

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Asset Management Forum held at online on 3 March 2025

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 9.30 am and ended at 10.41 am

18 Notes from the previous meeting held on 2 December 2024

The notes of the previous meeting held on 2 December 2024 were agreed.

19 Declarations of interest

Minute 23

Cllr I Barlow: ANRI, Sidmouth Town Council member

Minute 24

Cllr O Davey, ANRI Exmouth Town Council member

Minute 26

Cllr J Brown: ANRI Honiton Town Council member

20 Public speaking

None.

21 Matters of urgency

None.

22 Confidential/exempt item(s)

There was one item which officers recommended should be dealt with in this way.

23 Major Projects and Programmes Team Update

The Corporate Lead Major Projects and Programmes' report provided a summary of the more high profile projects that the Major Projects and Programmes Team were currently involved in delivering. The projects were wide ranging, supporting the delivery of a range of Council Plan objectives. The update report included:

- Depots review
- Public toilets, Esplanade and Drill Hall, Sidmouth
- UKSPF feasibility studies, Exmouth Placemaking Plan
 - Exmouth Placemaking Plan
 - UKSPF feasibility study for Queens Drive Space and Beach Gardens
- Stalled employment sites
 - Cloakham Lawn, Axminster
 - Seaton and other sites
- Seaton Moridunum
- Clyst Meadows Country Park
- Cranbox, Cranbrook

Discussion covered:

- The initial Depots Review report was received from consultants in summer 2024 and was reported to the Recycling and Waste Future Service Member Working Group, supported by consultants, Iesa. A value engineering exercise is currently underway and following a review of this, an outline business case will be prepared and reported to Cabinet. A timeline for this work will be shared with Asset Management Forum members shortly.

The Forum noted the report

24 **Estates Team Update**

The Senior Estate Surveyor's report provided an update on the areas of work the Estates Team were involved in:

- An initial expression of interest in the Community Asset Transfer had been received in respect of the Norman Lockyer Observatory and consultation had begun.
- Changes to discounts available to tenants under the Right to Buy scheme had led to a significant number of requests for valuations within a three week period – the equivalent to what was usually undertaken in two years. The team had worked hard to balance this additional work with the ongoing workload in order to provide valuations to allow housing colleagues to process the applications.
- The team had successfully agreed terms for a new letting of a unit at Manstone Workshops, Sidmouth, ensuring the site remained fully let.
- Disposal of Category B & C public toilets continued to progress with transfers to Town and Parish Councils close to completion. Two sites were to be sold at auction in April 2025 and work continued to progress lease arrangements for sites where a commercial operator had been identified.
- The overall general fund portfolio continued to perform well with very limited voids and rental growth in most areas. In the financial year to date the increase in rental income due to lease renewals, new lettings and rent reviews was £52,154.
- The team had assisted the housing service in agreeing terms for access rights and easements in respect of sewage treatment and drainage works.
- The team were in the process of undertaking a revaluation of a portion of the Council's land and building assets. The assets being revalued had a combined value of £65m - £70m and this significant piece of work was being undertaken for inclusion in the Council's financial reporting.

Discussion included:

- The business units on Salterton Road, Exmouth were nearing completion, and the team had an extensive list of those who had expressed an interest in the units. Members would have an opportunity to visit the site once the works were finished.
- Two toilet sites were due to be auctioned; Marsh Road, Seaton, and Sidford Cross. Both were non-controversial and had been closed for some years. There had been reports of antisocial behaviour and it was appropriate to dispose of them.
- The Chief Executive would liaise with the Monitoring Officer and Communications Manager to explore whether it was appropriate to delay the auction of the aforementioned toilet sites until after the 1st May County Elections due to the potential for social media commentary on the matter.
- The reported increase in rental income of £52,154 was an increase on £1.2 million, representing the asset value rather than rental value.

The Forum noted the report.

25 **Community Asset Transfer request**

The Asset Management Forum were consulted on a Community Asset Transfer (CAT) application received in respect of the public toilet building in School Lane car park, Newton Poppleford. Consultation had been undertaken with relevant council officers and the local ward member. Following consultation, a decision on whether to go to Stage 2, where Newton Poppleford Parish Council would prepare a detailed business case, would then be made by the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Assets on the basis of a report from the Assistant Director – Place, Assets and Commercialisation.

The report considered by the AMF included the:

- Council's procedure for Community Asset Transfers.
- Site detail.
- Consultation with relevant council services and ward member.

The Senior Estates Surveyor shared with the Forum the expression of interest form which had been submitted to the Council from Newton Poppleford Parish Council.

Discussion included:

- Members were supportive of disposing of the free car park at the site of the public toilet building, and officers were asked to liaise with the parish council to explore if there was interest in the car park via CAT or an extension to the current CAT.
- The Senior Estates Surveyor was asked to provide details of how many other car parks the Council had which were free, and how many toilet buildings were leased to parish councils; this information to be provided by email to Cllr Geoff Jung and the Chair.

RESOLVED: that Asset Management Forum

1. notes the report and offers its thoughts on the application, as part of the consultation process.
2. notes that following completion of this consultation, that in accordance with the Procedure, Officers will make a recommendation to the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Assets on whether the applicant should be invited to submit a business case for the site
3. notes that should the recommendation be that this application does not progress to the Business Case stage, officers will contact the Parish Council to discuss their proposals and identify whether there is scope for a collaborative approach to achieve some of their objectives set out in the EOI.

The meeting went into private session.

26 **Employment Site, Honiton**

The Development Delivery Project Manager and the Interim Project Manager's report provided the Asset Management Forum with an update on progress in regard to an allocated employment site in Honiton.

Members discussed the report at length, and asked direct questions.

The Forum noted the update and next steps.

Attendance List **Councillors present:**

T Olive
P Arnott
P Hayward (Chair)

G Jung

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

I Barlow
C Brown
J Brown
O Davey
M Hall
N Hookway

Officers in attendance:

Andrew Champion, Development Delivery Project Manager
Tim Child, Assistant Director Place, Assets & Commercialisation
Naomi Harnett, Corporate Lead (Interim) – Major Projects & Programmes
Rob Harrison, Senior Estates Surveyor
Alison Hayward, Project Manager Place & Prosperity
Tracy Hendren, Chief Executive
Sarah James, Democratic Services Officer
Sarah Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer
Anne Mountjoy, Growth Point Communications Officer

Councillor apologies:

S Hawkins

Chair:

Date: