

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE  
HELD AT FOLLATON HOUSE ON THURSDAY, 10 SEPTEMBER 2009**

**MEMBERS**

\* Cllr R J Tucker - Chairman

\* Cllr P W Hitchins - Vice-Chairman

\* Cllr H D Bastone

\* Cllr M J Hicks

\* Cllr B E Carson

\* Cllr M J Howarth

\* Cllr J D Hawkins

\* Cllr M F Saltern

\* Denotes attendance

Also in attendance and participating:

Cllrs N A Barnes, J H Baverstock, R J Carter, R F Croad, G J Fielden, F J Hawke,  
R M Lawrence, J W Squire and M Stone

Also in attendance but not participating:

Cllr K J Baldry and Cllr I G Blackler

Officers in attendance:

All Agenda Items: Chief Executive, Strategic Director (Community), Strategic  
Director (Resources) and Senior Member Support Officer;

Item 7 (minute E.35/09 below refers): Acting Community Development Officer;

Item 8 (minute E.36/09 below refers) Head of Customer Services;

Items 9, 10, 11 and 12 (minutes E.37/09, E.38/09 E.39/09 and E.40/09 below refer):  
Head of Financial Services; and

Item 14 (minute E.42/09 below refers): Development Surveyor.

**E.30/09 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 16 July 2009 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**E.31/09 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.35/09 below refers) – Cllrs Barnes; Baverstock; Croad; Fielden; Hawke; R M Lawrence; Squire; Stone

Item 14 (minute E.42/09 below refers) – Cllr R J Carter

**E.32/09 URGENT BUSINESS**

The Chairman advised that since the publication of the agenda, Item 13 – ‘Partnership Policy and Guidance’ (minute E.41/09 below refers), would not be considered at this meeting and would be deferred to the next Executive meeting on 8 October 2009.

**E.33/09      DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of the meeting. These were recorded as follows:-

Cllrs H D Bastone, J D Hawkins, M J Howarth and M F Saltern each declared a personal interest in Item 7: Capital Programme – ‘Investment in the Community’ Initiative Grant Awards (minute E.35/09 below refers). Cllrs Bastone and Hawkins both declared their interests in relation to the Dartmouth and District Indoor Pool Trust grant application. Cllr Howarth declared his interest in relation to the Kingsbridge Community Centre grant application. Cllr Saltern declared his interest in relation to the Ivybridge Cricket Club, Ivybridge Rugby Football Club and South Devon Tennis Centre grant applications. All four Members declared their interests by virtue of being the local Members for these applications and remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion but abstained from the vote thereon.

**E.34/09      PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

It was noted that no public questions had been received.

**E.35/09      CAPITAL PROGRAMME – ‘INVESTMENT IN THE COMMUNITY’  
INITIATIVE GRANT AWARDS**

Consideration was given to a report which outlined the recommendations of the recently convened Member Assessment Panel to make grant allocations to significant community based projects in the district through the ‘Investment in the Community’ Initiative. This Initiative was approved for inclusion in the Capital Programme by Council on 24 July 2008 (minute.39/08 refers) as part of the Council’s Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Cllr Barnes, as Chair of the Member Assessment Panel, gave Members a brief report on each grant application and the corresponding recommendation of the Panel. Cllr Barnes also explained to Members that one of the key criterion was that the project be deemed to be significant, which was subjective and could be open to a range of different interpretations.

The report concluded in stating that the ‘Investment in the Community’ Initiative had proved to be a challenging task for the Panel as it was oversubscribed and all six applicants had undertaken a significant amount of work to develop their projects.

During discussion, the following points were made:-

- a) It was noted that the application for Kingsbridge Community Centre could also be supported by the Council offering the land at a peppercorn rent. Members also noted that Kingsbridge was in need of such a facility and expected it to be well used and supported. In the current financial climate facing the Council Members were pleased to note that the business case for the Community Centre did not require any revenue subsidy;
- b) The submitted Dartmouth and District Indoor Pool Trust application had received strong financial support including £1.5m from Devon County Council and £250,000 from Dartmouth Town Council. Whilst the recommendation from the Panel was to provide a grant of £400,000 (or 50% of the total project cost if lesser) to the application, there were serious concerns raised over the lack of clarity about revenue funding. It was stressed that a revenue subsidy would be needed, and suggested that it should not be provided from the Council. A local Member advised that he was confident that once the capital funding was in place, then the revenue funding would be addressed. It was also noted that Dartmouth had a good track record for fund raising;
- c) The application from Ivybridge Cricket Club, whilst not considered so financially significant to some, was critical to securing the future of the Club. A loan had been considered but it was felt that repayment would necessitate membership fees rising to an unacceptable level and Members therefore expressed their outline support to awarding this grant;
- d) In it's deliberations, the Panel had been concerned that the Modbury Sports, Recreation and Social Centre application was ambitious, as the building was hi-tech and would require high maintenance. Nonetheless, the majority of the Panel wished to recommend a grant of £90,000 towards phase one of the project. It was felt that this recommendation would not impact upon the delivery of Phase 2 of the application, which could be achieved at a later date;
- e) A local ward member emphasised the importance of the application for Ivybridge Rugby Football Club by explaining that the club was at the heart of the town. The club currently had a total of 720 members and a national reputation, with a number of former players now representing professional Premiership teams. The Panel again questioned the significance of the bid, but was impressed by the professionalism shown by the club and confirmation that the Rugby Football Union was also prepared to invest £100,000 in the project. On balance, a number of Members expressed their support to award a grant at the £60,000 level towards this application;

- f) The concerns of the Panel in relation to the application from South Devon Tennis Centre to build a dance studio were echoed by Members, as there was little relation to the existing activity of tennis. However the importance of the Tennis Centre to the region was significant and Members felt that any attempts to diversify to increase income should be supported and therefore wished to recommend the in principle award of £25,000 towards the application;
- g) Members wished to thank the Panel for their hard work and also the officers who had initially put the bids through a robust scoring process. In response, the Members of the Panel in attendance wished to commend the professionalism and hard work of the applicants, who were volunteers striving to improve their local communities and who had worked tirelessly in preparing their applications and presentations.

It was then:-

### **RESOLVED**

- (a) That a grant of £400,000 or 50% of the total project cost, whichever is the lesser, be awarded to Kingsbridge Town Council towards the construction costs of Phase 1 of a new community centre for Kingsbridge, subject to project match funding being secured by the applicant and the conditions in the offer letter being met.
- (b) That a grant of £400,000 or 50% of the total project cost, whichever is the lesser, be awarded to Dartmouth and District Indoor Pool Trust towards the construction costs of a new indoor swimming pool, subject to project match funding being secured by the applicant and the conditions in the offer letter being met.
- (c) That a grant of £25,000 or 50% of the total project cost, whichever is the lesser, be awarded to Ivybridge Cricket Club towards the development of a new cricket facility at Filham Park, Ivybridge, subject to project match funding being secured by the applicant and the conditions in the offer letter being met.
- (d) That a grant of £90,000 or 50% of the total project cost, whichever is the lesser, be awarded to Modbury Association of Recreation and Sport towards the construction costs of a new sports, recreation and social centre, subject to project match funding being secured by the applicant and the conditions in the offer letter being met.

- (e) That a grant of £60,000 or 50% of the total project cost, whichever is the lesser, be awarded to Ivybridge Rugby Football Club towards the development of new pitches at Rutt Playing Fields, Ivybridge, subject to project match funding being secured by the applicant and the conditions in the offer letter being met.
- (f) That a grant of £25,000 or 50% of the total project cost, whichever is the lesser, be awarded to South Devon Tennis Centre, Ivybridge, towards the construction costs of an extension, subject to project match funding being secured by the applicant and the conditions in the offer letter being met.

E.36/09

### **REVENUE AND BENEFITS SHARED SERVICES PROGRESS REPORT**

Consideration was given to a report which informed Members of the successful South West Regional Improvement Efficiency Partnership (SWRIEP) funding bid and updated the Executive on the progress so far of the Revenue and Benefit Shared Service project.

In conclusion the report stated that the new shared service delivery model would create economies of scale and a more robust service. It would also build upon the best practices of the two authorities to further improve performance and customer service for both. The successful application for funding from SWRIEP also provided a timely and additional opportunity to improve the service provided to our customers.

During discussion, the following points were made:

- a) The shared service project was on target to commence on 1 October 2009 and a recent ICT system test had worked well;
- b) Officers were congratulated for the successful funding application, which would benefit this project both directly and indirectly;
- c) In relation to the 'South Hams Connect' event all Registered Social Landlord's had been invited and 17 agencies had attended what had been a very successful workshop;
- d) Officers felt that it would not be appropriate to renegotiate a new software system to support the project at this stage, as experience has shown that it could take up to a year to recover from the resultant backlogs. It had been concluded that it was more important to ensure that the transition went smoothly for all customers, particularly in the current financial climate;

- e) Members were keen to progress the Connect service which had already been so successful in West Devon and had the support of other agencies, such as the Job Centre, Inland Revenue and the Police. Whilst it was acknowledged that the first event would be held at Quayside Leisure Centre, Kingsbridge, a Member requested that a future event be held in Townstal.

It was then:-

**RESOLVED**

That the progress of the Revenue and Benefits Shared Service project be noted.

**E.37/09 MEDIUM TERM RESOURCE STRATEGY 2010/11 TO 2014/15**

A report was considered which provided an updated forecast of the financial situation for the five year period to 2014/15. The forecast was intended to provide a framework within which decisions could be made regarding future service provision and council tax levels.

The report concluded by stating that this was the first of a number of reports on the budget for 2010/11 and represented the start of the budget setting process.

Cllr Tucker introduced the report and made specific reference to:-

- a) The Government grant, which was only 0.5% for 2009/10 and whilst it was to increase to 1.3% for 2010/11, this still only constituted an increase of £69,000;
- b) Current efficiency targets of £600,000 per annum. The Leader advised that the Council, which had been efficiently run for a number of years was effectively being penalised as it was much harder to identify continual efficiency savings;
- c) The further potential loss of income arising from the loss of LABGI and Planning Delivery Grant.
- d) Investment returns reducing from an average of 6% to 0.5%.
- e) Pension revaluation. The Council currently had one of the lowest employer rates. In addition, the staff pay award had been offered at 1%, but this was yet to be settled;
- f) The importance of partnership working, shared services and the flexibility of staff to compensate for the ever increasing budgetary pressures.

During discussion, further points were raised as follows:

- g) A Member queried whether we should use a range of best and worst case scenarios to better reflect the uncertainty of the current economic climate. In response, officers confirmed that it was a rolling five year forecast, with the variables being continually monitored and assumptions would inevitably change. In addition, any increase in inflation was likely to be matched by an increase in interest rates, so the overall picture should not change substantially;
- h) A Member queried whether further partnerships may take place in the future. In response, the Chairman confirmed that the work with Integrated Devon was continuing, and in addition there were other partnerships starting to form in different parts of Devon.
- i) Officers confirmed that the number of properties within a District affected the amount of government grant received;
- j) The Sherford development being a large commitment, which would require careful and extensive planning;
- k) A Member asked that comparative benchmark information be obtained on local authority held Reserves;
- l) A Member asked if the Economic Regeneration and Economic Initiatives Reserves could be amalgamated. In response it was noted that the Economic Regeneration Reserve was set up in response to the Simalto exercise a few years ago and was in fact used for things such as street scene and debt advice. It was suggested therefore that this Reserve be renamed to avoid any confusion.

It was then:-

**RESOLVED**

That the Medium Term Resource Strategy 2010/11 to 2014/15 be approved.

E.38/09

**TREASURY MANAGEMENT UPDATE 2009/10**

Consideration was given to a report which updated the Executive on the performance of the Treasury Management activity and Strategy for 2009/10.

The report concluded by stating that the investment strategy for 2009/10 enabled the Council to comply with the latest CIPFA objective for Treasury Management, namely *'it is important that treasury management policies adequately reflect risk and in particular security, liquidity and yield risk, in that order of importance. No treasury management transaction is without risk and management of risks is the key purpose of the treasury management strategy'*.

In discussion, it was confirmed that the Council would now only lend to the institutions contained within Appendix A (of the presented agenda report) which was somewhat restrictive.

It was then:-

### **RESOLVED**

That the forecast income and expenditure variations for the 2009/10 financial year be noted.

#### **E.39/09 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2009/10**

Consideration was given to a report which enabled Members to monitor the income and expenditure variations against the approved budget for 2009/10.

During discussion, the following points were made:-

- a) Income from community parks, by way of sponsorship or advertising, had yet to materialise. This was felt to be unfortunate but in the current economic climate it was difficult to get companies to increase their spend in this area. The Council was continuing to liaise with a company that worked on behalf of local authorities on such matters and as and when opportunities arise they will be pursued;
- b) The Strategic Management Team were fully aware of the budget shortfall and would be working to address the current position;
- c) The importance of increasing income as well as reducing costs was stressed;
- d) Members provided some positive examples of where the financial situation had shown signs of improvement and any upturn will be highlighted in the next presented monitoring report;
- e) A Member raised the issue of concessionary fares and the perception that as the Council had estimated it would receive a surplus of £90,000 this money should be used to change the start time of the scheme to 9.00am. However, Members felt that the amount saved was the equivalent to a 2% increase in council tax and therefore should be kept for general purposes;

- f) Finally the Chairman asked that in future monitoring reports, presented appendix E be expanded so that every service be included regardless of whether they had been asked to identify savings.

It was then:-

### **RESOLVED**

That the forecast income and expenditure variations for the 2009/10 financial year be noted.

#### **E.40/09 WRITE OFF REPORT**

Members considered a composite report that detailed the debts for all revenue streams, within the Revenue and Benefits Service remit, up to the value of £3,000, written off by the Head of Financial Services under delegated authority, and for those debts in excess of £3,000 for which permission to write off was sought.

The report concluded by reassuring Members that every effort was made to collect all debt owing to the Council, and that the decision to write off any amount was not taken lightly.

During the discussion the following points were raised:

- a) There was a significant item for write off relating to a business rates debt where the customer had absconded. It was assured to those present that write off of the debt would not mean that it would be forgotten and officers would continue to try and recover the debt;
- b) When questioned, officers advised that the Council did not apply a deminimus to overpaid housing benefit. In relation to culpability if lies were told then this was classified as fraud and the case could be presented to court. However if a member of staff makes an error then a debt was written off.
- c) A Member felt that the overall totals were encouraging when compared to previous quarters.

It was then:-

### **RESOLVED**

1. That in accordance with Financial Regulations, the write-off of individual debts totalling £48,247.86, together with £1,184.84 of Non Domestic Rate Debt which is collected on behalf of the Government as detailed in Tables 1 and 2 of the presented report, be noted;

2. That the write off of individual debts in excess of £3,000, as detailed in Table 3 of the presented report, be approved.

E.41/09 **PARTNERSHIP POLICY AND GUIDANCE**

**RESOLVED**

That this item be deferred to the Executive meeting on 8 October 2009.

E.42/09 **PROPOSED TRANSFER OF LAND USED FOR ALLOTMENTS AT MALBOROUGH TO HASTOE HOUSING ASSOCIATION AND RELOCATION OF THE ALLOTMENTS TO LAND ADJOINING THE SITE.**

Members considered a report that sought approval for the disposal of the Council's allotment site at Malborough to Hastoe Housing Association to enable the delivery of 15 affordable homes

During discussion, the following points were raised:

- a) The lead Executive Member for Affordable Housing advised that this site was most acceptable to the community and he had attended a consultation event at which this was confirmed. He was also able to share the news that the HCA had confirmed that they had granted £1m towards the cost of the 15 properties.
- b) A local Ward Member thanked the Executive on behalf of the village and was able to advise that it was his belief that in fact 17 properties would now be built.
- c) A Member stated that after all the hard work from both officers and the local parish council, it was good to see this project come to fruition.

It was then:-

**RESOLVED**

That the land be disposed of at a nominal consideration of £1 to Hastoe Housing Association to be developed for affordable housing for local people, subject to the granting of planning permission.

E.43/09 **REPORTS OF OTHER BODIES**

**RESOLVED**

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

**a) Community Policy Development Group – 15 July 2009**

**CPDG.12/09 Draft External Communications Strategy**

**RESOLVED**

That the Strategy be adopted, subject to the inclusion of comments recorded in the minutes.

**CPDG.13/09 Forward Together – Corporate Equalities Scheme**

**RESOLVED**

That subject to level 2 being included as the stated aspiration, the draft corporate Equalities Scheme be adopted.

**b) Prosperity Policy Development Group – 4 August 2009**

**PPDG.03/09 Budget Analysis Car and Boat parking, Pannier Markets and the Lower Ferry Dartmouth**

An Executive Member questioned that the £10,000 figure quoted in the report for loss of income in relation to the car boot sales held at the Quay car park, Kingsbridge and stated that there was no evidence to support this.

**RESOLVED**

That the Group has noted the report and has made comments (as detailed in the minutes at that meeting) for consideration during the 2010/11 budget setting process.

**PPDG.04/09 Lower Ferry Monitoring Report**

**RESOLVED**

1. That the performance report be noted and its contents considered to be satisfactory;
2. That usage markedly increased during April, May and June 2009. This increase being attributable to both the Higher Ferry being out of operation and to the revised pricing strategy of the Lower Ferry; and,

3. That the Group will monitor the activity on the Lower Ferry during 2009/10 in comparison to the activity on the Higher Ferry, to enable the service to establish a competitive pricing structure for 2010/11.

**PPDG.05/09 To create an order for Taxis to park free in designated bays at Glanville Mill Car Park**

**RECOMMENDED**

That Council be **RECOMMENDED** to approve the making of the Order under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to enable hackney carriages to utilise five bays in Glanville Mill car park free of charge while plying for hire.

**PPDG.06/09 Prosperity Joint Action Plan Review**

**RESOLVED**

That the Group has commented on the report (as detailed in the minutes of that meeting) and acknowledges progress with the development of a Joint Prosperity Action Plan that supports the ongoing delivery of the Council's good jobs priority CP2 and complements parallel work with West Devon Borough Council to share service delivery efficiently.

**(NOTE: THESE DECISIONS, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF MINUTE E.43/09 PART PPDG.05/09 (WHICH IS A RECOMMENDATION TO THE COUNCIL MEETING ON 17 SEPTEMBER 2009) WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE FROM 5.00PM ON 21 SEPTEMBER 2009, UNLESS CALLED IN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULE 18).**

(Meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 12.10 pm).

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Chairman