

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PROSPERITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT
GROUP HELD AT FOLLATON HOUSE, TOTNES ON THURSDAY, 25 OCTOBER
2007**

MEMBERS

* Cllr R F Croad – Chairman

* Cllr I Longrigg – Vice-Chairman

* Cllr J I G Blackler

* Cllr G Date

* Cllr F J Hawke

* Cllr R M Lawrence

* Cllr J T Pennington

* Cllr M Stone

* Denotes attendance

Also in attendance and participating:

Cllrs H D Bastone, J Brazil, B E Carson, R D Gilbert, P W Hitchins and J W Squire

Also in attendance but not participating:

Cllr M J Howarth

Officers in attendance:

All Agenda Items: Strategic Director (Operations);

Item 5 (minute PPDG.06/07 below refers): Head of Landscape and Leisure;

Item 7 (minute PPDG.08/07 below refers): Street Scene Manager and Street Scene Officer;

Item 8 (minute PPDG.09/07 below refers): Business Development Officer;

Item 9 (minute PPDG.10/07 below refers): Economic Development Officer.

PPDG.04/07 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Prosperity Policy Development Group held on 27 June 2007 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

PPDG.05/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Cllr G Date declared a personal interest in item 5: 'Review of Charges – Outdoor Recreation 2008/2009' (minute PPDG.06/07 below refers) by virtue of him being the Chairman of the South Devon Summer Tennis League and remained in the meeting and took part in the debate and vote thereon. He also declared a personal interest in item 6: 'Review of Waste Charges 2008/09' (minute PPDG.07/07 below refers) by virtue of him purchasing trade waste sacks and remained in the meeting and took part in the debate and vote thereon.

Cllr F J Hawke declared a personal interest in item 5: 'Review of Charges – Outdoor Recreation 2008/2009' (minute PPDG.06/07 below refers) by virtue of his involvement as a local league football referee and remained in the meeting and took part in the debate and vote thereon. He also declared a personal interest in item 7: 'Review of Car Parking and Pannier Market Charges 2008/09' (minute PPDG.08/09 below refers) by virtue of his occasional use of the Dartmouth Lower Ferry for both personal and business use and remained in the meeting and took part in the debate and vote thereon.

Cllr M Stone declared a personal interest in item 7: 'Review of Car Parking and Pannier Market Charges 2008/09' (minute PPDG.08/09 below refers) by virtue of his occasional use of the Dartmouth Lower Ferry and remained in the meeting and took part in the debate and vote thereon.

Cllr I Longrigg declared a personal interest in item 6: 'Review of Waste Charges 2008/09' (minute PPDG.07/07 below refers) by virtue of his business related activities and remained in the meeting and took part in the debate and vote thereon.

Whilst not a Member of the Group, Cllr H D Bastone wished it to be noted that he had a personal interest in item 7: 'Review of Car Parking and Pannier Market Charges 2008/09' (minute PPDG.08/09 below refers) by virtue of his occasional use of the Dartmouth Lower Ferry and took part in the discussion thereon.

PPDG.06/07 REVIEW OF CHARGES – OUTDOOR RECREATION 2008/2009

A report was considered which provided Members with proposals for the charging of outdoor recreation for 2008/2009. The proposed outdoor leisure charges reflected good value for the local community to access appropriate public outdoor leisure provision which compared well to neighbouring authorities.

In presenting the report, the Head of Landscape and Leisure highlighted that the proposed 3% increase was in line with inflation and was the minimum amount required to support expenditure at the current level.

During discussion, reference was made to:-

- a) the number of tennis balls received for the cost of hiring. Following a query, it was believed that the number was approximately 6. However, the Head of Landscape and Leisure stated that he would confirm this figure following the meeting and advise interested Members accordingly;

- b) clarification as to why there was a discrepancy in the pricing for changing facilities in association with sport pitches. It was thought that this may be due to an external stakeholder holding the lease for the Erme Playing Fields. To confirm this, the Head of Landscape and Leisure advised that he would check this matter and advise interested Members accordingly;
- c) a Members endorsement of the suggested reduction in charges for junior tennis and bowls to encourage greater youth participation;
- d) work being undertaken through the Public Space Strategy to increase the use of play facilities and engage in partnership working, particularly with town and parish councils.

RECOMMENDED

That the Executive be **RECOMMENDED** that Council resolve that the;

- i. level of charging for 2008/2009 be increased by 3%;
- ii. amended charges for outdoor recreation as set out in Appendix A of the published report be agreed.

PPDG.07/07 REVIEW OF WASTE CHARGES 2008/09

A report was considered which set out the level of charges for the collection and management of commercial and household waste for which a charge may be made. The report also set out how the Council intended to manage trade waste in a cost effective manner within prescribed budgets. There were a number of influences which affected the estimated income and it was important that this was recognised when committing the projected income into the overall budget.

In presenting the report, the Strategic Director (Operations) reminded Members that the Council was only allowed to charge for certain types of domestic waste and since there had been a change to the regulations governing commercial drivers' hours the Council was unable to collect domestic and commercial waste together. The Council was obligated, under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 Section 45, to arrange for the collection of waste from commercial premises if so requested and at a charge. It had previously been agreed to manage this activity in-house rather than to direct owners/controllers of commercial premises to third parties for this service. Members were now being recommended that a new differential pricing structure be introduced for the service into three bands depending on the location of the property to be served. This was estimated to increase income by £50,000. Furthermore, it was suggested that a 5p per day rental charge for containers be introduced which would make an additional estimated income of £40,000 per annum.

During discussion, reference was made to:-

- a) biodegradable waste. Highlighted from the presented report was the recycling trial for commercial cardboard collections which had been carried out in Totnes. The Landfill Directive stipulated that as of 31 October 2007 only waste which had been pre-treated may be taken to landfill. Subsequently, a questionnaire had been sent to all customers who used the South Hams trade waste service to establish how they were managing their waste. In terms of pre-treating waste, it was noted that this could involve separating waste for composting;
- b) the use of tachographs in trade waste collection vehicles. Following a query, it was noted that tachographs had been installed in vehicles used for the collection of commercial waste due to changes in drivers' hours regulations which were also obligatory for private companies who collected trade waste. These were not obligatory for vehicles collecting domestic waste, however these drivers were still restricted to working an appropriate number of driving hours;
- c) differential charging. Members were concerned that it could be perceived that rural and urban areas were being treated differently in terms of charging for trade waste collection. Some Members felt that the same charge should be implemented throughout the district. In response it was noted that, the intention was that the three bands would be costed as fairly as possible but that the service has to remain commercially viable. Many private sector trade waste services used differential charging, dependant on the destination and the cost of collecting/delivering to the premises. However, a non-Group Member expressed concern that the Council was a public sector authority and not a commercial business, and should not be seen to be discriminating between different areas of the district. In comparison, a fellow non-Group Member, although appreciative of these concerns, felt that it would not be justifiable to allow towns to subsidise the rural areas. In conjunction, a Group Member noted that customers to the trade waste service had an option of whether to use this Council facility and therefore the Council needed to be competitive in the open market.

Following a lengthy debate detailing both sides of the argument, where Members appreciated that there was no easy solution, the following amendment to the recommendation, as presented in the report, was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** and on being put to the vote declared **CARRIED**:-

'That differential charging for trade waste services be investigated throughout the district.'

It was felt that in doing so, officers could offer finer detail on the varying scenarios and implications prior to final ratification by the Executive;

- d) charging for trade waste containers. In reference to the proposed 5p per day charge for waste containers, a non-Group Member, although not adverse to the idea, felt that it could be perceived to be a tax on tourism. Moreover, a Member expressed concern that charging for waste containers could impede small businesses. In contrast, another Member noted that the Council needed to ensure that its trade waste business was viable. Furthermore, the Strategic Director (Operations) reminded Members that income from trade waste collections was used to subsidise the domestic waste collection and hence ease the strain on the Council Tax payers. If the service was not viable then the Council would need to address whether it could continue providing it.

However, a number of Members were still concerned with regard to the impact this charging would have on the service and therefore the following amendment to the recommendation, as presented in the circulated report, was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** and on being out to the vote was declared **LOST** by virtue of the Chairman's casting vote:-

'That the introduction of charging for trade waste containers be deferred pending further detailed analysis of the potential impacts.'

- e) charges for trade waste services. During discussion of the proposed increase of 4%, together with the additional cost of landfill, a Member queried why customers were not offered separate bins in order to separate their waste. In response it was noted that unless Members were minded to change the pricing structure this would not be financially viable. However, a Member wished for further data to be made available following feedback from the questionnaire which was being distributed to all customers who used the trade waste service.

Due to the amendment which Members had previously Carried (minute PPDG.07/07.c above refers), it was felt appropriate that the following amendment to recommendation (c) of the presented report be **MOVED** and **SECONDED** and on being put to the vote was declared **CARRIED**:-

'that the charges for trade waste services for 2008/09 be increased by a minimum 4% together with the additional cost of landfill tax dependant on the outcome of the investigation into differential charging for trade waste services'.

To reaffirm this Motion, Members wished for this to be recorded as a Substantive Motion which was then **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** and on being put to the vote declared **CARRIED**.

It was then:-

RECOMMENDED

That the Executive be **RECOMMENDED** that;

- a. differential charging for trade waste services be investigated throughout the district;

Council **RESOLVE** that:

- b. a rental charge for trade waste containers be introduced as detailed in the presented report;
- c. the charges for trade waste services for 2008/09 be increased by a minimum 4% together with the additional cost of landfill tax dependant on the outcome of the investigation carried out in accordance with recommendation a. as recorded above;
- d. that other waste charges as described in Appendix A of the presented report be introduced for 2008/09.

PPDG.08/07 REVIEW OF CAR PARKING AND PANNIER MARKET CHARGES 2008/09

A report was considered which set out potential areas for increasing charges for Car and Boat Parking which had the potential to generate an additional 4% income for 2008/09. Furthermore, a proposal had been submitted by a Member of the Group which was to give all residents a parking permit to allow free use of Council car parks before 10.30am and after 4.00pm (and all day Sunday). It was anticipated that this would help both the elderly and infirm residents to get to their local shops without having to rush, whilst also benefiting local shops and traders with increased business.

The report concluded in stating that there were a number of influences which could affect estimated income and it was important that this was recognised when committing the projected income into the overall budget.

In introducing the report, the Street Scene Manager made reference to the estimated shortfall for the financial year end figures for 2007/2008 of approximately £150,000. It was thought that this was largely due to the bad weather experienced in the summer which had affected the whole of the South West tourism industry. Members were also informed that the Council was continually investigating additional

parking facilities, and that there was continued pressure for the supply of disabled bays which also had associated costs. In conclusion, appendix A of the presented report was highlighted, which detailed two options for Members to consider, with option (b) being in association with recovering costs if Members were minded to incorporate the free parking proposal for residents.

The Member who proposed the parking concession for resident's initiative then proceeded to inform the Group on the background to the proposal and its implications. Also tabled to the Group was a further option, Option (c), for Members to consider. It was noted that option (c) was a 10% increase on option (a) with the figure then rounded to a level considered to be reasonable. It was thought to be a cost neutral proposal for this initiative and therefore should not contribute to any increase in Council Tax levels in the forthcoming year.

During discussion, reference was made to:-

- a) Members endorsement of the proposed car parking concessions scheme. Although in full support of this proposal, concern was raised as to the funding of the scheme. Due to various reasons such as the trend of residents in the western end of the district using Plymouth as their main shopping destination, along with those residents who did not have the use of cars and those with concessionary bus passes, it was felt that the cost should not be borne by the Council Tax payer and instead be subsidised through the overall increase of car parking charges.

In terms of tabled option (c), Members requested that this be duly consulted upon, along with option (a) as part of the recommendation. In response, the Strategic Director (Operations) stated that if Members were minded to do so then a cost analysis would need to be completed. Therefore the following amendment to the recommendation was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** and on being put to the vote declared **CARRIED:-**

‘that subject to a cost analysis of tabled option (c), the proposed increase in Pay and Display charges for 2008/09 should be one of the options tabled at the meeting and duly consulted upon accordingly.’

- b) the proposed principle of civil parking enforcement due to come into force during 2008 for on and off street parking which had the potential to compel further use of the car parks;
- c) confirmation that the downturn in car park usage was predominately due to the bad weather experienced during the summer and not a resistance to increased charges set in the previous year;

- d) a non-Group Members suggestion that a two-tier parking fee be enforced which would involve an increased charge in the morning when the car parks were at their optimum use, compared to a more feasible charge in the afternoon. In response, a Group Member commented that it was good to see Members lateral thinking to problem solve and that if minded to, the suggestion could be put to the Programming Panel for future consideration;
- e) annual parking permits. A Member queried the viability of customers who purchased annual parking permits paying in instalments. In response, officers noted that it was possible but would put further pressure on existing staff resources. It was also confirmed that businesses were restricted to a maximum of 5 permits per company;
- f) winter storage for boats. Members commented on the proposed increase for winter storage and sought clarification as to why it was a recommended 29% increase. A non-Group Member noted that whilst concerned with this proposed increase, it had been deemed necessary due to the need for increased supervision of the site to improve health and safety and to reduce the risks associated with winter storage. Although appreciating this, a selection of Members were still minded to express their concern over the extent of this increase;
- g) a Member's disappointment that the report had not contained finer detail on how officers had calculated the proposed increase;

RECOMMENDED

That the Executive be **RECOMMENDED** that Council **RESOLVE** that;

- a. subject to a cost analysis of tabled option (c) being undertaken, the proposed increase in Pay and Display charges for 2008/09 be one of the options tabled and duly consulted upon accordingly.
- b. all other chargeable services within Car and Boat Parking together with Pannier Markets should be in line with the detail contained in the presented report.

PPDG.09/07 REVIEW OF FERRY CHARGES 2008/09

A report was considered which explored a pricing structure for the Ferry Services which, it was anticipated, would generate an additional 4% income. It was noted that there was opportunity to increase income with a pricing strategy which did not depend wholly on price increases. By levelling the concessionary tickets to 50% and reducing the main car/van cash tariff, it was considered possible to increase income. However, this would only be successful if a proactive marketing and promotion campaign was instigated. The Group was also informed that the long term viability of the Ferry Service would be addressed in due course.

In presenting the report, the Business Development Officer noted that in developing the proposed pricing structure, consideration was given to the possible reasons behind the decrease in user numbers, such as cheaper alternatives. An analysis of other non-statutory services which the Council was responsible for was also carried out to examine pricing structures.

Furthermore, for information Members were informed that the calculated footprint of one vehicle using the ferry had been calculated at £1.76 per journey.

During discussion, reference was made to:-

- a) a non-Group Member being pleased to see that officers were addressing the money handling problems which the ferry crew had experienced since a single journey had been increased to £3.30. The Member, who was also a local ward Member for Dartmouth, also expressed dissatisfaction that local Members had not been consulted upon when the proposed pricing structure had been developed. Furthermore, it was important that the Lower Ferry charges were competitive when considering the Higher Ferry pricing structure. For clarification, officers advised that the ferry manager had been consulted upon the proposed charges;
- b) a proposed marketing strategy and promotion plan. Members were informed that it was the intention to be pro-active in terms of promoting the Lower Ferry. Members had observed that the road layout around Dartmouth and Kingswear naturally guided users to the Higher Ferry and therefore appropriate signage was crucial;
- c) the proposed increase in concessionary ticket prices. Members expressed grave concern over these proposed increases. During a lengthy debate, it was noted that Members felt that the increase was excessive and not comparable to rival companies. In response, officers reminded the Group that the calculated footprint of one vehicle using the ferry was £1.76 per journey. Therefore, the concessionary tickets as they currently stood were not covering overheads. Consequently, the Council did not want to be seen to be subsidising a non-statutory service which only served one part

of the district along with a neighbouring authority. However, Members concerns were such that finer detail and costings were required prior to making a final recommendation. Therefore, a Member suggested that a task and finish group, consisting of both officers and Members, should be established to address both the financial implications and to develop a pro-active publicity, marketing and promotion plan. The following amendment was then **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** and on being put to the vote was declared **CARRIED**:-

‘That a final decision be deferred pending an Officer and Member Task and Finish Group to review finer financial detail and implications of various scenarios’.

Members also wished that the Prosperity Policy Development Group considered the outcomes of the Task and Finish Group prior to any consideration by the Executive. Therefore the following motion was then **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** and on being put to a vote was declared **CARRIED**:-

‘that the Task and Finish Group report back to the Prosperity Policy Development Group, prior to consideration by the Executive.’

RECOMMENDED

That the Executive be **RECOMMENDED** that the establishment of a pricing structure for the Ferry Services be deferred pending consideration by a Task and Finish Group. The Task and Finish Group to consist of relevant officers and Cllrs Croad and Pennington to report back to the Prosperity Policy Development Group prior to consideration by Executive.

PPDG.10/07 REVIEW OF SUB-NATIONAL REVIEW OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION

Consideration was given to a report which noted how government at all levels responded to the future challenges of economic development and regeneration. The purpose of the review was to strengthen economic performance in the regions, cities and localities across England and to respond more effectively to tackling pockets of deprivation.

The key points were summarised as follows:-

- the reduced role of the Regional Assembly and the increase responsibility of the Regional Development Agency;
- a single Regional Strategy replacing the current Regional Spatial Strategy and the Regional Economic Strategy;
- the increased Scrutiny role of local authorities over the Regional Development Agency; and
- the likely consultation on changing the Council's discretionary aspect of economic development to a focused statutory economic duty.

Highlighted to Members were the proposed reforms as attached as Appendix A to the presented report.

It was then:-

RECOMMENDED

That the Executive be **RECOMMENDED** that:-

- i. the report and the significant implications for local government generally and this authority in particular be noted;
- ii. recognition that the review gives to the diversity of rural economies and the particular challenges for economic development and regeneration of those areas be acknowledge;
- iii. the proposals to increase the powers, capacity and duty of local authorities to deliver sustainable development and economic well-being provided the duty is accompanied by sufficient resources, be supported;
- iv. the intention for further development of the economic agenda, to and below the level of, Regional Development Agencies be welcomed.

(Meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 5.30 pm).

Chairman