

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP HELD AT FOLLATON HOUSE, TOTNES ON TUESDAY, 9 JANUARY 2007**

**MEMBERS**

\* Cllr R W Hallett - Chairman

\* Cllr A R Vale - Vice-Chairman

∅ Cllr J Brazil

\* Cllr B E Carson

\* Cllr G H W Rosevear

\* Cllr M Stone

\* Cllr A Ward

∅ Cllr J A Westacott

\* Denotes attendance

∅ Denotes apology for absence

Also in attendance at the invitation of the Chairman:

Cllr D W May

Officers in attendance:

Item 5: Devon County Council Climate Change Officer and the 'Green Team';  
Item 6: Head of Planning and Building Control and Conservation and Design Officer;  
Item 7: Head of Business Development, Head of Operations and Waste Services Development Manager.

**EPDG.8/06 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Environment Policy Development Group held on 19 December 2006 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to it being recorded that the Vice-Chairman was in fact in attendance, and not absent from the meeting.

**EPDG.9/06 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 was made.

**EPDG.10/06 PRESENTATION FROM THE CLIMATE CHANGE OFFICER OF DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL**

The Chairman welcomed the Devon County Council Climate Change Officer, Mr Ian Bateman, to the meeting. The Group also welcomed to the meeting a number of officers who were from the Council's 'Green Team' and who wished to view the presentation. It was noted that the 'Green Team' was an internal officer group which was assigned with the task of improving environmental practices across the Council (e.g. by considering methods to increase recycling levels and save energy).

Ian Bateman proceeded to give a presentation to the Group titled: 'Developing a Climate Change Strategy'. During his concluding comments, Ian provided the Group with the following words of advice:

- Climate Change was ubiquitous
  - It was caused by everything we do;
  - It could affect everything we do;
  - It was for ever (from our perspective);
  - It was global;
- You cannot do everything;
- You need to prioritise;
- You need to understand the boundary of what you were proposing;
- You need to get your own house in order first;
- Anything which was done was good and should be celebrated.

Members and officers were then invited to question Mr Bateman. During discussion, particular reference was made to:-

- (a) the Local Authority Carbon Management Programme. Members were informed that the Programme had the primary aim for local authorities of implementing a climate change strategy and was run annually by the Carbon Trust. Whilst Mr Bateman felt that local authorities should undertake such a Programme, he did advise that the Carbon Trust tended to concentrate on larger local authorities and the Programme created a significant amount of work, which was estimated to be in excess of 2 days per week of officer time for 9 months;
- (b) work being carried out by the 'Green Team'. Members noted that the 'Green Team' had already begun to carry out work linked to evaluating the carbon footprint of the Council, which included the collating of gas, water and electricity usage levels;
- (c) the predicted affects of flooding. The Group noted that at present, the rate of sea level rise was 2mm per year but that this was predicted to rise to 5mm per year by 2050. A Member advised that the Environment Agency were currently undertaking a major study on Managing Flood Risk;

- (d) the importance of local authorities taking ownership of a strategy. Members and officers alike stressed the need for the organisation to embed an approach whereby a senior officer took the lead on the issue of climate change and a clear reporting mechanism was in place in which Members and staff could be aware of any progress being made or any relevant information could be cascaded through the organisation. To support the importance being placed upon climate change, Members made reference to the increased emphasis being applied by central government. In addition, reference was also made to climate change being a 'cross cutting theme' of the Council and the Group's recommendation that the proposed budget bid for a part time climate change resource be promoted to a high priority bid (Minute EPDG.7/06 refers). As a consequence, Members **MOVED** and **SECONDED** a recommendation to ensure a sense of corporate ownership which was subsequently declared **CARRIED**;
- (e) the role of the Members of Devon County Council. It was noted that Members had set the political direction for the Council and had identified and set clearly defined corporate objectives;
- (f) the likely legislative necessity for local authorities to need to be aware of their carbon footprints before 2009. Members were advised that a consultation document was currently on the DEFRA website which, if eventually adopted, could lead to it being necessary for local authorities to know their carbon footprints. This could result in the implementation of pollution permits and was felt to be a cost effective way of dealing with carbon emissions;
- (g) Environmental Management Systems. Officers believed that there was no need to adopt any such system as they were too procedure and process orientated. However, the Council could adopt its own system which was not as rigid or formalised but still utilised some areas considered to be good working practices.

#### **RECOMMENDED**

That, in light of the increased national onus on climate change, the Executive be **RECOMMENDED** to endorse the Group suggestion for senior officer level leadership in the Council to ensure a sense of corporate ownership for climate change and a clear reporting mechanism (which could be evidenced) on the progress being made in this area.

EPDG.11/06 **TOTNES CONSERVATION CHARACTER APPRAISALS AND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

A report was considered which presented the final draft of the Totnes Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan (prior to seeking its adoption by full Council) and set out a framework for the future approval and adoption of conservation area appraisals and management plans.

The report concluded that the Totnes Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan formed a vital link in the planning framework and recommended their adoption to full Council.

In discussion, reference was made to:-

- (a) the weighting given to the appraisal and management plan. The Group was informed that these were guidance documents which constituted the Council's most definitive statement with regard to what should happen within the Conservation Area. As a consequence of the national Local Development Framework guidelines, officers felt that the documents had the maximum degree of weighting possible and would also assist in shaping future proposals and inform decisions with regard to planning applications in the Conservation Area;
- (b) the belief was expressed that increased reference should be made to Fore Street and High Street in the traffic management and public realm element of the Management Plan;
- (c) ensuring greater clarity in the action programme within the management plan. The Group believed that in the expected outcomes in the action programme which related to areas not solely within the remit of the Council (e.g. traffic management issues), reference should be made to outcomes being undertaken 'in conjunction with relevant stakeholders or agencies';
- (d) the importance of signage within the town centre area. It was noted that Totnes Town Council had set up a working group to look at the issue of signage in the town centre;
- (e) No. 39 High Street. The Group was informed that officers had inspected the dwelling which was considered to be in a better condition than was anticipated and appeared to be well ventilated and was not significantly deteriorating;

- (f) proposed changes to the Conservation Area boundary. A local Member advised that she felt it to be regrettable that some local residents had only been informed via a letter. These residents had requested a meeting with officers and expressed concern that it was likely that their properties were to now be located within a conservation area and wished for the boundary to remain as it currently existed. Officers agreed to contact the residents in an attempt to arrange a meeting and also agreed that when undertaking future appraisals and management plans, the working practices of informing local residents and promoting the benefits of residing within a conservation area would be revised.

As a consequence, a proposal for an additional recommendation was **MOVED** and **SECONDED** whereby any proposed changes in the boundaries of conservation areas in the future, be consulted upon with local residents, the local Member(s) and the local town or parish council;

- (g) the need to update the appraisal and management plan to incorporate a number of minor textual and typographical amendments;
- (h) the assurance that when published, the Character Appraisal would be more reader friendly and be produced in a larger format with an increased font size.

### **RECOMMENDED**

That the Executive **RECOMMEND** to Council that:

1. the amended draft Totnes Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan be adopted, subject to the inclusion of any comments as recorded above and following consultation with the local residents;
2. in the future, Conservation Area Character Appraisals be approved for consultation and adopted under delegated authority by the Head of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the relevant Ward Members and the appropriate Executive Member;
3. in the future, Conservation Area Management Plans be approved for consultation and adopted under delegated authority by the Head of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the relevant Ward Members and the appropriate Executive Member;

4. in the future, any proposals to change the boundaries of a Conservation Area be consulted upon with local residents, the local Member(s) and the local town or parish council.

EPDG.12/06 **ORAL PROGRESS UPDATE ON THE ROLL-OUT OF THE WASTE SCHEME**

The Head of Business Development gave a presentation to the Group which highlighted the current trends in waste and recycling levels being collected. The Group noted that since phase 6 of the scheme was rolled-out, it was apparent that recycling levels were now at approximately 50% of total waste but that this was subject to seasonality and there was still a need for education amongst second and holiday homeowners.

A Member stated that at a recent parish council meeting he had attended, a question was raised regarding the cost effectiveness of the waste scheme particularly in remote areas. In response, officers advised that Members adopted a policy whereby a recycling service be provided for all households in the district to be fair and equitable and to provide equal rights for all residents. Officers also wished to counter some other misconceptions by stating that the only additional vehicle used in that area was a caged vehicle to collect dry recycling on a fortnightly cycle and Members were assured that no recyclable materials collected went back into landfill.

The Executive Member for a clean environment wished for it to be recorded that in light of recent national press stories linking increased numbers of rats to fortnightly collections, he was monitoring the situation and had requested that officers provide him with data for the last six months in relation to numbers of rats and house mice in the area. The Executive Member also advised that he was happy to look into the viability of operating a weekly collection system during the peak summer tourist season.

(Meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 1.20 pm).

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Chairman