

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Asset Management Forum held at online via zoom on 4 December 2023

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 9.30 am and ended at 11.20 am

11 Public speaking

There were no public speakers.

12 Notes from the previous meeting on 19 June 2023

The notes of the previous meeting held on the 19th June 2023 were agreed.

13 Declarations of interest

Minute 18

Cllr Hall; Affects Non Registerable Interest: Member of Placemaking in Exmouth Town and Seafront Group

Cllr Davey; Affects Non Registerable Interest: Member of Placemaking in Exmouth Town and Seafront Group

14 Matters of urgency

None.

15 Confidential/exempt item(s)

None.

16 Place and Prosperity update

The Project Manager for Place and Prosperity presented her report with updates on the following aspects:

- Depot review
 - Consultants had been appointed and data gathering concluded; work underway on considering options for delivery and future site requirements.
- Community Asset Transfer
 - An update on the application made by Ottery St Mary Town Council, which had subsequently been considered in depth by the Portfolio Holder. The decision was made not to invite the submission of a Business Case at this time, but to enter into further discussions with the Town Council on their aspirations and how this opportunity may progress in the future.
- Seaton Jurassic
 - Disposal of the site was approved by Council on 18 October 2023, with legal documentation planned for completion prior to the end of the year. The Tramway hopes to open the new facility in time for the 2024 visitor season.
- Public toilets at the Esplanade and Drill Hall in Sidmouth
- Seaton and Axminster employment sites
- Seaton Moridunum

- No offers for the site were put forward by the closing date of 10 November 2023, despite a number of expressions of interest. Potential options are now being reviewed with the marketing agents.
- Devon Place Urban Renewal project

In response to a question on the lack of offers on the Seaton Moridunum, those expressing an interest were not required to express why they then chose not to submit a bid; the offer of the site would be explored further with the agents.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

17 **Estates Team update**

The Forum received an update on the Estates Team, including:

- Continued decreasing backlog of cases showing a positive trend;
- Conclusion of lease renewals and rent reviews at Millwey Rise Industrial Estate in Axminster which has led to full occupation and increased rental income circa £11K per annum;
- Asset Register now published on Council's website;
- Continuing the revaluation of a portion of the land and building assets for financial accounting purposes;
- Annual insurance valuation completed.

In response to a question on rent negotiations, the Senior Estates Officer confirmed that whilst no tenant welcomed a rent increase, negotiations are generally constructive and agreement reached without issue or the need for 3rd party determination.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

18 **Exmouth Placemaking update**

The Project Manager for Place and Prosperity for Exmouth gave the Forum an update on Placemaking in Exmouth.

This covered:

- A reminder of the key tasks of Baseline Study and Benchmarking report; Characterisation Study; and Placemaking Strategy;
- Additional car park signage now in place;
- 95 of the scheduled 97 events on Exmouth land took place in the Exmouth Town and Seafront area;
- A further consultation on the levelling up fund bid – now renamed as “Exmouth Active Travel Improvements” was expected next autumn.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment voiced his concern on the expectation of the public in reading the draft Placemaking Plan for Exmouth Town and Seafront, as it referenced a number of options that were not currently funded, including:

- Toilet facilities, in light of the rationalisation of council owned toilets;
- Policing dogs in the area;
- Parking for motorhomes at Orcombe, as there was no flood protection there so risks to users;
- Facilities along the Esplanade and Maer, again with flood risk that would require additional flood defence work that was not funded.

The Forum was reminded that these desirable elements had come forward from the consultation, and that the draft plan at this stage contained the ambition of developing the area. A business case would have to be developed at the later stages in order to rationalise what could be delivered with available funding.

Cabinet had agreed the previous week for a sub group to be formed, consisting of Exmouth Town Council, EDDC, Devon County Council and other stakeholders for further work on the Exmouth Placemaking Plan that would act as a forum for the Placemaking in Exmouth Town and Seafront Group.

The Chair thanked all those concerned with the efforts on the project to date.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

19 **Property and FM Team update**

The Forum received the detailed report on the planned preventative maintenance, reactive, capital and compliance works undertaken between June 2023 and October 2023. Works outside of the planned schedule were also detailed. Compliance levels had improved since the last report to the Forum.

One aspect highlighted against the maintenance budget spend was that the current spend at public toilets is around twice the amount budgeted.

Discussion took place on:

- Decarbonisation value for Exmouth Withycombe changing facilities. In response, the budget request against the capital programme was to establish the requirements for the facilities that already needed action for the replacement of the existing boilers and review the reliance on LPG, If these works identified that decarbonisation was not appropriate, then a much more modest scheme would be implemented.;
- Chart in paragraph 1.11 showed the breakdown of works against each sporting facility;
- Existing budget on toilet maintenance was already small and had only increased by 3% on previous year, well under the rate of inflation.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

20 **Portfolio Overview**

The report before the Forum set out how the General Fund portfolio was comprised, including the income streams from the different asset types under the Council's ownership.

The property types are categorised as follows:

- Industrial
- Cafes and kiosks
- Investment
- East Devon Business Centre
- Sports and activity clubs
- Property/site with rental income greater than £15K that do not fall into the above categories
- Other

The issue identified with those classed as “other” was the administrative resource required for a relatively small proportion of income of the overall portfolio.

The breakdown of information on the assets would help inform the Asset Management Plan.

RESOLVED to note the report.

21 **Asset Management Plan**

The Forum was shown the Asset Register online, with an example of how to drill down to detailed information on land and buildings in the district. This information, whilst available online for some time, had been refined to be easier to use. Members were encouraged to make use of this functionality.

The Forum received a presentation from the Assistant Director for Place, Assets and Commercialisation on the Asset Management Plan proposals.

Creating a new Plan was required to take account of the current direction of travel of the new Council, to accord with the emerging new Council Plan. The need to have a full understanding of the breadth of assets was key to an effective Plan being delivered.

The new Asset Management Plan would therefore provide the effective targeting of resources to have the greatest effect in raising performance, maximising value for money and maximising the wider potential of assets.

The Plan would cover the three themes of:

- Proactive Asset Management
- Investment and Capital Programme
- Supporting wider objectives

The term of the new Plan would be 2024 – 2029, consisting of:

- Asset Management Policy
- Asset Management Strategy
- Asset Management Action Plan (reviewed annually)

Next steps were to set up working group meetings under exclusion conditions (that the public and press could not be present due to the risk of commercially sensitive information being discussed).

Members present welcomed the approach proposed, and discussed how the Policy included taking a view on the social and wellbeing benefit of an asset to the local community, as well as the financial aspects of assets. Profits from commercially buoyant assets, for example, may be able to then fund less profitable social assets. The Chair agreed that this level of detail would be better discussed by the working group proposed.

The Chair, in consultation with the Assistant Director for Place, Assets and Commercialisation, would agree the membership of this small working group. Progress would be reported through the Portfolio Holder Updates, with an update being presented to the Forum at their March 2024 meeting. The Plan would then be recommended forward to Cabinet and Council for adoption during the summer of 2024.

Volunteers for the working group to sit alongside the Chair were Councillors Matt Hall, Ian Barlow and Jenny Brown. The Chair would also take into consideration a councillor representative for the social and wellbeing aspect of the Policy.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted; and that the Chair of Asset Management Forum agree the membership of the Asset Management Plan working group for work beginning in early 2024.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

O Davey
M Hall
P Hayward (Chair)
T Olive

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

I Barlow
C Brown
J Brown
P Faithfull
C Fitzgerald
N Hookway
T McCollum
C Nicholas

Officers in attendance:

Tim Child, Assistant Director Place, Assets & Commercialisation
Rob Harrison, Senior Estates Surveyor
Alison Hayward, Project Manager Place & Prosperity
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer
Gerry Mills, Project Manager Place & Prosperity (Exmouth)
Jorge Pineda-Langford, Principal Building Surveyor, Property & FM

Councillor apologies:

P Arnott

Chair

Date: