

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of LED Monitoring Forum held on 16 December 2020

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 11.02 am and ended at 1.08 pm

1 Election of Chair

One nomination was received from Councillor Arnott and seconded by Cllr Jung.

RESOLVED:

that Councillor Hawkins be appointed Chair of the LED Monitoring Forum.

2 Public Speaking

There were no questions raised by members of the public.

3 Declaration of interest

Minute 6. Agree work priorities for forum.
Councillor Alan Dent, Personal, Paid up member of LED.

Minute 6. Agree work priorities for forum.
Councillor Geoff Jung, Personal, Family members are paid up member of LED.

Minute 6. Agree work priorities for forum.
Councillor Jess Bailey, Personal, Daughter is a pupil at Colyton Grammar School.

Minute 6. Agree work priorities for forum.
Councillor Paul Arnott, Personal, Paid up member of LED.

Minute 7. Review of LED portfolio future building maintenance and investment requirements.
Councillor Jess Bailey, Personal, Daughter attends Colyton Grammar School.

4 Matters of urgency

There were no matters of urgency raised at the meeting.

5 Confidential/exempt item(s)

There were 2 items classified in this way and agreed to be considered in private session, listed under items 11 and 12.

6 Agree work priorities for forum

The Chair welcomed suggestions from Members to the work priorities. He addressed the current situation LED faced with Covid-19 and the support mechanism in place that could possibly continue while the leisure industry took time to recover.

Update from Peter Gilpin, LED Chief Executive

Before Peter Gilpin gave an update he suggested to include energy conservation as an ongoing item on the agenda to help reduce energy usage at the LED sites, particularly swimming pools. He advised it had been previously agreed at Cabinet and Council to look at Honiton swimming pool with the re-development of the changing rooms and reception and welcomed the consideration of other swimming pools and other leisure centres.

He advised Members it was difficult to update Members on the current situation as the direct debits were being collected at the end of this week so it was unknown how many memberships had been reactivated. Members noted at the end of October, before that last lockdown the membership and income had recovered to approximately 70%, to where it had been towards the end of 2019.

Concerns were raised about moving into tier 3 as this would have a significant impact. Peter advised tier 2 permitted the running of group exercise classes, gyms and swimming pools which was a significant part of their income. He advised December was traditionally the worst month for gym memberships but hoped to see an influx in the New Year. It was hoped by the end of January the income figure would be back up towards the 70% figure with a forecast of 80% at some point in 2021.

Peter advised the support from the council and the furlough scheme had been a huge welcome during lockdown. Quite a few staff were still on furlough with more staff being put on furlough over the Christmas period which would reduce staffing costs to about 55% of expenditure. Members noted staffing costs was LEDs biggest spend with utilities being the second at 20%.

He also advised during lockdown the heat had been switched off in all the swimming pools and the pumps and chlorination had been run at a very minimal level to maintain health and safety requirements.

Comments made by Non-Forum Members included:

- Welcomed energy conservation but suggested looking into how people travel to and from the sites.
- Suggested looking at plastics and wider environmental issues. In response Peter Gilpin welcomed the opportunity to review the use of plastics. He also suggested revisiting the provision of core leisure activities and trying to target the hard to reach groups.
- Need to look at what is provided in vending machine, replacing plastic bottles and providing healthier snacks;
- Need to ask people what they want in their communities, are we providing it and what can we do better;
- Make swimming pools changing rooms fit for purpose now and install gender neutral changing rooms;
- It is important to get the message out to inform residents of the relationship between the council and LED for full transparency and to be the best it can be;
- An important priority is to reduce health inequalities in the district. Offering discounted membership for people who are on means tested benefits.
- Another important priority is the need to get to grips with the upcoming government grant that LED and the council will be applying for to cover the lost income;
- A suggestion to start a campaign in secondary schools and primary schools to encourage young people

Comments made by Forum Members included:

- Councillor Arnott welcomed the new Chair and was delighted to see the Forum up and running. He advised the agenda had clearly identified the priorities that would assist LED to move forward financially through the pandemic;
- The agenda has done a good job of identifying the priorities to help LED move forward financially and more urgently how is the government going to help;

The Chair thanked Members for their contributions and advised a priority list would be prepared in advance of the next meeting and brought forward as an agenda item.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and a priority list brought back to the Forum.

7 **Review of LED portfolio future building maintenance and investment requirements**

In response to comments made in the previous agenda item around energy efficiency, before the Service Lead – Place, Assets and Commercialisation presented his report he updated Members on his new draft Service Plan for next year that had 2 items related to climate change and energy efficiency measures for LED properties addressing those issues raised.

The report presented to Members on building maintenance and investment requirements provided an overview of the future cost and investment projections alongside income projections required to maintain the existing stock of leisure assets over the next 30 years captured through a stock condition survey for each of the 12 buildings.

The Service Lead – Place Assets and Commercialisation referred to paragraphs 2.2 and 2.5 and Members noted £26.6m was needed to be invested in the 12 buildings which was reduced to just under £23m taking into account school contributions for the dual use sites. Members also noted that whilst there was an average requirement of £740k per annum to spend on the 12 buildings which consisted of revenue and capital spend, there was a cost pressure in the first 7 years requiring investment in some years of £1m.

He advised the current leisure portfolio property related budgets were £410k revenue and circa £1.5m for capital expenditure over a 5 year timescale (£300k per annum), equating to spend of £720k per annum in recent years.

Members noted that a significant amount of costs would be saved by keeping maintenance works on LED properties in-house rather than employing external contractors.

The Chair sought clarification on whether the figures had been factored into the mid-term financial plan. In response the Strategic Lead for Finance advised that £409k was included in the mid-term financial plan. Members noted that total costs of investing in the LED buildings would also include a large capital programme that would run on an annual basis for a number of the properties.

The Chair welcomed comments from Forum Members and Non-Forum Members which included:

- Clarification sought on whether these figures did not include major improvements. In response the Service Lead – Place Assets and Commercialisation advised that

the costs were to replace components at end of useful life, reactive maintenance and similar and not specifically to improve.

- Clarification sought on whether there would be an opportunity for funding for these improvements. In response the Strategic Lead for Finance advised the council had in the past put in its own capital resources but also that through LED there had been successful bids to Sports England for significant funding. Peter Gilpin confirmed LED had been very successful in lottery bids managing to secure £2m worth of investment and advised LED were investing quite a lot through a loan from the council.
- Suggestion made by Peter Gilpin as another agenda item was to look at reviewing the dual use agreements at schools and raised concerns that some activities at school sites have restricted access;

RESOLVED:

The review of the LED portfolio building maintenance and investment requirements be noted.

8 **External advice - EDDC Leisure Strategy and auditing of LED monthly claims**

EDDC Leisure Strategy

The Service Lead – Countryside and Leisure advised the Forum that there was a need for a Leisure Strategy as the last one had been produced over 15 years ago when the leisure service was run in-house. He stressed that despite the absence of a Leisure Strategy a lot of work had already been done in terms of delivering the physical and mental health wellbeing activities taken under the Public Health Plan.

The Service Lead – Countryside and Leisure requested the Forum to consider 2 important questions to help them decide how they would like to approach the strategy and to think carefully about the direction of the strategy:

1. The scope of the leisure strategy, and
2. Whether the forum wants to look at the strategy at a higher strategic level or a fine grained level which would go into a lot more detail.

Members noted that Peter Gilpin had contacts through Sport England's accredited consultees that can help the Leisure Strategy

Peter Gilpin stressed to Members the importance of a having a Leisure Strategy to help with funding bids so that National Governing Bodies can identify local authority priorities.

The Chair concurred with Peter's comments and highlighted a lot had happened in 15 years including a brand new town.

The Chairman welcomed comments and heard extensive debate from the Forum Members and Non-Forum Members about whether the LED Monitoring Forum was the right forum to develop the Leisure Strategy. In response the Strategic Lead for Governance and Licensing advised it was Cabinet's responsibility to authorise the advice needed to deliver it and for this forum to scrutinise the LED function. In response the Leader's comment about the possibility of adding the Leisure Strategy to the Cabinet agenda for 6 January 2021, the Strategic Lead for Governing and Licensing suggested the minutes for this meeting to be added as a late item so there was a record that Cabinet had endorsed the idea.

Other key points made by members included:

- Suggestion made to refer to the Overview Committee;
- It will be a mistake for the Forum not to show initiative as it has been 15 years since the last Leisure Strategy;
- The public need to see a commissioned piece of external work to verify the healthy relationship between this council and LED.
- The Forum's focus needs to be on the strategy of LED and how that fits into the overall strategy for leisure development as a council;
- Need to be clear on the role of the Forum;

Auditing of LED monthly claims

The Strategic Lead for Finance updated Members on 2 consultancy firms being considered for the auditing of the subsidy claim. He advised the preferred option was the Sport England, due to their expertise and their willingness to part fund up to £5,000.

Councillor Millar, a non-forum member welcomed the discussions with Sport England and said it was value for money.

RESOLVED:

That the Strategic Lead for Finance progress with Sport England to engage consultancy to help with the immediate checking of the LED additional subsidy claim be endorsed.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet:

That Members pursue a new Leisure Strategy.

9

Government support fund update

The Strategic Lead for Finance updated Members on the Government's scheme to allocate £100m to interested authorities to help support leisure centres and advised details had been published yesterday on how to apply.

Members noted the first process was to register to acknowledge interest in the scheme which had been done and the council was now waiting for an applicant form and a confirmed amount that the council can bid for.

The Strategic Lead for Finance was disappointed to advise the scheme was to cover costs from 1 December to 31 March 2021 and would not cover costs already spent. He advised discussions would be held with LED about how to pitch it best to help support the cost that the council had already committed to LED.

Members noted the scheme would be live until 8 January 2021 and updates would be provided.

The Chair welcomed comments from Members:

- Clarification sought on the figure that the council had committed to LED. It was advised £732k had been committed and paid to LED.
- Clarification sought on whether there was an opportunity for private sports clubs to claim for funds. It was advised it had to be a local authorities backed claim.

The Chair suggested that the Leisure Strategy be included in the Cabinet Forward Plan. In response, the Leader advised it could be added to both Cabinet and Overview Committee's agenda to progress.

RESOLVED:

That the Government support fund update be noted.

10 **Exclusion of press and public**

That under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting as exempt and private information (as set out against each Part B agenda item), is likely to be disclosed and on balance the public interest is in discussing the items in private session (Part B).

11 **LED income update and forecast 2020 - 2021**

The Forum received an update on LED's income and forecast for 2020 – 2021.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

12 **LED Service fee review 2021 - 2026**

The Forum received an update on the LED Service Fee Review 2021 – 2026 and discussed instructing officers to review further options.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and officers are instructed to review further options and report back to the Forum.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

P Arnott
J Bailey
A Dent
S Hawkins (Chair)
P Hayward
V Johns
G Jung

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

D Bickley
B De Saram
P Faithfull
D Ledger
K McLauchlan
P Millar
A Moulding
E Rylance
E Wragg

Officers in attendance:

Simon Davey, Strategic Lead Finance
Henry Gordon Lennox, Strategic Lead Governance and Licensing
Charles Plowden, Service Lead Countryside and Leisure
John Golding, Strategic Lead Housing, Health and Environment
Wendy Harris, Democratic Services Officer
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer
Tim Child, Service Lead - Place, Assets & Commercialisation

LED Leisure in attendance:

Peter Gilpin, Chief Executive
Bridgette Jones, Head of Finance & Support Services
Nigel Halford, Chairman

Apologies:

M Hartnell
G Pook
J Rowland
M Williams

Chairman

Date: