

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE
HELD AT FOLLATON HOUSE, TOTNES ON THURSDAY 12 JULY 2007**

MEMBERS

* Cllr R J Tucker - Chairman

* Cllr P W Hitchins - Vice-Chairman

* Cllr N A Barnes

* Cllr H D Bastone

∅ Cllr B E Carson

* Cllr D W May

* Cllr S L Rankin

* Cllr M F Saltern

* Denotes attendance

∅ Denotes apology for absence

Also in attendance at the invitation of the Chairman:

Cllrs R M Lawrence, C M Pannell, J T Pennington and J W Squire

Also in attendance but not participating:

Cllrs J I G Blackler, R D Gilbert, F J Hawke, M J Hicks, M J Howarth and M Stone

Officers in attendance:

All Agenda Items: Strategic Management Team;

Items 9, 10 and 11 (Minutes E.24/07, E.25/07 and E.26/07 below refer) – Head of
Financial Services;

Items 12 and 13 (Minutes E.27/07 and E 28/07 below refer) – Head of Property
Services;

Item 14 (Minute E.29/07 below refers) – Community Development Officer.

E.18/07 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 7 June 2007 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

E.19/07 MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

It was noted that the following Members were in attendance and participated during the discussion on the under-mentioned items:-

Items 7, 8, 10 and 15 – (Minutes E.22/07, E.23/07, E.25/07 and E.30/07 below refers) – Cllr Squire;

Items 7, 8, 10, 12, 14 and 15 – (Minutes E.22/07, E.23/07, E.25/07, E.27/07, E.29/07 and E.30/07 below refers) – Cllr Pannell;

Items 8, 9, 10, 12, 13 and 15 – (Minutes E.23/07, E.24/07, E.25/07, E.27/07, E.28/07 and E.30/07 below refers) – Cllr Pennington;

Item 15 – (Minute E.30/07 below refers) – Cllr Lawrence.

E.20/07 **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.

E.21/07 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

It was noted that no public questions had been received.

E.22/07 **SHARED SERVICE ARRANGEMENTS**

Members received a report that advised the new Council of the existing situation regarding shared service arrangements. Approval was sought for the expansion of the arrangement to include West Devon Borough Council and to establish a new Shared Services Leadership Group. Government had continued to invest less resource into rural authorities and it was therefore imperative that real progress was made regarding the Shared Services agenda.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- a) A Member stated their approval of the proposal although he was concerned as to what extent this would effect the Cornwell Management Consultants' Report which had looked at Shared Service arrangements between Teignbridge and South Hams Councils. Officers advised that the main variation would be the figures which were indicative in any case. The Member then proceeded to question the Membership of the Shared Services Leadership Group and whether it should involve the Leaders of each minority parties as well. However, it was clarified that further board meetings would involve the minority group Members and a joint event to update Members from all three authorities was being scheduled for September 2007;
- b) Confirmation was given that if it became evident that a three way shared working arrangement was not feasible, this would not preclude the advancement of a two way shared working arrangement;
- c) A non-Executive Member made reference to the importance of all authorities entering into the agreement as equals to ensure that no individual authority was exerting dominance over the others.

RESOLVED

That the Executive:-

- (i) agree, with Teignbridge District Council, to the inclusion of West Devon Borough Council within the shared service partnership;

- (ii) appoint the Leader of the Council and Leader of the Opposition (as agreed at Annual Council) onto a Shared Services Leadership Group;
- (iii) note the establishment of a new Officer Project Group which will re-visit the previously agreed outcomes of the Cornwell Management Consultants' Report and prepare a new project plan and recommendations as to its implementation, including timetabling and costs.

E.23/07

STRATEGIC LIAISON: PLYMOUTH AND SOUTH HAMS EASTERN CORRIDOR BOARD

Consideration was given to a report which updated Members on the changing liaison arrangements between the strategic agencies and local authorities with regard to major developments in Eastern Plymouth and Western South Hams. The proposed Terms of Reference would help to ensure that the role of each of the agencies in the delivery of major developments was fully recognised.

During discussion, reference was made to:-

- a) a non-Executive Members request that Members be kept informed of progress with major developments;
- b) clarification on the understanding of paragraph 3 of the presented report which referred to strategic partners working to “unblock obstacles”. Officers advised that obstacles included infrastructure issues such as major improvements to Deep Lane junction which would be best addressed if the liaison arrangements were better structured and formalised in order to engage a wider range of strategic stakeholders;
- c) the cross-border strategic transportation issue. Members were informed that this was a complex issue and it was imperative to ensure that a range of transportation initiatives were implemented through the Eastern Corridor using a mix of public subsidy and private sector contributions from each of the strategic developments, without undermining the viability of any of the schemes.

RESOLVED

That the Terms of Reference of the Plymouth and South Hams Eastern Corridor Board be agreed.

E.24/07 ANNUAL TREASURY REPORT 2006/07

Members considered a report which detailed the results and performance of the Treasury Management activity undertaken in 2006/07. The report concluded in saying that the investment returns had matched the benchmark and that since 2001 the Councils investment policy had resulted in over £1.1 million of additional interest compared with the benchmark.

Members were informed of a number of budget issues which had arisen throughout the year which included a delay in the leisure transfer, a short fall in the lower ferry income, refuse collection costs and the concessionary bus fares scheme. In relation to the concessionary bus fares scheme, it was noted that at the Local Government Association Conference, Devon districts lobbied government officials to readdress the issue for better parity for rural authorities.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

E.25/07 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2007/2008

Consideration was given to a report that enabled Members to monitor income and expenditure variations against the approved budget for 2007/2008.

The Council identified significant budget pressures in relation to Waste Management. To ensure that a net overspend was not incurred, the Operations Services were requested to reduce their expenditure by critically examining all budgets. Should the necessary savings not be identified then an action plan would have to be produced and a report brought back to the Executive in September 2007.

During discussion, reference was made to waste management and the significant additional costs arising from the re-organisation of the refuse collection rounds. Members were informed that the older vehicles had been replaced in the interim with hire vehicles on a negotiated short-term hire rate. This would reduce the amount of break down time and consequent overtime costs, along with repair and maintenance costs. In terms of the round structure, officers were working in conjunction with WebAspects to address this issue.

RESOLVED

That;

- (i) the forecast income and expenditure variations for the 2007/2008 financial year be noted;
- (ii) approval be given to transfer £200,000 from the Council's accumulated surpluses to the Strategic Issues Reserve.

E.26/07

PURCHASE OF NORTHGATE WIRELESS SYSTEM FOR REVENUES AND BENEFITS

A report was considered requesting authority to waive standing orders in order to purchase the Northgate Wireless System from a sole supplier without going out to tender. The system would allow the visiting officer access to the back office processing system from the site and thus eliminate most of the pre-work required before the visit.

The report concluded that there were numerous benefits to justify purchasing the wireless system which was only provided by Northgate. In terms of the safety of visiting officers procedures were in place whereby they were required to report in before and after a visit and within a certain timeframe.

RESOLVED

That the Financial Instructions be waived for the procurement of the Northgate Wireless System.

E.27/07

CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING REPORT

A report was considered which enabled Members to monitor the Council's major capital schemes in terms of both cost and progress against the timetable. The current capital schemes had progressed in line with the approved programme and there was not currently any area presenting cause for concern.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

E.28/07 ADMIRAL COURT (PHASE 3) EMPLOYMENT UNITS, DARTMOUTH

A report was considered which provided Members with recent information about the increased costs associated with the construction of a third phase of employment units at Admiral Court, Dartmouth. The report informed Members that an additional £100,000 had been secured from the European Objective 2 funding programme, which mitigated the impact of the increased costs.

The main concern related to the slippage in the project milestone which was already behind the timetable originally agreed by Government Office South West (GOSW). However, whilst the slippage would be unwelcome by GOSW, officers did not anticipate any risk that funding would be withdrawn.

RESOLVED

That it be noted that:

- (i) the originally secured contribution of £180,000 from ERDF Objective 2 funds had increased to £280,000; and
- (ii) the actual costs of the project following the tender process had increased by £60,000 from £560,000 to £620,000 but that this was funded from the additional grant funding that had been secured.

E.29/07 ECONOMIC INITIATIVES RESERVE: FUNDING APPLICATION FROM DEVON WHEELS 2 WORK INITIATIVE FOR DELIVERY IN SOUTH HAMS

Members considered a report which provided a summary of the funding application and Business Plan submitted by Devon Wheels 2 Work, in order that delivery of the initiative was extended to the South Hams. Devon Wheels 2 Work provided a service that improved the transport options available, enabling individuals to become independent and economically active within the community.

A Member was concerned that an upper age limit had been set at 65 and felt that this could be unlawful in relation to the Age Discrimination Act. Officers advised Members that this would be raised with Devon Wheels 2 Work to ensure no upper age limit was put in place.

RESOLVED

That a grant of £25,000 to Devon Wheels 2 Work towards the costs of running the scheme in the South Hams be approved.

E.30/07 SOUNDING BOARD SURVEY 9

A report was considered that provided Members with an overview of the results of the Sounding Board Survey 9. The survey results provided a useful snapshot of residents' views of living in the South Hams area.

During discussion, reference was made to:-

- a) Members disappointment that the survey had not been circulated with the report. Although it was available on the Council's website a non-Executive Member felt that it should be made available on the Members' Secure Site. In response, officers assured that this would be actioned;
- b) the importance of addressing areas of concern including those which were not within the remit of the district council. A non-Executive Member highlighted transport as an example and questioned how the district was involved in such issues. In response it was noted that Devon County Council had a Highways and Traffic Order Committee which two South Hams Councillors were Members of. The importance of being realistic in what the district council could or could not achieve was noted along with the importance of signposting the relevant agency for an issue to residents. However, this did not insinuate that the Council would ignore important issues and simply delegate to the relevant organisation. It would work in partnership to develop solutions through such groups as the Local Strategic Partnership;
- c) a Member's query as to the relevance of the survey. In response it was felt that it was useful to have a foundation to illustrate what issues needed addressing and to demonstrate why money maybe invested into projects. Moreover, a non-Executive Member felt that it was a good means of influencing partner organisations to focus on problem areas. This survey was one further example of a range of surveys and feedback opportunities which the Council uses to understand the concerns of local people, which influences corporate priorities and service planning.
- d) confirmation that the survey sample was proportionate to Devon demographics. A non-Executive Member suggested placing the survey online for completion. In response there was concern that this could lead to a dominant group filling in the survey and thus skewing the results.

RESOLVED

That the Executive considered and commented on the results of Sounding Board Survey 9 and in particular the improvement in the percentage of respondents who felt they could influence decisions affecting their local area.

E.31/07 **REPORTS OF OTHER BODIES**

RESOLVED

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

- a) **PROSPERITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP – 27 June 2007.**

(NOTE: THESE DECISIONS WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE FROM 5.00PM ON MONDAY 23 JULY 2007 UNLESS CALLED IN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULE 18).

(Meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 12.00 pm).

Chairman