

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT  
GROUP HELD AT FOLLATON HOUSE, TOTNES ON WEDNESDAY,  
15 DECEMBER 2009**

**MEMBERS**

\* Cllr R Rowe - Chairman

\* Cllr R J Carter - Vice-Chairman

∅ Cllr P Coulson

\* Cllr D W May

\* Cllr S L Rankin

\* Cllr R J Vint

\* Cllr A Ward

\* Denotes attendance

∅ Denotes apology for absence

Also in attendance and participating:  
Cllrs Lawrence and Pennington

Members in attendance and not participating:  
Cllrs Carson, Hicks, Hitchins, Howarth, Saltern, Steer and Tucker

Officers in attendance:

All agenda items: Strategic Director (Community), Strategic Director (Resources),  
Head of Financial Services, Head of Environment Services and Senior Member  
Support Officer.

**EPDG.16/09 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Environment Policy Development Group held on 14 October 2009 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**EPDG.17/09 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.

**EPDG.18/09 BUDGET PROPOSALS 2010/11**

The Head of Financial Services introduced this item by taking Members through the key elements of the Executive report of 3 December 2009, which gave the background to the Executive budget proposals for 2010/11.

The Head of Financial Services then introduced the additional pages which set out the Executive proposals to reduce the budget shortfall. He advised that should Members not agree to any of the proposals, then alternative suggestions would have to be put forward in their place to fill the budget gap.

A Member asked why the Council could not use its reserves to help balance the budget. A discussion followed and officers advised that once the reserves were gone they could not be used again, and whilst using them may help this year, in the longer term further budget gaps were expected. In addition, the District Auditor would challenge the Council's reliance on using reserves. It would, however, be possible to look at the contribution made to each reserve as Members may wish to make savings in this area.

The Executive proposals were then discussed as follows:

**Possible savings from Shared Services - £75,000**

Officers advised that a total saving of £150,000 would be required and this would be split between the two authorities to achieve the £75,000 saving. Members were reminded of the services they had selected to be shared and whilst officers felt the amount was realistic as an overall corporate target, it was not possible to say exactly how this saving would be delivered or whether the savings could be delivered from the beginning of April.

**When put to the vote the proposal was unanimously agreed.**

**Possible savings from Crime and Disorder Activity - £30,000**

The Strategic Director (Community) advised that this saving should be considered in line with the Bid for £17,000 which had a specific focus on anti social behaviour. Increasingly, work in relation to anti social behaviour appeared to be shifting to the district council from the police authority. Communities regard this work as important in terms of creating a good place to live but levels of crime are low in the District. The Bid was to allow a shared post for one year which would enable Members to review at the end of that year. The Executive proposal for savings related to the Community Safety Partnership and related activity. The Council had a statutory duty to be involved but Members could make a judgement on the how much involvement was appropriate in view of financial constraints.

**When put to the vote the proposal was unanimously agreed.**

**Possible savings from Tourism - £10,000**

The Strategic Director (Community) reminded Members that the Council had entered into a five year tourism partnership and in time the contribution in terms of staff and finance would taper down. The Executive proposal would reduce the work on green tourism activity and focus the Council's contribution on marketing through the partnership.

**When put to the vote the proposal was unanimously agreed with the exception of the Chairman who abstained.**

**Possible savings from Development Control and Land Charges - £30,000**

The Strategic Director (Community) advised Members that a saving could arise from joining the administrative elements of the two functions as a result of the downturn in activity, which, whilst currently split between different services, could lead to greater synergy and did in fact use the same planning software. In response to a question from a Member, the Strategic Director (Community) confirmed that the budget proposals from CMT had already identified savings of £30,000.

**When put to the vote the proposal was unanimously agreed.**

**Possible savings from Economic Development Activity - £45,000**

The Strategic Director (Community) introduced this item by explaining that the district's role in economic development was changing and it had been seen by Government as being supported by upper tier authorities in future. An example of this was the proposed changes to the way that the Local Authority Business Growth Initiative (LABGI) grant had been distributed. Furthermore a range of organisations outside the Council offered business advice. A further issue could be seen that in the context of a declining economy, support for CP2 would come from across the Council for example, from Benefits, Development Control and Housing Advice. In response to a question relating to the external funding post that had not been replaced, the Strategic Director (Community) advised that external funding opportunities had already been reduced but that when any opportunities became available, the Council would engage and staff time would be allocated from existing officers.

**When put to the vote the proposal was unanimously agreed.**

**Possible savings from Community Grant - £30,000**

For clarity, Members were reminded that this did not relate to the Locality Fund, but was a grant available for identified projects promoted by the community. A number of projects had been supported over the years and the average grant was approximately £5,000.

**When put to the vote the proposal was carried by four votes to two.**

**Contributions to Reserves**

The Group then examined the list of reserves and their contributions. The Strategic Director (Resources) introduced the list of reserves and confirmed that these were invested as part of the Treasury Management portfolio that generated interest which was credited to the General Fund.

During the discussion, points raised included the following:

- The Print Equipment reserve seemed to have a high balance of £46,000, although a single piece of equipment could be in the region of £80 - £90,000;

- Car Park Pay and Display Equipment technology was constantly changing and the reserve was needed to ensure up to date equipment;
- The Community Wellbeing reserve was a broad reserve and would be used to cover the Bid discussed (above) in relation to anti social behaviour;
- The contribution to Vehicles and Plant Renewals was higher than the reserve held, but this was because a number of vehicles had recently been replaced and the fund was currently low. It was noted that work was ongoing to see if savings could be made to enable more efficient use of this reserve.

**When put to the vote the Group unanimously agreed the retention of all contributions to reserves.**

### **Bids**

There were two bids for the Group to discuss. The first bid for £17,000 had been discussed as part of the earlier debate on savings from Crime and Disorder Activity.

**When put to the vote the bid for £17,000 for an anti social behaviour officer post was unanimously agreed.**

The second bid was for the purchase of street sweeping vacuum cleaners. The Head of Environment Services advised that the service was trying to become more effective and these machines would help them to cover more ground. There would be a disparity between urban and rural areas as the machines would need to be regularly emptied so, therefore, they were better suited to an urban environment. However, they were not to replace the mechanical sweepers which would still be used.

**When put to the vote the bid for £20,000 for vacuum machines for street sweeping was unanimously agreed.**

The Group then moved on to discuss the paper put forward by Cllr Lawrence in relation to the Residents Concessionary Car Parking Scheme. Cllr Lawrence introduced his paper and reiterated the main points to the Group. He put forward two possible proposals to either send a free permit to all households or to send a revised permit, which did not allow overnight parking, free to all households.

During discussion the following points were made:

- The cost of the loss of income was unknown and could only be estimated;
- Officers concern regarding how to enforce the rules of the permit if residents were asked to write their own registration numbers on the permit;
- The increase in council tax that may be required to fund the permit.

**When put to the vote the Group did not support Cllr Lawrence's proposals.**

(Meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 4.10 pm).

---

Chairman