

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL
HELD AT FOLLATON HOUSE, TOTNES ON
THURSDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2014**

Panel Members in attendance			
* Denotes attendance		∅ Denotes apology for absence	
*	Cllr A D Barber (Chairman)	*	Cllr J T Pennington
*	Cllr J I G Blackler	*	Cllr R Rowe
*	Cllr B F Cane	*	Cllr P C Smerdon (Vice Chairman)
∅	Cllr B S Cooper	*	Cllr M Stone
*	Cllr P Coulson	*	Cllr R J Vint
*	Cllr C M Pannell	*	Cllr K R H Wingate

Non Panel Members also in attendance and participating
Cllrs K J Baldry, H D Bastone, R D Gilbert, M J Hicks, P W Hitchins, T R Holway and J A Pearce
Non Panel Members also in attendance and not participating
Cllrs R J Tucker, L A H Ward and S A E Wright

Item No	Minute Ref No below refers	Officers in attendance and participating
All Items		Head of Environment Services and Member Services Manager
8	EE.26/14	Chief Accountant, Property Services Manager, Business Support Manager, Natural Environment and Recreation Manager
9	EE.27/14	Economic Development Officer
10	EE.28/14	Natural Environment and Recreation Manager
11	EE.29/14	Engineering Manager
12	EE.30/14	Engineering Manager and Natural Environment and Recreation Manager

EE.21/14 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Economy and Environment Scrutiny Panel held on 4 September 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. A local Ward Member for Salcombe and Malborough updated the Panel on a response from South West Water (SWW) following issues reported to the Panel when SWW attended earlier in the year (Minute EE.39/13 refers). Other Members also raised issues relating to water and sewerage matters that had not yet been addressed and the Panel therefore requested that SWW be invited back to the next meeting of the Economy and Environment Scrutiny Panel to give an update.

EE.22/14 URGENT BUSINESS

The Chairman advised that he had agreed for one item of urgent business to be considered at this meeting, which was considered urgent in light of the date constraints associated with this matter. The Vice Chairman advised the Panel that he had been contacted by a company who was offering to undertake a feasibility study into solar PV panels on a car park within the South Hams. Other Members added that they had similarly been approached by different organisations. Following a brief discussion it was agreed to reconvene the 'Renewable Energy Solar PV on Assets' Task and Finish Group at the earliest opportunity to ascertain if this matter could be taken forward.

EE.23/14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members and officers were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of the meeting and the following was made:

Cllr Cane declared a potential Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in Item 8: 'Fees and Charges' (Minute EE.26/14 below refers) and specifically the proposed charges for Commercial Waste by virtue of being a customer of the service. He agreed he would leave the room if there was any debate on this matter. He subsequently abstained from the vote on this item.

EE.24/14 PUBLIC FORUM

No items were raised. However, the Chairman advised that both he and the Vice Chairman had recently attended an event where the issue of involving the public in Overview and Scrutiny meetings was raised. Ideas included using the media more to raise awareness of issues. The Chairman expected that this was an issue that would be picked up in the next Municipal Year.

EE.25/14 EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN

The Chairman asked for detail on a number of items on the Executive Forward Plan. Respectively, the Executive Portfolio Holder for Assets, Planning, Economy and Community and Environment Services all provided information on forthcoming items on the Forward Plan.

EE.26/14 FEES AND CHARGES

The Chairman introduced a report that set out the proposed fees and charges for all services for 2015/16. Service representatives then took Members through the key elements of their section of the report.

During discussion, the following points were raised:

- A Member asked how much time had been spent in putting together the report, which stated that the financial implications were an increase of £1,000. The Chief Accountant responded that there was a requirement for the Council to review its fees and charges every year as part of the budget process;
- In relation to the Dartmouth Lower Ferry, Members felt the Council should proceed with caution going forward as more data was needed before firm decisions could be made;
- The Head of Environment Services confirmed that a report would be presented at a later date in respect of commercial waste charges, once the costs from the disposal authority were known;
- The Executive Portfolio Holder for Environment Services took the opportunity to remind Members of the importance of preventing contamination in the recyclable material and it was agreed that an article would be placed in the Members Bulletin but also that Members should alert their parish councils to what could and could not be placed in the recycling sacks;
- One Member queried the level of charge for bowls and was advised that the Council no longer ran its own bowls areas as they had been taken over by clubs, on the understanding that the general public would be able to attend and play. The Member noted that this charge appeared to be low and could perhaps be reviewed;
- A number of Members agreed that the cost of play area inspections should not be increased. The Natural Environment and Recreation Manager confirmed that the charge did not cover costs but the overall cost to the council was decreasing as the frequency of inspections had decreased;
- One Member **PROPOSED** that the Executive be recommended to write a letter of support to Westminster Council in respect of their legal appeal relating to charging for licensing enforcement activities. This was **SECONDED** and on being put to the vote declared **CARRIED**. The Business Support Manager advised that he had previously written in support to Westminster Council, which included detailed enforcement costs, but the Proposer of the motion wished it to stand and that another letter be sent;
- In response to a query, the Business Support Manager advised that the new charge for mobile home sites would provide some protection for mobile home owners. He also confirmed that the new charge was on a cost recovery basis;
- One Member queried whether the charge for a Temporary Event Notice covered our costs. In response, the Business Support Manager confirmed that costs were not covered, but this was a

statutory charge and as such could not be increased. Applicants were encouraged to apply electronically and this helped to keep costs down.

It was then:

RESOLVED

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

1. the introduction of a charge of £75 from 18 December 2014 for the site owners of mobile homes for the depositing, variation and deletion of site rules be approved, with an annual review thereafter;
2. the proposed fees and charges set out in the presented report be approved as part of the budget setting process for 2015/16; and
3. a letter be sent on behalf of the Council to Westminster Council in support of their legal appeal relating to charging for licensing enforcement activities.

EE.27/14

RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR ENGLAND (RDPE) 2007-2013 PROGRAMME SUMMARY AND RDPE 2015 – 2020 UPDATE

The Executive Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economy and Community introduced the report and reminded the Panel that the council acted as the accountable body whilst Defra was the lead organisation for the Rural Development Programme. He also explained the role that he undertook for the South Devon Coastal LAG and the similar role that Cllr Hitchins undertook for the Greater Dartmoor LEAF, and each Councillor set out the geographical boundaries for each organisation.

In response to comments, the Economic Development Officer explained to the Panel that the new programme, which was due to start in 2015, was focused on the economy and in particular job creation and business growth and productivity.

The Economic Development Officer also confirmed that a launch would be held for the new programme, and information would be produced which would include how to apply for funding and who to apply to.

One Member was pleased that the new programme would have an emphasis on business but was disappointed that projects that could have applied before would no longer be eligible. In response, the Economic Development Officer advised that the new Programme would require applicants to think innovatively.

Another Member asked whether the Council went back to projects after, say, two years to assess their success. The Economic Development Officer advised that there was not the resource to undertake this, however, at the end of every project an evaluation and monitoring

assessment was undertaken. A number of Members agreed that an analysis some time after the projects had completed would be useful and the Executive Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economy and Community agreed to feed this comment back to the Board.

To conclude this item, the Chairman requested an update for when the new programme launched and advised the Panel that annual update reports would now be received on the progress of the programme.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the presented report be noted with particular regard being made to the outputs and outcomes achieved for the RDPE Local Action Programme 2007 – 2013 and the update on the development of the RDPE Local Action Programme 2015-2020.

EE.28/14 TREES AND HEDGES UPDATE

The Chairman advised the Panel that he had requested this report to provide an update for Members on the current operation of the service in respect of matters related to trees and hedges following adoption of a new policy in November 2013.

The Natural Environment and Recreation Manager took Members through the key parts of the report and explained that there were two distinct pieces of work, the first being trees on Council owned land and the second being the protection of trees through the planning system.

During discussion, it was confirmed that Devon County Council had responsibility for hedges adjacent to the highway. The district council involvement in hedges was only a mediation role in high hedge disputes.

One Member raised concerns over the issue of works to trees on development sites without consultation with the local Ward Member. Other Members agreed that this was an issue and should be brought to the attention of the appropriate Portfolio Holder.

Another Member noted a comment in the presented report whereby a lack of software and hardware was a constraint on efficient working and record keeping. The importance of tree inspections was known and the Panel asked that the appropriate Portfolio Holder be made aware of the need for new IT systems under the Transformation Programme T18 to be able to undertake this work.

In addition, the Natural Environment and Recreation Manager agreed to provide figures in respect of time taken to issue decisions in respect of tree protection matters.

Finally and in response to requests for a named contact on tree matters,

the Natural Environment and Recreation Manager advised that with the new ways of working under T18, the responsibility for tree matters would fall to a business support unit, with more complex issues being referred up for specialist advice. He also confirmed that more detailed information would be available on the Council website to help Members and the public.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That current delivery of the service had been reviewed and that the action points outlined in the presented agenda report be noted.

EE.29/14 **WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15**

The Chairman advised that items to add to the Work Programme were to invite South West Water to attend the next Panel meeting, to request a report on Green Infrastructure Plan within Our Plan at the next Panel meeting, and to reconvene the Renewable Energy (to include solar panels on council assets) Task and Finish Group.

EE.30/14 **TASK AND FINISH GROUP UPDATES AND REPORTS – MANAGING COASTAL ASSETS**

The Chairman introduced the report and thanked the Finance team for providing additional information relating to spend on coastal assets for the previous five years. The report included predictive figures on spend for the next five years.

One Member was concerned that the figures may be inadequate, particularly when considering recent issues at Kingsbridge with the collapse of part of the quay wall. The Engineering Manager advised that, with planned maintenance in place, it should not be necessary to consider reactive spend.

The Chairman asked if advice should be given to the public, particularly in respect of planning applications in areas that could be impacted by climate change in the future. The Engineering Manager confirmed that there was guidance within the NPPF and a policy was in place but further detail was required and was being worked on.

Members also felt it would be helpful to give advice to the public on areas of responsibility in terms of coastal matters as there was a public perception that the district council was responsible for all issues. The definitive document was the Shoreline Management Plan and it was agreed that a link would be placed on the SHDC website to this

document along with a brief statement to aid clarity.

The Chairman concluded this item by confirming that the Task and Finish Group would meet again in the Spring and recommending that the three departments involved, Forward Planning, Natural Environment and Recreation and Engineers, continue to work together on this important subject.

EE.31/14 **TASK AND FINISH GROUP UPDATES AND REPORTS – WASTE POLICY REVIEW**

The Executive Portfolio Holder for Environment Services introduced the update that was part of the presented agenda. He again reminded Members of the issue of contamination.

The Head of Environment Services advised that the Task and Finish Group was due to meet again within the next couple of weeks to look at the vehicle maintenance contract and the remainder of waste review matters. A full report would be presented to the next meeting of the Panel.

In response to a query the Head of Environment Services confirmed that under the new contract that commenced on 1 October 2014, plastic bottles and their tops could be included in the recycling sacks. She also confirmed that a new guide had been produced and could be circulated to Members.

(Meeting started at 10.00 am and concluded at 12.20 pm)

Chairman