

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE SOUTH HAMS DISTRICT  
COUNCIL HELD AT FOLLATON HOUSE, TOTNES ON FRIDAY 19 JANUARY 2007**

**MEMBERS**

- \* Cllr B E Carson – Chairman
- \* Cllr R J Carter – Vice-Chairman

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| ∅ Cllr N A Barnes   | ∅ Cllr J O'Connell    |
| ∅ Cllr H D Bastone  | * Cllr C M Pannell    |
| ∅ Cllr J S Beer     | ∅ Cllr J T Pennington |
| * Cllr B J Boughton | * Cllr M C Ramsay     |
| ∅ Cllr J Brazil     | * Cllr S L Rankin     |
| * Cllr B F Cane     | ∅ Cllr M A Roadknight |
| * Cllr P H Cook     | ∅ Cllr G H W Rosevear |
| * Cllr R F Croad    | * Cllr G Rothwell     |
| ∅ Cllr G Date       | * Cllr R Rowe         |
| ∅ Cllr B C Evans    | * Cllr M F Saltern    |
| ∅ Cllr L A Facy     | * Cllr J W Squire     |
| * Cllr S M Fairman  | * Cllr I P Steer      |
| * Cllr G J Fielden  | * Cllr M Stone        |
| * Cllr R W Hallett  | * Cllr D W S Thorning |
| ∅ Cllr V A Harvey   | * Cllr R J Tucker     |
| * Cllr J D Hawkins  | * Cllr A R Vale       |
| * Cllr P W Hitchins | ∅ Cllr A Ward         |
| * Cllr I Longrigg   | * Cllr J A Westacott  |
| * Cllr D W May      | * Cllr R O Yonge      |

\* Denotes attendance

∅ Denotes apology for absence

Officers in attendance:

For all items: Chief Executive and Member Support Services Manager.

**80/06 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 21 December 2006 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**81/06 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**82/06 STRONG AND PROSPEROUS COMMUNITIES – THE LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER: COUNCIL RESPONSE**

Consideration was given to a report which informed Members of the latest position of the Devon local authorities in response to the Local Government White Paper, "Strong and Prosperous Communities" and sought approval for the way ahead.

In introducing the report, the Chief Executive referred to the main implication arising from the White Paper, which was that no change was not an option. In conjunction with the other Devon authorities, a joint proposal for transforming public services was being developed, with the intention that this would be submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) by 25 January 2007.

During discussion, particular reference was made to:-

- (i) proposals for shared services and the need for the Council to consider its own objectives and level of expenditure when entering into such arrangements;
- (ii) it being unfortunate that the White Paper had preceded rather than been published in conjunction with the Lyons Review. This being the case, the Council was required to respond to the White Paper in line with the prescribed deadlines and consider the implications arising from the Lyons Review once the report had been published;
- (iii) the timescale for delivery of the proposals for joint working. A precise timetable was not currently available. However, Members were advised that it would be a matter of months for the principles to be agreed between the Devon family of local councils and implementation would then take place in the ensuing years;
- (iv) the level of resources required and the impact this would have on the Council's other priorities. Members were advised that there would be a resource commitment which could be managed but not removed. This would impact primarily on support services and less so on front end service delivery;
- (v) the impact on the proposal for joint working should Exeter City Council achieve unitary status. Members were reassured that the submission would remain valid whether Exeter did or did not achieve unitary status. Members were further advised that Exeter would be required to demonstrate that it could meet the financial consequences of becoming a unitary council. It was also noted that whilst the White Paper did not specifically exclude councils seeking to revise area boundaries, it was not thought that Exeter or Plymouth currently had ambitions in this direction;
- (vi) the need for Members to be kept informed of developments with the proposal;
- (vii) the risk of a central government imposed solution should the Devon authorities not come to agreement on a preferred local solution. Members were advised that the proposal would allow for some degree of flexibility in future service delivery which reflected the diversity of the county. This meant that some services would be delivered on an individual basis, some on a countywide basis and others at a sub-county level. As such, the Council's existing commitment to explore shared service delivery with Teignbridge District Council would be supported by this wider proposal;

- (viii) a Member's concern that the government's timetable for the submission of a proposal had not permitted sufficient opportunity to engage town and parish councils. It was important therefore to ensure that they were engaged as the proposal evolved;
- (ix) a Member's view that bids for unitary status by neighbouring counties might influence government to impose a similar solution on Devon. Members were advised that at least three groups of authorities within counties were submitting proposals for enhanced two-tier working which included Dorset. Additionally, there were no guarantees that where a bid for unitary status had been submitted, this would be successful;
- (x) improved relations between the Council and other organisations which meant that it was an opportune time to develop the proposal for joint working.

### **RESOLVED**

That the Council agrees:-

- i) to work with the other District Councils and the County Council to agree a joint submission to Government for improved working among the Devon family of authorities with the ultimate aim of improving service for local people and communities;
- ii) to delegate to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and a representative of the Minority Groups, to agree a final submission to the Department of Communities and Local Government;
- iii) over the coming months to work with the other Councils to develop more detailed action plans to deliver change;
- iv) to consult and work with other stakeholders, particularly Parish and Town Councils;
- v) to consider all implications of the White Paper and adapt process, structure and development programmes to respond to its expectations;
- vi) to authorise officers to pursue the above and, where possible and appropriate, involve Members informally and to bring back to an appropriate Council body any matters requiring a Member decision.

(Meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 11.30 am)

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Chairman