

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE  
HELD AT FOLLATON HOUSE, TOTNES ON THURSDAY 24 JANUARY 2008**

**MEMBERS**

\* Cllr R J Tucker - Chairman

\* Cllr P W Hitchins - Vice-Chairman

\* Cllr N A Barnes

∅ Cllr H D Bastone

\* Cllr B E Carson

\* Cllr T J Hewitt

\* Cllr D W May

\* Cllr M F Saltern

\* Denotes attendance

∅ Denotes apology for absence

Also in attendance at the invitation of the Chairman:

Cllrs K J Baldry, J Brazil, M J Howarth, R M Lawrence, D M O'Callaghan, C M Pannell, J T Pennington, R Rowe, J W Squire, R C Steer, R J Vint and A Ward;

Also in attendance but not participating:

Cllrs J I G Blackler, B F Cane, R F Croad, F J Hawke, M J Hicks and M Stone;

Officers in attendance:

All Agenda Items: Strategic Management Team and Head of Financial Services

**E.91/07      MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 3 January 2008 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to it being recorded that under minute reference E.89/07 Members expressed in principle support for the concept of a residential car parking concession scheme but did not specify a preference in terms of which option would have been most beneficial.

**E.92/07      MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE**

It was noted that the following Members were in attendance and participated during the discussion on the under-mentioned items:-

Item 7 (minute E.95/07 below refers) – Cllrs Baldry, Brazil, Lawrence, O'Callaghan and Pennington;

Item 8 (minute E.96/07 below refers) – Cllrs Baldry, Brazil, Howarth, Lawrence, O'Callaghan, Pannell, Pennington, Rowe, Squire, Steer, Vint and Ward.

E.93/07      **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of the meeting but none were made.

E.94/07      **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

It was noted that no public questions had been received.

E.95/07      **REPORTS OF OTHER BODIES**

**RESOLVED**

That the following be received and that any recommendations contained therein be approved:

- a)    **Environment Policy Development Group – 13 December 2007**
- b)    **Prosperity Policy Development Group – 8 January 2008**

**PPDG.16/07 Notes of the Task and Finish Group**

**1.      Review of Ferry Charges 2008/2009**

**RECOMMENDED**

That the Council be **RECOMMENDED** that:-

- a) the car/van cash ticket be £3.00 per journey;
- b) the car/van cash return ticket be £6.00 for 8 months per calendar year and reduced to £5.50 for the remaining 4 months;
- c) the price of a car/van concessionary ticket be increased from £1.00 to £1.20 each, with 20 tickets per booklet;
- d) the concessionary booklets be limited to a six month time restriction;

**RESOLVED**

- e) that a pro-active publicity, marketing and promotion plan to help grow the market be developed.

## 2. Review of Waste Charges 2008/2009

Prior to taking the vote on this item, a non-Executive Member wished to reiterate his dissatisfaction to the proposed differential charging, noting that the Council should be providing a fair service across the district.

### **RECOMMENDED**

That the Council be **RECOMMENDED** that differential charging for the trade waste collection be introduced throughout the district in line with the charges as identified in the appendix as presented to the Prosperity Policy Development Group meeting held on 8 January 2008.

#### **c) Community Policy Development Group – 10 January 2008**

#### **d) Scrutiny – 17 January 2008**

In relation to the comments of Scrutiny and the PDG's, a non-Executive Member hoped that the Executive would give serious consideration to these comments, highlighting the recommendation of Scrutiny that the South Hams Magazine be self financing. In response, the Chairman informed those present that communication with residents was essential and the magazine was distributed to all properties in the district. The cost of each magazine amounted to approximately 8p per copy. However, the Council's Communication's Team had been asked to investigate making the magazine a self funded publication.

An non-Executive Member also made reference to the contingency reserve of £100,000. The Member felt that in view of the financial situation of the authority, the Council could not afford to place £100,000 into a contingency reserve and that it was therefore essential that the agreed budget was met without the luxury of a financial safety net. To justify supplementing this reserve, officers informed Members that the forthcoming financial year had more uncertainties than previously. These unknown factors included costs arising from the restructuring of waste refuse rounds, the new concessionary bus fares scheme and pressure on key income sources, such as car parks and the Dartmouth Lower Ferry.

**E.96/07 DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS 2008/09**

Consideration was given to a report which set out the Council's financial position over the medium term and to act as a framework for developing final budget proposals. These would include the appropriate level of council tax and service provision. It was noted that the Executive's recommendations would be considered by full Council on 7 February 2008.

The report concluded that disappointingly, this year had seen the worst ever Revenue Support Grant settlement for district councils with the Council only receiving a 1% increase compared with the November Retail Price Inflation rate of 4.3%. This represented a cut in real terms of 3.3%, which would have to be made up with savings on services and/or through increasing Council Tax. Therefore, it was imperative that the Council continued to manage its budget through a planned strategy to find new ways of working and efficiencies that were achievable over the coming five years to avoid short term problems and make the annual budget setting process smoother.

The report sought the Executive's final recommendations as to how it wished to reconcile the competing demands of additional expenditure, improved service provision and sound financial management.

During discussion on the report and appendices, specific reference was made to:-

- f) the triennial pension revaluation. A non-Executive Member expressed concern over the increased employer contribution rate for the pension fund. In response, officers noted that changes to the employee contribution were to be implemented as of 1 April 2008 to balance the burden on the fund;
- b) the web based survey. A Member felt that the survey had not achieved its objectives due to the lack of participants. Whilst in agreement with this view, the Executive Member with responsibility for Value for Money stressed the importance in web based surveys of providing a means of consultation and informed those present that an improved approach to this would be investigated.

Prior to a discussion on the proposed savings, the Executive considered each proposed budget saving individual to inform those present which they were minded to support.

**S1: Invite contributions from other partners in SHSP towards Community Development Officer**

The Executive did not support this proposed saving.

It was noted that this was aspirational at this stage, as partners were not forthcoming in contributing financial support towards the post of Community Development Officer due to their own budgetary constraints. However, officers would endeavour to continue to pursue this issue with its partners.

**S2: Cease or Reduce Community Grant Funding**

The Executive agreed to cease Community Grant Funding but for £20,000 from this saving to be ring-fenced for a Locality Budget which would therefore result in a total saving of £5,000. However, it was stipulated that prior to the establishment of a Locality Budget, officers would investigate further the feasibility of such a fund.

**S3: Cease support to Devon Racial Equality Council**

The Executive did not support this proposed saving.

It was noted that the Devon Racial Equality Council represented a number of hard to reach groups and an communication with them was beneficial to the Council.

**S4: Cease support to Enterprise South Devon**

The Executive supported this proposed saving.

It was noted that the service provided by Enterprise South Devon was not exclusive to them.

**S5: Cease support to Ring and Ride**

The Executive did not support this proposed saving.

Members noted that that the Ring and Ride scheme provided an essential service to the community.

**S6: Restructure Public Convenience Cleaning Rounds**

The Executive supported this proposed saving.

The proposed restructure of cleaning rounds would result in an efficiency saving, whilst the standard of cleaning would be maintained to its current level.

**S7: Introduce Seasonal Opening for 24 Public Conveniences**

The Executive did not support this proposed saving.

Following consultation with Scrutiny and the PDG's the Executive were minded not to support this proposed saving. However, the Council would in time be looking to the town and parish council's for assistance by investigating the feasibility of transferring ownership of the public conveniences to the town and parishes.

**S8: Grounds Maintenance – Change Planting from Bedding Plants to Shrubs**

The Executive supported this proposed saving.

**S9: Remove Swimming Buoys from Torcross and move Lifeguards to Slapton where no Buoyed Area is required**

The Executive agreed to reduce this potential saving by half to £1,200.

It was noted that two heavy anchorages could be sunk with a string of marker buoys placed between them, therefore stopping boats from approaching the beach. It was believed that this method could be employed at half the cost of the current operation.

**S10: Remove Speed Limit Buoys at Jennycliff and Wembury**

Having taken into account comments of a local ward Member for Wembury, the Executive did not support this proposed saving.

**S11: Review of Grounds Maintenance Arrangements for Land not Owned by SHDC**

The Executive supported this proposed saving.

**S12: Reduce Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Project Funding**

The Executive did not support this proposed saving.

It was highlighted that this funding attracted additional external funding.

**S13: Partnership Working and Restructuring of Legal Services**

The Executive supported this proposed saving.

**S.14: Shared Services**

The Executive then proposed an additional saving of £15,000 for officers to recover through the Shared Services initiative.

The Executive then invited those present to comment on the proposals made. During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- i. A number of non-Executive Members were pleased with the decisions of the Executive, especially in relation to the Ring and Ride (S5 refers) and the seasonal opening for 24 public conveniences (S7 refers);
- ii. A non-Executive Member expressed concern over the proposed Locality Fund for Members in relation to its feasibility. In response, the Member was reminded that a feasibility study would be undertaken prior to a final decision being made on whether to implement such an initiative;
- iii. A non-Executive Member expressed displeasure that S3: 'Cease support to Devon Racial Equality Council' could not be supported. He expressed concern that support for Gypsies and Travellers was within the Devon County Council remit and was therefore duplication in responsibility. However, in response it was noted that the remit of Devon Racial Equality Council was wider than solely Gypsies and Travellers;
- iv. Following a query in relation to S11: Review of Grounds Maintenance Arrangements for Land not Owned by SHDC, it was noted that this would be phased in through the Public Spaces Strategy and there would be no detrimental impact on town and parish council budgets in 2008/09, because many parish council's had already set their budget for the next financial year.

The Executive then proceeded to consider the proposed Bids. With the exception of the following two bids, all bids were supported by the Executive as outlined in the presented report:-

### **B2: 0.5 Planning Support Officer**

The Executive supported the funding of 0.5 Planning Support Officer, funded from the Planning Delivery Grant for two years. However, if following the two year period officers wished to retain this post, a further bid for funding would be required.

### **B8: Carbon Management**

The Executive proposed a reduction in this bid to £15,000. In the light of Shared Services, West Devon Borough Council had agreed to fund the additional £5,000.

**RECOMMENDED**

That Council be **RECOMMENDED** that:-

1. The following sums should be included in the overall budget as set out on Appendix B of the report presented to the meeting:

	£
Provision for inflation	620,000
Budget contingency – service pressures	100,000
Existing bids approved in previous years	62,550
External Interest receivable	1,150,000
Reversal of capital charges and pension charges (FRS17)	2,241,900
Net contributions to Reserves (Appropriations)	1,141,450
Collection Fund Surplus	70,000;

2. The following options to close the budget gap be approved:

	£
Savings identified by the Corporate Management Team that are already achieved or can be implemented by managers without a significant impact on service delivery	405,200
Saving decisions by Members	84,700

3. The amounts to be included within the Authority's budget for the following:

Provision for bid items to be financed from the General Fund (totalling £117,500)

Provision for bid items to be financed from Planning Delivery Grant reserves or self financing (totalling £94,500);

4. As required under Part 2 of the Local Government Act 2003, the level of reserves as set out within Section 4 (as detailed in the report presented to the meeting) and the assessment of their adequacy and the robustness of budget estimates (as detailed within Section 7 of the report presented to the meeting) be noted;
5. The minimum level of the General Reserve balance be maintained at least to the equivalent of 20% of the net revenue budget;

6. That the future Pension Fund employer contribution rates be set at 10.1% in 2008/09; 10.5% in 2009/10 and 11.0% in 2010/11 at a cost of £50,000 in 2008/09;
7. That, under Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2003, the Prudential Indicators and limits set out within Appendix J of the presented report be approved;
8. The Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy for 2008/09 (as detailed within Appendix K of the presented report) be adopted;
9. The Council should set its total net expenditure for 2008/09 at £10,389,400 subject to final confirmation of Government Grant. If the Government changes the Grant, delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director (Resources) to make a corresponding amendment to the contributions to Reserves to bring the total net expenditure back to that agreed by the Executive.

**(NOTE: THESE DECISIONS, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF E.95/07 (1. (a, b, c, and d) and 2) AND E.96/07 (WHICH ARE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COUNCIL MEETING ON 7 FEBRUARY 2008) WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE FROM 5.00PM ON 4 FEBRUARY 2008 UNLESS CALLED IN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULE 18).**

(Meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 11.50 am).

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Chairman