

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of LED Monitoring Forum held at Online via zoom app on 1 March 2022

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 9.30 am and ended at 11.24 am

103 Public Speaking

There were no members of the public registered to speak.

104 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 January 2022

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 January 2022 were noted as a true and accurate record.

105 Declaration of interest

Cllr P Arnott: Minutes 108 – 115; Personal Interest: Member of LED Community Leisure.
Cllr A Dent: Minutes 108 – 115; Personal Interest: Member of LED Community Leisure.
Cllr P Millar: Minutes 108 – 115; Personal Interest: Member of LED Community Leisure.

106 Matters of urgency

There were no matters of urgency.

107 Confidential/exempt item(s)

There were four items to be considered in private session.

108 Update on Leisure Strategy

Rachel Fowler of Strategic Leisure provided an update on the Leisure Strategy, including the following:

- Site quality audits are now complete.
- Stakeholder consultation is now complete, meetings having been held with East Devon DC officers, LED Community Leisure, key clubs, schools and colleges, Active Devon, Health & Wellbeing Boards, Clinical Commissioning Groups, organisations representing key target groups, neighbouring authorities and town and parish councils.
- Sports club and schools surveys have gone out; a good response has been received from sports clubs but only 11 schools have responded. A community survey was also live, with a closing date of 11th March 2022.
- Sports hall and swimming pool supply and demand analysis was completed; the rest of the facility analysis was to follow.

Discussion and questions included:

- A Member commented that the response rate from schools was disappointing and asked if this was down to schools being unclear about who should be responding on their behalf. Ms Fowler responded that school response rates had been getting worse over recent years but it was not known why. She would keep chasing for responses but Strategic Leisure had nevertheless seen the facilities and knew whether they were open or not and, if there were gaps, they would telephone individual schools direct.

- Comment was made that the number of responses locally to consultation is impressive and shows a high level of interest in sport and leisure in East Devon.

Ms Fowler suggested that for the next Forum meeting she could bring a short presentation headlining the findings from the surveys and a summary analysis of the issues coming out from the stakeholders.

The Forum noted the report and thanked Ms Fowler for her contribution.

109 **LED Dashboard January 2022**

The Forum received and noted key details of the performance of LED Community Leisure for January 2022, including an outline of the net promoter score.

Following request for clarification, the LED Director of Delivery stated that the figure of 41.96% in relation to swimming was the increase in total attendances relative to the previous month.

110 **LED Facilities and Activities**

The LED Director of Delivery ran through the content of the Facilities and Activities Report highlighting the following points:

- The impact of Covid was reducing, having been a significant challenge over December and the Christmas period.
- A new General Manager had been appointed for Exmouth Leisure Centre and was currently undergoing his induction into the business.
- Work to refresh the changing rooms and locker area at Sidmouth swimming pool was going well; this was being funded from the National Leisure Recovery Fund, at no cost to East Devon DC.
- A refurbishment project for Honiton swimming pool had suffered a mid-programme delay due to some challenges with the contractor's procurement chain, and was now due to complete on Friday 4th March.

Discussion and questions included:

- A Member suggested the new General Manager of Exmouth Leisure Centre, Mr Day, might meet with Exmouth town councillors; the Director of Delivery agreed this could be arranged, once Mr Day had settled in.
- The Forum looked forward to receiving further updates on LED's sessions with Exmouth Community College. The Director of Delivery stated that this was a constantly developing relationship, and LED were keen to encourage school leavers to consider meaningful careers in the leisure industry, including swimming teaching and lifeguarding.
- A Member asked if the 7 incidents/accidents recorded in January were significant, compared with other leisure centres. In response, the Director of Delivery stated that the target was for zero incidents, but every incident was captured, and the number and nature of recorded incidents (slips, trips and falls) were not extraordinary or unusual.
- Members were pleased to see it recorded that there was a strong focus on improving the customer experience.
- The Forum briefly discussed social prescribing and the LED CEO remarked that GP referrals were continuing in the district, however a different form of coaching programme was now in place with a focus having moved from physical health activities towards mental health.

The Chair thanked the Director of Delivery for his contribution and the report was noted.

111 **Capital Bids Update Report**

The Service Lead – Place, Assets and Commercialisation ran through the update report circulated to the Forum in advance of the meeting, which summarised the capital bids that were proposed for consideration by the Budget Setting and Capital Bid Allocation Panel, the Panel's recommendations and the rationale for its recommendations.

The Forum noted:

- The capital bids approved and recommended to Council.
- That the proposal for the light refurbishment of changing rooms at Sidmouth swimming pool had already been recommended for funding from the approved National Leisure Recovery Fund by Cabinet; LED had now commenced these works.

Members of the Forum were asked to consider a proposal for the installation of pool energy management systems at the Exmouth and Honiton swimming pool sites, at an expected cost of £62,500. The Service Lead – Place, Assets & Commercialisation invited the Principal Building Surveyor to set out the technical details of what the proposal relates to.

The Principal Building Surveyor outlined the following points:

- The proposal is for an energy management system which deals with the filtration and circulation of the swimming pools, optimising how these systems work.
- It is estimated that the new system will generate energy savings in the region of £16k annually, and as energy costs rise the savings will be even greater.

The LED CEO provided the following rationale:

- The current system in place is inefficient and controlled manually.
- The proposal is for an automated system which would significantly reduce the amount of water used, generating savings in water costs.
- In using less water, less gas would be needed to heat it, and less electricity to pump it, generating significant energy cost savings.
- There would be additional savings in maintenance costs since pumps would be used less and scaled down more.
- Customers would see an improvement in water quality.
- The new system would reduce the carbon footprint and therefore align with the Council's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan and its priority for a greener East Devon.
- In view of the forecast savings, it is anticipated that the system would pay for itself within 2 - 2½ years.

Discussion and clarification included:

- In response to a Member's question, the Strategic Lead – Finance clarified that if the proposal was approved, it would add not more than £2–3K to interest payments. He added that this sum would be immaterial in the overall capital programme and would not significantly affect the General Fund.
- The Strategic Lead – Finance reminded the Forum that if it recommends the proposal, it would be a recommendation through Cabinet to Council, as it would be asking for a budget in-year for the capital programme.
- The Strategic Lead – Finance highlighted that the forecast payback period of 2-2½ years is unusually short for a capital scheme.
- A Member queried why a review was only carried out for Honiton and Exmouth Swimming Pools and not for Sidmouth. The LED CEO responded that a lot of work had already been done to improve the pool flow system at Sidmouth Swimming Pool, so there was less to be gained from any upgrade, and there would be insufficient return on investment.
- In response to a Member's question on where the money would come from to fund the works, the Strategic Lead – Finance stated that the project would go into the capital programme and added to the sum in-year. It would therefore be funded from capital money available, and some borrowing might be required in terms of the overall capital

programme. He added that £62,500 is not a significant sum in the overall capital budget and would not impact on the General Fund position or the assumptions made.

- Following a request for more detail on the climate change impact of the proposed system, the Principal Building Surveyor stated that a saving of 23 CO2 tonnes was estimated for Honiton Swimming Pool, down from 37.7 to 14.2 tonnes, and a saving of 21 tonnes was estimated for Exmouth.
- Responding to a question about a wider programme of works reduce the carbon footprint from LED properties, the LED CEO stated that longer term improvements would be explored in respect to solar panels and air source heat pumps, once the Leisure Strategy is complete. The Principal Building Surveyor added that an approved element of one of the capital bids was to commission a study of energy efficiency in LED properties, and this would be progressed in due course.

The Portfolio Holder – Finance sought an Officer view on whether it was appropriate for him to vote on this item since he had chaired the Budget Setting and Capital Bid Allocation Panel meeting; a Democratic Services Officer commented that there was no reason why he should not vote as a Forum member if he wanted to do so. She added that the final decision on the capital bid proposal would rest with Cabinet, of which he was a member.

RECOMMENDED TO Cabinet and Council:

That the installation of pool water treatment energy management systems at the Exmouth and Honiton LED managed swimming pool sites be included in the capital programme, with a capital budget in 2022/23 of £62,500.

The Chair thanked those present for their contribution to the debate.

112 LED Management Fee 2022-23

The LED CEO ran through the content of the LED Management Fee 2022-23 report which had been circulated to Forum Members in advance of the meeting, which included:

- Background information in respect to the Service Fee.
- The 2022-23 Service Fee and effect on service.
- The impact on LED of the pandemic, the significant increase in inflation and rising utility and wage costs, together with a summary of the mitigations that have been implemented.
- The financial forecast for the EDDC Leisure Management Contract for the coming financial year, assuming no further Covid lockdowns or restrictions after 1 April 2022, and the effect of the forecast financial position on development of the service and investment in the facilities.

In view of the effect on the contract of the significant increase in energy costs, the LED CEO asked the Forum to consider allocating the £50-£100K contingency fund that was written into the Council's budget as additional support, subject to LED evidencing the impact of energy costs, in arrears.

The Strategic Lead – Finance suggested that, with Cabinet approval, the Council could support LED to meet the additional energy costs up to £87,500 in the financial year, by

means of a quarterly reconciliation of utility costs and associated quarterly monitoring reports to the Forum.

In discussion, the following points were made:

- One Member commented that going forward, it would be helpful to have this report as a bar chart, to better make sense of the data.
- Views were expressed that it was appropriate to support LED with utility costs as proposed, and that quarterly monitoring would be helpful.
- A Member observed that energy costs cannot be controlled and, with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the outlook was gloomy, and the £100K contingency for LED was likely to be inadequate. He expressed that there were difficult decisions for Members, given that LED was one of a number of groups who were arguably in need of support with rising utility costs. He urged caution and suggested it would be sensible to consider monthly monitoring rather than quarterly, to ensure tighter controls.
- Another Member expressed every sympathy with everyone facing higher costs but cautioned against 'comparing apples with pears' given the specific situation of how the contract is arranged with LED, and noting the work that was ongoing to support other groups e.g. the work of the Poverty Working Panel, and grants available for social housing tenants. He added that some solutions were outside the control of the Council and were a matter for central government.
- Members would continue to lobby the local MPs concerning financial support from the National Leisure Recovery Fund for East Devon's leisure provision, and would discuss outside of the meeting how best to do so.

Following the discussion, Cllr Paul Millar proposed, seconded by Cllr Alan Dent, to recommend to Cabinet the process for allocating the £100k contingency in the 2022/23 budget be specifically aimed at coping with the increased utility costs with the applications made in arrears by LED to be agreed by the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture, Sport and Tourism, the Chair of the LED Monitoring Forum and the Strategic Lead – Finance.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet:

That the process for allocating the £100k contingency in the 2022/23 budget be specifically aimed at coping with the increased utility costs, with the applications made in arrears by LED to be agreed by the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture, Sport and Tourism, the Chair of the LED Monitoring Forum and the Strategic Lead – Finance.

113 **Exmouth Pavilion Financial Report**

The LED CEO ran through the Exmouth Pavilion Financial Report which had been circulated to Forum Members in advance of the meeting and summarised the LED operating position in operating the Pavilion. He reminded Members that whilst LED operate the facility, the building is the responsibility of the Service Lead – Place, Assets & Commercialisation, and the property team, on behalf of the Council.

Discussion included the following points:

- Forum Members recognised the good work of the Pavilion management team in putting together a full programme for 2022/23.
- It was noted that longer term factors for the Pavilion would be considered as part of the Cultural Strategy, which would in turn link in with the Leisure and Tourism strategies.

The Chair thanked the LED for the update and the report was noted.

114 **LED price menu**

The Forum had received the LED price menu, for information.

In discussion, a Member asked if the cost to schools of using the swimming pool could be reduced, to encourage maximum participation. The LED CEO stated that there were no concerns for schools in paying the current sum, and he was confident that the pricing for schools was reasonable. He added that under the government curriculum it is a key stage requirement that children should have learnt to swim by the end primary school, and reducing the price to schools would mean subsidising a statutory education service, which would not be appropriate.

For a future meeting, the Chair asked that LED provide a cost breakdown of the management fee spend by the different centres, and by sport.

115 **Passport to Leisure scheme**

The LED CEO ran through the report on Passport to Leisure, a scheme which provides a 25% discount to customers on means tested benefits, commenting that LED looked forward to discussing as part of the Leisure Strategy the social value which LED provides, and how to improve access for people more in need. He added that every £1 spent equates to a £9 return in terms of social value.

Comment and questions included:

- A Member invited the LED CEO's view on whether there was good awareness of the scheme and if there might be existing Members who were eligible for the scheme but not aware of it. He expressed a view that, looking at PTL member numbers, take-up seemed quite low. The LED CEO acknowledged that there probably were members and non-members who were not aware of the discounts available, and it would be useful to promote the scheme again.
- The Forum agreed that both LED and the Council should work to raise awareness of the PTL scheme.
- The Strategic Lead – Housing, Health & Environment commented that as part of the Public Health Strategy there was a desire to make leisure and other activities accessible to lower income families. He added that he would be keen to do more work going forward to align poverty and public health aspirations with the PTL scheme, with a view to keeping people active as cheaply as possible.

The Chair thanked the LED CEO for his contribution and the report was noted.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

P Arnott
A Dent
B De Saram
N Hookway
G Jung
P Millar (Chair)
J Rowland

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

S Gazzard
E Rylance

Officers in attendance:

Tim Child, Service Lead - Place, Assets & Commercialisation
Simon Davey, Strategic Lead Finance
John Golding, Strategic Lead Housing, Health and Environment
Sarah Helman, Democratic Services Officer
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer
Jorge Pineda-Langford, Principal Building Surveyor, Property & FM
Charles Plowden, Service Lead Countryside and Leisure

Councillor apologies:

S Hawkins

Chair

Date: