boote	David Key
Peter Burrows	John Humphreys
Derek Button	Jim Knight
Bob Buxton	Andrew Moulding
David Chapman	Frances Newth
Maddy Chapman	John O'Leary
Iain Chubb	Helen Parr
Trevor Cope	Ken Potter
David Cox	Philip Skinner
Deborah Custance Baker	Pauline Stott
Alan Dent	Peter Sullivan
Paul Diviani	Brenda Taylor
Vivien Duval Steer	Ian Thomas
Jill Elson	Graham Troman
Martin Gammell	Phil Twiss
Steve Gazzard	Chris Wale
Roger Giles	Mark Williamson
Steve Hall	Tim Wood
Tony Howard	Steve Wragg
Stuart Hughes	Claire Wright
Douglas Hull	Tom Wright

**Officers:**

Mark Williams, Chief Executive  
Richard Cohen, Deputy Chief Executive  
Denise Lyon, Deputy Chief Executive  
Rachel Pocock, Corporate Legal & Democratic Services Manager  
Diana Vernon, Democratic Services Manager

**Apologies**

**Councillors:**

Peter Bowden  
Geoff Chamberlain  
Pat Graham  
Peter Halse  
Mike Howe  
Geoff Pook  
Eileen Wragg

**Honorary Aldermen:**

Vivienne Ash  
Ron Mudge  
Bob Peachey  
Margaret Rogers

The Chairman introduced Revd Jeremy White, former vicar of Uplyme and invited him to say a prayer.

The meeting then started at 6.30 pm and ended 10.02 pm.

\*56 **Public question time**

The Chairman welcomed members of the public to the meeting and invited their questions. All of the speakers spoke about the proposed office relocation.

Ron Roberts asked if the Council had taken into account the 'Beyond Retail' publication which highlighted the impact that the loss of an organisation/large employer has on a town centre. He gave the example of Plymouth University's (Rolle College) move which had a significant impact on Exmouth. He said that the Council needed to take into account the affect that EDDC's move from Knowle would have on Sidmouth.

Peter Whitfield asked the Council to have the political courage to vote through the Relocation Motion (Minute 65 refers). He said that too many of the decisions on relocation were being made in the private part of meetings. He said that the public needed to be able to examine the financial and other details relating to the proposed move so that they could challenge and scrutinise.

Kelvin Dent listed 4 statements which he said had been made by the Council in respect of the relocation:

- The reason for the relocation was to move to a more central and convenient location. (Mr Dent added that Skypark was not central to the district but close to Exeter)
- The jobs lost in Sidmouth would go to other residents in East Devon. (Mr Dent added that the move to Skypark was likely to draw staff from Exeter)
- Sidmouth's economy will suffer but another East Devon town will benefit. (Mr Dent added that there is no town of Skypark).
- The relocation will be cost neutral. (Mr Dent added that the Council was proposing to sell a number of assets and borrow to fund the move.)

The Chairman asked Mr Dent to send in his question in writing to enable the Leader to respond.

Richard Eley referred to the increasing cost to the council tax payer. He said that the new building would be no cheaper to run and there would be the additional cost of travel by staff and councillors. In a time when sharing services with other councils was being considered, he believed that the project should be halted until the future requirements were properly known. Although the most recent report on the relocation indicated that a purpose-built office in Skypark would be easier to sell should circumstances change, Mr Eley disputed this because of the proposed size and specification. He asked the Council not to sell the Knowle until a proper financial analysis had been carried out and the details published.

Mr Alan Darrant said that EDDC provided 400 well paid jobs and its location in Sidmouth was an economic benefit to the town. He accepted that the Council needed to consider the wellbeing of the whole district but was alarmed by the cost of the proposal and the lack of financial details in the public domain. He referred to the difficult choices being made by Devon County Council to cut its budget and how this would leave care homes, youth clubs and libraries vulnerable. He said it was inappropriate for EDDC to plan to spend on a new office building in times of cut backs. He said that the Council was committing its residents to unnecessary debt and that the decision should be reconsidered.

**\*56 Public question time (continued)**

Robert Crick asked the Council to take responsibility for democracy. He referred to diminishing resources, complex bureaucracy, democratic consultation and the need to deliver efficient and effective services. He asked the Council to look sceptically at the facts and opinions before they made the decision on relocation as this had to be for the people of East Devon.

The Chairman advised that the comments made would be taken into account during the debate on office relocation later on the agenda.

**\*57 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 4 December 2013 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

**\*58 Declarations of interest**

<b>Councillor/ Officer</b>	<b>Minute number</b>	<b>Type of interest</b>	<b>Nature of interest</b>
Cllr Jill Elson	60	Personal	Chairman of Community Transport Group
Cllr Trevor Cope	60	Personal	Trustee of Community Transport Group
Cllr Stephanie Jones	60	Personal	Trustee of East Devon TRIP (Transport Research and Information Project)
Cllr Stuart Hughes	60	Personal	DCC Cabinet member dealing with community transport
Cllr Jim Knight	60	Personal	Member of Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority

**\*59 Chairman/Leader notices/announcements****a) Former Councillor - obituary**

The Chairman announced with sadness the death of former Councillor Jean Sutherland Earl in December last year. Best known as Jane, former Councillor Sutherland Earl served on this Council from 1987 until 1999 when she did not seek re-election. Jane represented Sidmouth Rural Ward and served on a wide range of Committees, Sub Committees and Outside Bodies, taking on a number of positions of responsibility during her time as an EDDC Councillor. These included being Vice Chairman of the Public Health Committee, Vice Chairman of Amenities, Vice Chairman of Finance and Personnel Committee and Chairman of the Tourism and Transportation Committee.

The Chairman invited Members to stand in silence as a mark of respect.

\*59 **Chairman/Leader notices/announcements (continued)**

**b) Reminder from Standards Committee (Minute 34 refers)**

The Chairman had been asked issue a reminder to all Members to:

- Keep their register of interests up to date
- Make sure that they register gifts and hospitality
- Check their on-line profile page
- Declare any interest in planning matters to both the Monitoring Officer and Head of Economy (or the Development Manager in their absence).

**c) Thank you to staff**

The Chairman extended thanks to all staff who had been involved in the emergency and clean-up work resulting from the recent exceptional weather conditions. On behalf of the Council he thanked staff for the incredibly effective work carried out. He also thanked the volunteers for their support and involvement without whom our local communities could not flourish in the way that they do.

**d) Open for business**

The Chairman called upon the Portfolio Holder for Economy, Councillor Ian Thomas and the Member Champion for Tourism Councillor Sheila Kerridge to address the Council on the impact of the recent storms on the area's tourism industry.

Councillor Thomas emphasised the importance of giving a positive message to the press and public; that despite media images and reporting during the recent exceptional weather conditions, East Devon was well and truly open for business and ready to welcome visitors. He referred to the excellent attractions that East Devon had to offer and asked Councillors to help get that message out as a way of supporting East Devon's valuable tourist trade.

Councillor Thomas extended congratulations to the Deer Park Hotel near Honiton on their success in the South West Tourism Excellence Awards 2013-14, winning silver in the Venue and Business Tourism Category.

Councillor Kerridge emphasised the message that East Devon was already 'bouncing back' from the storms. Although some businesses had been affected by the bad weather, the recovery was now almost complete and businesses were looking ahead with optimism.

\*60 **Revenue Estimates, Capital Programme and Council Tax**

The Chairman advised that as a result of a Statutory Instrument being passed on 31 January 2014 (which came into force yesterday), a recorded vote would be taken on the budget decision.

County councils, district councils and London boroughs were required to amend their Standing Orders so that how Members have voted in budget setting meetings must be formally recorded in the minutes of the meeting (in essence the same principle as would happen for a recorded vote). The budget decision would therefore be a recorded vote. Direct link to the relevant Statutory Instrument - <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/165/contents/made>

\*60 **Revenue Estimates, Capital Programme and Council Tax  
(continued)**

**RESOLVED:** that the Council's Rules of Procedure be updated as soon as reasonably practicable in line with The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014.

Members considered the report of the Section 151 Finance Officer and the recommendations of the Cabinet from its meeting on 5 February 2014 relating to the Revenue and Capital Estimates – the purpose of the report was to enable the Council to calculate and set the Council Tax for 2014/15. Since the Cabinet's meeting on 5 February 2014, Government had granted additional funding for rural authorities which gave this Council an additional £5,570 - this would be paid into the General Fund balance.

The precepts from Devon County Council, Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall, Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority and town and parish councils (preceptors) had been added to EDDC's Council Tax requirement. This Council, as billing authority would formally set the Council Tax for the area to include all the amounts to be collected.

The Chairman invited the Leader of the Council, Councillor Diviani, to present the Revenue Estimates and Capital Programme together with proposals for the Council Tax for 2014/15.

Councillor Diviani thanked officers for preparing the budget and for the regular updates throughout the year which helped with budget monitoring. He said that because officers had worked in a professional and committed way, savings had been realised. This had resulted in achieving a balanced budget despite

- significant cuts to the Council's Formula Grant since 2010/11 (equating to 33%) and the 14% reduction this year in the Council Tax Support Grant
- the intention to freeze the council tax for a further year
- the need to continue to deliver services at the best possible price

He advised that as a sparsely populated rural area, East Devon had been penalised by the Government formula which favoured urban areas. MP Neil Parish (with the support of Member Champion Ken Potter and MP Hugo Squire) had managed to achieve an improved rural settlement but the formula was still imbalanced between rural and urban areas. On-going cuts to Government funding were anticipated.

He referred to strategies the Council had put in place, or were in the process of being put in place:

- continuing to freeze Members' Allowances for a further year
- getting resources to work harder to deliver front line services
- the Corporate Property Asset Management Plan
- use of the New Homes Bonus Income to support the Capital Programme
- savings/increased income achieved through the Member Budget Working Party, the Fees and Charges Task and Finish Forum and the across-the-board Portfolio Holder savings.
- Improvements to the recycling rate and cutting waste to landfill
- Support for the Growth Point and recognition of its economic benefits

\*60 **Revenue Estimates, Capital Programme and Council Tax  
(continued)**

The Leader emphasised efforts made to keep the council tax as low as possible; East Devon's council tax was currently the lowest in Devon and 16<sup>th</sup> lowest in the country. The proposal was to agree not to increase EDDC's council tax for a fifth consecutive year.

The Leader recommended that the budget be agreed as presented in the Council papers and moved the printed recommendations set out in Appendix A to the report.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor David Cox, Portfolio Holder – Finance who said that the Council had worked hard to contain costs and this was evidenced by the balanced budget being presented and the proposal to freeze any increase in the council tax for a further year. This was despite the underfunding of rural areas through the Government Settlement formula and pressures on the Council's cash flow. Work on the current budget and beyond had commenced in April 2013 when the future budget deficit had been anticipated. The aim was to bring in new ways of working to cut costs and raise income. This was within a context of various challenges including Welfare Reform. Councillor Cox said that seconding the Leader's proposal gave him the opportunity to thank Councillors who had been involved in the budget process and Officers who had presented useful and timely reports.

Councillor Tim Wood, Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee said that the budget process has benefited from the work of his Committee and that of the two task and finish forum – Fees and Charges and Budget. Debate, which had been in the public domain, had been useful and informative.

Further issues raised:

- The intensive scrutiny of the Council's services had achieved efficiencies – this work should continue with Councillors working with Officers in an entrepreneurial way;
- Effective cross-party working had helped to deliver the balanced budget
- Rural poverty issues needed to be addressed
- Concern that there was no provision to give financial support to the Tourist Information Centres
- Future tough decisions were anticipated

Councillor Claire Wright proposed an amendment to the budget – that funding should be taken from the relocation budget to support youth centres in East Devon. This was seconded by Councillor Roger Giles.

Councillor Jill Elson, Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Homes and Communities advised that provision of youth centres was a County responsibility but that she had organised a Think Tank for 24 March to which all Councillors were invited. The Think Tank would consider youth services as a whole and would therefore include the work of the Council's Community Officers (resourced from the Housing Revenue Account) and the Council support of the Troubled Families' project. Youth representatives had been invited to attend and put forward their views. All of the youth centres in East Devon were individual but each had youth safety as a priority. The Think Tank would gather information and views and review this in order to make representations to County on its proposed cuts to the service.

\*60 **Revenue Estimates, Capital Programme and Council Tax  
(continued)**

On a technical point Councillor Cox advised that the proposal to use money from the Capital Budget for a revenue project was not possible.

The Chief Executive confirmed that any allocated support for the youth service resulting from the Think Tank would be funded by savings made within the year and not from the Capital Budget. The amendment was not correct.

Councillor Claire Wright asked for the vote on her proposed amendment to be recorded. This request was seconded by Councillor Roger Giles. The request was put to the vote and lost.

The amendment was put to the vote and lost.

The proposal as printed in Appendix A to the report was put to the vote and carried.

- RESOLVED:**
- (1) It be noted that on 8 January 2014, the Cabinet (minute 142 refers) calculated the Council Tax Base 2014/15
    - a) for the whole Council area as 54,047 (Item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the "Act")); and
    - b) for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a parish precept relates as in the attached Schedules.
  - (2) that , as a preliminary step, calculate that the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2014/15 (excluding parish precepts) is £6,581,840;
  - (3) that the following amounts be calculated for the year 2014/15 in accordance with Sections 30 to 36 of the Act;
    - (a) £89,074,285 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by parish councils.
    - (b) £80,390,028 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
    - (c) £8,684,257 being the amount by which the aggregate at 3(b) above exceeds the aggregate at 3(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act).
    - (d) £160.68 being the amount at 3(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including parish precepts).

\*60 **Revenue Estimates, Capital Programme and Council Tax  
(continued)**

- (e) £2,102,417 being the aggregate amount of all special items (parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act (as per Schedule attached).
- (f) £121.78 being the amount at 3(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 3(e) above by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no parish precept relates.
- (g) The amounts stated in column 5 of the Schedule 1 (attached) given by adding to the amount at 3(f) above the amounts of the special item or items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area specified in column 1 of Schedule 1 divided in each case by the amount at 1(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area set out in column 1 of Schedule 1 (attached) to which one or more special items relate.
- (h) The amounts set out in Schedule 2 (attached) given by multiplying the amounts at 3(g) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.
- (4) that it be noted that for the year 2014/2015 Devon County Council, Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the District Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:



**\*60 Revenue Estimates, Capital Programme & Council Tax (continued)**

Valuation Bands	Devon County Council	Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon & Cornwall	Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue
A	£759.06	£110.77	£51.26
B	£885.57	£129.24	£59.80
C	£1,012.08	£147.70	£68.35
D	<u>£1,138.59</u>	<u>£166.16</u>	<u>£76.89</u>
E	£1,391.61	£203.08	£93.98
F	£1,644.63	£240.01	£111.06
G	£1,897.65	£276.93	£128.15
H	£2,277.18	£332.32	£153.78

5. that, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 3(h) and 4 above, the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the amounts set out in Schedule 3 (attached) as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2014/2015 for each of the categories of dwellings shown in Schedule 3.
6. The Council has determined that its relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2014/15 is **not** excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992.  
As the billing authority, the Council has **not** been notified by a major precepting authority that its relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2014/15 is excessive and therefore the billing authority is not required to hold a referendum in accordance with Section 52ZK Local Government Finance Act 1992.

**Recorded vote on the budget:**

Councillors Peter Burrows, Roger Giles, Douglas Hull and Claire Wright voted against.

Councillors Derek Button and Brenda Taylor abstained from voting.

All other Councillors present voted in favour of the budget (Majority – 46)

**\*61 Questions (Procedure Rules 9.2 and 9.5)**

10 questions had been submitted.

1. **Request for media contact list.** The Chairman confirmed that the Council's media contact list was used to issue corporate messages and was therefore not available for use by individual Councillors.
2. **Re-introduction of weekly waste collections.** The Portfolio Holder - Environment was thanked for his comprehensive answer.
3. **Bus service to support Skypark.** The Portfolio Holder – Corporate Business confirmed that the provision of a bus service was a requirement through a Section 106 agreement.
4. **Computer system.** The Portfolio Holder – Corporate Services was thanked for his comprehensive response. The Portfolio Holder further emphasised security issues.

\*61 **Questions (Procedure Rules 9.2 and 9.5) (continued)**

5. **Tourist Information presence in Seaton.** The Portfolio Holder – Economy re-stated the importance of tourism within the District.
6. Seaton Enhancement Scheme
7. Youth question at Devon County Council meeting
8. Youth question and democratic processes
9. **Attendance of Councillors at conferences.** The Leader confirmed the relevance and value for money of the conferences attended.
10. **HS2 and rail infrastructure.** The Leader said that the rail link at Dawlish was vital and that would be given Council support. The HS2 rail link was a separate nationally strategic issue.

\*62 **Motion 1 – Lobbying**

The following motion (in the names of Councillors Claire Wright, Roger Giles, Susie Bond, Ben Ingham and Trevor Cope) was proposed by Councillor Claire Wright and seconded by Councillor Roger Giles

"Openness and transparency in the planning process is vital. This Council therefore agrees to include an item on the agenda of all Development Management Committee and Planning Inspections Committee meetings, requiring Members of those committees to declare if and who they have been lobbied by, about items on the agenda."

In proposing the motion, Councillor Claire Wright referred to the adverse affect on public confidence of the police investigation into a former EDDC Councillor. She spoke of the importance of increasing public confidence in the Council and for transparency in its dealings. She said that the motion was straightforward and in line with the Probity in Planning document.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Roger Giles said that the proposal had no connected cost and complied with Nolan's Principles of Public Life which still applied.

Comments made by Councillors when the motion was opened to debate included:

- There was no dispute that integrity was important but the motion assumed something improper and the wording was unclear.
- All Councillors were contacted regularly about development and so the definition of what lobbying actually meant needed to be clarified.
- Development Management Committee members all had specific training before they were able to serve on the Committee. They were all fully aware of the relevant element of the Council's Constitution and the importance of complying with legislation. The Committee members were continually lobbied but they listened, sifted comments and then came to the meeting with an open mind.
- Listening to opinions and points of view was part of the democratic process.

Councillor Douglas Hull proposed an amendment to refer the motion to the next meeting of the Standards Committee to discuss and clarify its intention. The amendment was seconded by Councillor Mike Allen.

**RESOLVED:** that the motion as printed be referred to the next meeting of the Standards Committee for clarification and debate.

**\*63 Motion 2 – Legal Highs**

The following motion (in the names of Councillors Ray Bloxham, Tom Wright, Steve Hall, Mike Howe and Stephanie Jones) was proposed by Councillor Ray Bloxham and seconded by Councillor Tom Wright.

“This Council supports the drive to prevent the sale of Novel Psychoactive substances (NPS) (otherwise known as ‘legal highs’).”

There is a groundswell of concern about the harm caused by NPS and a national call for legislation to allow local councils to enforce the banning of these products. This move is prompted by 28 deaths suspected to be associated with the use of NPS in the UK, concern about mental and physical side effects, and the obvious risks attached to taking any substance which has not been tested nor regulated.

In proposing the motion, Councillor Ray Bloxham said he was seeking the Council’s support for this regional and national campaign. The substances were not categorised as drugs within drug legislation and therefore their use was not illegal. Those selling the NPS kept one step ahead of legislation but a change of law to control substances could save lives and the health of many young people. The Council’s stance in support of the campaign would give a clear message to Officers who might be in a position of influence through planning, licensing and environmental health work.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Tom Wright said that the problem needed action to be taken nationally. He said that this was not just an inner-city problem but one that was prevalent throughout Devon in places where young people congregated.

During 2012, (the last year for which figures are available) in England and Wales, 68 young people had died directly as a result of taking NPS. The practice was likened to glue and solvent abuse in the 80s and 90s – these substances were not illegal but their misuse resulted in wasted lives. Councillor Wright was the Council’s appointed representative on the Police Crime Panel and at its meeting on 7 February he had urged the Police Crime Commissioner to put this problem high on his list of priorities; the Community Safety Partnerships of Devon were also very concerned. Councillor Wright asked Members to support urgent action and legislation to address the problem as he hoped that concerted pressure would lead to meaningful action being taken.

Comments made by Councillors when the motion was opened to debate included:

- This seemed to be a matter for the Police or County Council’s trading standards teams;
- This Council did not have the resources to carry out additional checks.
- The Council was being asked to get behind a campaign to protect young people.

The motion as printed was put to the vote and carried.

**RESOLVED:** that this Council supports the drive to prevent the sale of Novel Psychoactive Substances (NPS) (otherwise known as ‘legal highs’).

\*64 **Motion 3 – Affordable Housing**

The following motion (in the names of Councillors Jill Elson, Stephanie Jones, Geoff Pook, Martin Gammell and Phil Twiss) was proposed by Councillor Jill Elson and seconded by Councillor Stephanie Jones

Last year's autumn statement announced the Government's intention to consult on a new 10 house threshold before an affordable housing provision is required.

2.208 Section 106 contributions – The Government will consult on a new 10 unit threshold for section 106 affordable housing contributions to reduce costs for smaller builders. If these intentions are pursued and a policy is introduced to impose a 10 house threshold on developments before affordable housing is required it will devastate the affordable housing aspirations of the majority of rural communities. It will also contradict both the current and emerging local plan policy. Development of affordable housing in small communities is essential, not just for the growth of communities but in some cases their continued existence.

For these reasons we believe it essential that this Council makes the strongest representations to Government requesting the cancelling of any plans to consult on or introduce any policy that would result in the reduction in affordable housing provision. This Council believes that rather than consider policies that could reduce affordable housing provision the Government should introduce more schemes to actively support communities in developing community led housing schemes.

In proposing the motion, Councillor Jill Elson said that the proposal to introduce a 10 house threshold on developments before affordable housing was required would have a significant impact on rural developments. Developers could apply to build 9 units to avoid an affordable housing requirement. This would have an adverse affect on maintaining balanced rural communities with affordable accommodation for young people and opportunities for older people to down-size.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Stephanie Jones referred to the Council's priority to provide affordable housing. The proposal could preclude any affordable housing in rural developments. Small scale development in villages helped them to survive.

Comments made by Councillors when the motion was opened to debate included:

- The Local Plan process had recognised that such thresholds were unhelpful as developers would submit applications below the upper limit to avoid the affordable housing requirement
- Artificial targets like this were unhelpful

The motion as printed was put to the vote and carried.

**RESOLVED:** that this Council makes the strongest representations to Government requesting the cancelling of any plans to consult on or introduce any policy that would result in the reduction in affordable housing provision. This Council believes that rather than consider policies that could reduce affordable housing provision the Government should introduce more schemes to actively support communities in developing community led housing schemes.

\*65 **Motion 4 – Office relocation**

The following motion (in the names of Councillors Claire Wright, Ben Ingham, Susie Bond, Trevor Cope and Roger Giles) was proposed by Councillor Claire Wright and seconded by Councillor Ben Ingham.

"This Council notes the concerns expressed by some Councillors of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 30 January 2014 about the Knowle relocation project, and their particular concerns about the increasing cost of the project, and the lack of detail provided to justify the inclusion of a further sum of £200,000 in the capital budget for the 2014/15 financial year, and the inclusion of a further sum of £200,000 in the capital budget for 2015/16.

The Council also notes the recommendation of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 30 January that a professional independent survey of the Council offices be allowed to be undertaken by someone not employed by the Council. The cost of the survey was not to be met by the Council.

The Council regrets the decision taken by the Cabinet on 5 February to press ahead with the project and to seek approval for relocation of the EDDC offices to Skypark.

This Council agrees to defer a decision on support for the principle of a relocation option until such time as a professional independent survey (the cost of which is not to be met by the Council) is undertaken by someone not employed by the Council".

The Chairman of the Council proposed to take this motion when the Cabinet minute in respect of Council accommodation was being considered (Cabinet minute 180 refers) but Councillor Claire Wright said she wanted to take the motion at this stage of the meeting.

In proposing the motion, Councillor Claire Wright said that there was a major public relations problem with the office relocation project, largely because the plans had been made in private meetings. She said costs of the project had rocketed and there was insufficient information in the public domain. The original intention was to move the offices to a more central location within the district but this had now changed. She believed that the take up of space in Skypark was limited despite active marketing and that was one of the drivers for the Council's choice of location. Councillor Claire Wright said that the choice of Skypark was putting at risk the economy of two district towns – Sidmouth because of the move and Honiton with the proposed new supermarket. The project was no longer cost neutral even if it did not increase the council tax. She said that the recommendations of Overview and Scrutiny should be considered; the role of the Committee was to scrutinise and check Cabinet decisions. She referred to future budget constraints and debt.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Ben Ingham said the Council's role was to represent the aspirations and wishes of the people of East Devon. He felt that the relocation strategy was irresponsible in terms of cost and other implications that have not been fully understood.

\*65 **Motion 4 – Office relocation (continued)**

Comments made by Councillors when the motion was opened to debate included:

- The original consideration of Honiton as a site was reasonable in terms of being central to the district and with good transport links.
- A move to a purpose built office was realistic.
- The cost of the project had got out of hand.
- Sidmouth residents were justifiably concerned in respect of loss of parkland and local employment.
- Other options need to be kept open – including a possible move to Cranbrook.
- Defer until clear financial information was available and a more informed decision could be made.
- There was merit in a move to Skypark if the Council was considering sharing its services with Exeter and Teignbridge to achieve savings.
- No action until an independent survey had been carried out would effectively block progress.
- Working conditions at Knowle were poor.
- There was a need for a highly efficient modern office suitable for modern ways of working.
- The recommendation from Cabinet was not that EDDC moved to Skypark but that this was currently the best option that needed to be analysed and quantified.
- A move to Skypark could cut the Council off from the area that it represents.
- The July Cabinet/Council decision to relocate was based on clear information – costs, benefits and clear reasoning. The selection criteria used to determine the most appropriate site was objective and realistic.
- Any move would result in an improved provision in the District's towns.
- The Council was already working with an independent consultant who had undertaken detailed research and data gathering.
- The relocation project included 'gateways' at significant points where decision had to be made by Cabinet before progressing.
- Who would arrange, order, monitor and collate the independent survey?
- Refurbishment of the Knowle did not stack up financially.
- Skypark may not be central geographically but was easy to access.
- The project would now progress with assessment of financial details and viability being checked.

In summing up Councillor Claire Wright said that a truly independent survey was one which was not funded by this Council. As many of the decisions were made in private meetings, the public had lost faith in the process. She said that the Council was being asked to spend one million pounds on land at Skypark.

Councillor Ben Ingham proposed an amendment but as this was not relevant to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommendation on which this motion was based, the amendment could not be accepted - it would have effectively changed the principle of the motion.

Councillor Claire Wright asked for a recorded vote on the motion but this was put to the vote and lost.

The motion was then put to the vote and lost.

**\*66 Minutes of Cabinet and Committees**

**RESOLVED** (1) that the under-mentioned minutes be received and the recommendations approved

Cabinet	Minutes	139-158, 159-182
Development Management	Minutes	39-42, 43-46, 47-53, 54-59
Planning Inspections	Minutes	14-16, 17-19
Audit and Governance	Minutes	30-39
Licensing & Enforcement Sub	Minutes	30-34, 35-36, 37-39

(2) that the under-mentioned minutes be received.

The Cabinet (minutes 146, 165, 166) had noted or accepted the following Overview/Scrutiny Committees' recommendations with or without amendment.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Minutes	39-47, 48-51
Housing Review Board	Minutes	49-60

**Arising from consideration of the above minutes:-**

**a) Extension to St Winifred's graveyard, Branscombe – authority to use compulsory purchase (Cabinet minute 150)**

A summary and map showing the proposed land swap detail had been forwarded to Councillors prior to the meeting.

The views of Council were being sought prior to the consideration, by Cabinet, of making a compulsory purchase order for land for use as a public cemetery for the parish of Branscombe.

**RESOLVED** that, in principle, Council supported making a compulsory purchase order for land for use as a public cemetery for the parish of Branscombe and referred the matter to Cabinet for consideration.

**b) Office accommodation – next steps (Cabinet minute 180)**

**RESOLVED** note clarification of recommendation 3(f) of this minute – the further project management costs referred to were for professional service costs until the end of July 2014. Another report would be referred to Cabinet in due course in respect of project management costs beyond July 2014.

**c) Housing Review Board**

In presenting the minutes, the Chairman, Councillor Pauline Stott advised that the purchase of 4 flats in Exmouth had now been completed and would be added to the Council's housing stock.

**d) Public speaking and future agenda management (Special meeting of the Development Management Committee - minute 46)**

**RESOLVED** that membership of the working group to further consider public speaking arrangements and future agenda and meeting management for Development Management Committee (DMC) meetings be:

- Helen Parr (Chairman DMC)
- David Key (Vice Chairman DMC)
- Mark Williamson (Member of DMC)
- Ray Bloxham (P/H – Corporate Business)
- Brenda Taylor (Liberal Democrat representative)
- Plus 1x Independent Member to be advised

**e) Public speaking at committee meetings (Standards Committee minute 31)**

The purpose of requiring advance notification of questions by members of the public in respect of items not included on the agenda was to give the opportunity to undertake research in advance of the meeting. The questioner would be entitled to ask a supplementary question relevant to the subject being raised. In addition a member of the public wishing to make a statement on an item not on the agenda would be entitled to speak without giving notice.

An amendment to the printed minute was put to the vote and lost.

**RESOLVED** that the recommendations of the Standards Committee in respect of public speaking at committee meetings (Minute 31) be agreed.

**f) Licensing and Enforcement Committee**

In presenting the minutes, the Chairman, Councillor Steve Hall, had pleasure in reporting that the Licensing Service had been awarded Customer Services Excellence for the 5<sup>th</sup> consecutive year. Despite the standard bar being increased year on year, the service had full compliance with particular credit for its mediation approach and the way it dealt with individual responses. He extended congratulations and thanks to John Tippin and his team and said that he appreciated the support of the whole Committee.

Chairman .....

Date.....