

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT
GROUP HELD AT FOLLATON HOUSE, TOTNES ON THURSDAY,
24 MARCH 2005**

MEMBERS

* Cllr R W Hallett - Chairman

* Cllr A R Vale - Vice-Chairman

* Cllr J Brazil

* Cllr R J Carter

* Cllr S L Rankin

* Cllr M Stone

* Cllr A Ward

* Cllr J A Westacott

* Denotes attendance

Also in attendance at the invitation of the Chairman:
Cllrs B E Carson, P J Prudden and R Rowe.

EPDG.16/04 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Environment Policy Development Group (EPDG) held on 16 January 2005 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

EPDG.17/04 URGENT BUSINESS

The Chairman reported that he had one item of urgent business, which concerned the EPDG's request for a workshop on Renewable Energy. This item was considered urgent because of the Group's determination to see this matter progressed in the near future.

It was agreed to reiterate the EPDG's request for a workshop and to support the Chairman and Cllr Ward in their offer of assistance to the Member Support Service towards making the arrangements for the event.

EPDG.18/04 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.19/04 WASTE ENFORCEMENT (MANAGING ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR)

A report was considered which set out and scoped the resources, policies and procedures that would be required to ensure that the Council managed anti social behaviour in relation to waste and other street scene related activities in an effective manner.

The report made particular reference to:-

- (a) the centrality of an attractive environment and well maintained open spaces to the prosperity of the district and towards sustaining a good quality of life for all its residents;
- (b) the importance of addressing any behaviour which might undermine the district's distinct character, such as litter, graffiti, fly tipping and inappropriate disposal of waste;
- (c) the results of the Crime Audit undertaken in 2004 covering the district's four main towns, which indicated the depth of concern felt by local communities about such examples of anti-social behaviour;
- (d) the role of the South Hams Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership through which the Council worked jointly with the police and Devon County Council to combat these activities, although some were solely the responsibility of the Council to address;
- (e) the Government's focus on the effective management of public spaces and the introduction of the term "liveability" to describe 'clean, green, safe' public spaces which discouraged anti social behaviour from becoming acceptable;
- (f) the 'Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Bill' which was progressing rapidly through Parliament. The purpose of the Bill was to provide a more effective legislative framework to deter offenders. New powers to be bestowed on local authorities included:-
 - the immediate seizure of vehicles caught fly tipping;
 - fix penalty notice for fly tipping, waste and graffiti offences with councils able to retain the receipts;
 - the immediate removal of nuisance vehicles.
- (g) the Council's current practices in relation to managing household waste, incidences of fly tipping, abandoned vehicles and litter and dog fouling;
- (h) the need for the Council to embrace the 'liveability' agenda by amalgamating and rationalising resources which were currently allocated discretely;

- (i) details of where the Council currently was in relation to addressing such issues as waste, fly-tipping, abandoned vehicles and litter;
- (j) proposals to promote greater partnership working with other agencies and multi-tasking in the delivery of the Council's services. It was further proposed to establish a new Multi Function Inspection Team as a means of combining services to provide more effective cover;
- (k) a collection of 15 proposed policies that had been designed to give effect to current and imminent legislation and to cultivate the ethos as outlined in the report before the EPDG to promote the 'liveability' agenda.

In discussion, the following issues were highlighted:-

- (i) the urban bias of the Crime Audit. It was accepted, however, that all the items featured in the 2004 Crime Audit would appear somewhere in an audit of the district's rural communities;
- (ii) the importance of the design of public spaces as a means of combating anti-social behaviour. It was noted that the proposed multi-tasking approach would be highly beneficial in this respect;
- (iii) a Member's disappointment that the recent decision by Council on how it was to manage waste, involving new arrangements for the Dartmouth area as part of a first phase, had not received more detailed coverage in the report. In response, Members were reminded that the new arrangements had only been in force for six weeks and that it was too soon to undertake an assessment of their effectiveness.

The EPDG, therefore, requested that a detailed report on phase 1 of the changes to the management of waste be brought to a meeting of the Group by the end of April 2005;

- (iv) the 15 draft policies. Those policies not mentioned below were accepted as set out in the report presented to the Group:-

***Policy 2** – Replacement Containers – it was agreed to include as an additional exemption to charging for replacement containers reference to stolen containers;

***Policies 3 & 4** – Provision of Containers to New Developments – the EPDG emphasised the importance of the Council's Waste Management Service working closely with the Forward Planning Unit to achieve the objectives of these policies;

***Policy 6** – Contamination of Recyclable Material/Non-separation of waste – Members expressed deep reservations about the enforceability of the recycling regime on second homeowners and holiday lets. Officers replied that it was intended to address this concern via negotiations with homeowners and the use of the Council’s existing powers in this respect;

***Policy 7** – Assisted Collections – A Member questioned the justification for the completion and submission of an application form by residents requiring assistance with their waste collection. The Member felt that this was overly bureaucratic and might be regarded as intrusive.

Following discussion, most Members took the view that the application form would ensure parity of treatment, although it was agreed that the form should carry an annotation to the effect that assistance to complete the form was available on request;

***Policy 11** – Point of Collection – Whilst a Member expressed his support for the prohibition on the Council’s Waste Collection Teams from entering private property, he cautioned against any move that might be perceived to discriminate against isolated properties;

***Policy 12** – Waiving Charges for Waste Collection – A Member commented that, whilst she accepted the role of managers in exercising their discretion over charging for the collection of bulky household waste, a mechanism should be established for monitoring the practice to ensure its fair and equitable application;

***Policy 15** – Dropping of Litter – in supporting the policy, particularly the reference to the role of education, the EPDG doubted whether the service would benefit from a poster campaign. It was agreed to delete the reference to the word ‘poster’ from the draft policy in order to widen promotion opportunities.

RECOMMENDED

That the Executive be **RECOMMENDED** that, subject to the comments of the Environment Policy Development Group as recorded above, the contents of this report be worked up into a detailed report to be presented to the Executive.

EPDG.20/04 THE FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY BEACH AWARDS

A report was considered which invited the EPDG to consider the future of quality Beach Awards within the South Hams. This followed the Council's confirmation, at its meeting on 10 February 2005, of a decision to reduce the Beach Awards budget by £5,100, delayed until 2005/2006. In the meantime, officers had been requested to investigate alternative sources of funding.

In the report, particular reference was made to:-

- (a) the various Beach Award schemes available, the criteria for the award of each and the extent of their recognition;
- (b) the status of the beaches across the South Hams;
- (c) the effect of the Beach Awards on the prosperity of the district, particularly in relation to the tourism industry;
- (d) issues to consider for the future management of the Beach Awards, which included:-
 - Award application fees
 - Cost of bathing water sampling
 - Cost of signage
 - Co-ordination of the Beach Award applications;
- (e) the contributions towards the Beach Awards currently received by the Council from local business beneficiaries;
- (f) the financial benefit accruing to five of the Council's car parks because of their close proximity to beaches;
- (g) the identification of two options for consideration:-
 - completely cease to support the beach awards
 - seek alternative funding to support Beach Award applications and servicing.

In discussion, reference was made to:-

- (i) a Member's belief that the Beach Awards were superfluous because of the requirement in all cases for the Environment Agency to check the quality of bathing water. The Member argued that rather than fund applications for awards, the money would be better spent on cleaning the beaches;
- (ii) the prevalent view that the Council should not support any of the beaches from which it did not derive an income whilst some Members wished to go further by arguing that privately owned beaches should be self-supporting.

In response, Members were reminded that this would constitute a significant change in the marketing strategy as the Council had sought to date to promote the whole of the South Hams;

- (iii) the EPDG's support, in any event, for the proposal not to reapply for awards at Strete Gate, Beesands, and Mouthwell as these were not designated bathing beaches.

EPDG.21/04 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

RESOLVED

That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business as the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 12 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act is involved.

- (iv) consideration of the beach related businesses that might be approached for contributions towards the future costs of applying for Beach Awards.

Members acknowledged that it might also be necessary to consider contributions from Council owned car parks which also benefited from their proximity to beaches.

EPDG.22/04 **RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

RESOLVED

That the public and press be re-admitted.

Towards the end of the discussion, the following motion was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** but on being put to the vote was declared **LOST**:-

'Option 1 Completely cease to support Beach Awards.'

In recognition of Members' comments as detailed above, an amended version of Option 2 was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** and on being put to the vote was declared **CARRIED**:-

'That the Executive be RECOMMENDED that:

- i) *the beach awards be not applied for at Strete Gate, Beesands and Motherwell;*

- ii) *negotiations be undertaken with all the beach-related businesses and owners of beaches to secure alternative sources of funding to support the award scheme and the profile of the beach-related businesses;*
- iii) *the Council encourage private owners direct control and management of their beaches, involving the gradual phasing out of the Council's support for beaches from which the Council does not accrue any income;*
- iv) *consideration be given to the possibility of securing contributions towards the future management of the beach awards from the Council's car parks service, five of which benefit from their close proximity to the beaches and may be classified as beach-related businesses as described at (ii) above.*

RECOMMENDED

That the Executive be **RECOMMENDED** that:

- (i) the beach awards be not applied for at Strete Gate, Beesands and Motherwell;
- (ii) negotiations be undertaken with all the beach-related businesses and owners of beaches to secure alternative sources of funding to support the award scheme and the profile of the beach-related businesses;
- (iii) the Council encourage private owners direct control and management of their beaches, involving the gradual phasing out of the Council's support for beaches from which the Council does not accrue any income;
- (iv) consideration be given to the possibility of securing contributions towards the future management of the beach awards from the Council's car parks service, five of which benefit from their close proximity to the beaches and may be classified as beach-related businesses as described at (ii) above.

(Meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 1.00 pm).

Chairman