

EAST DORSET DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held on 2nd September, 2013 at 6.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor M. C. Birr - Chairman
Councillor R. D. Cook - Vice-Chairman

Present: Councillors P. G. Bennett, D. B. F. Burt, S. Butler, Mrs L. J. Clark, A. A. J. Clarke, Mrs T. B. Coombs, Mrs J. Dover, R. C. Dudman, M. R. Dyer, Mrs G. S. Elliot, S. G. Flower, S. Gibson, Mrs J. M. Hazel, Mrs A. Holland, J. P. Holland, Mrs P. A. Hymers, Mrs B. T. Manuel, I. J. Monks, D. Morgan, B. E. Mortimer, D. G. L. Packer, Mrs P. A. Reynolds, G. W. Russell, D. W. Shortell, A. Skeats, S. S. Tong, D. J. Wallace, Mrs A. Warman and J. L. Wilson.

149. Prayers

Prayers were said by the Reverend Andrew Rowland of St Mary's Church, West Moors.

150. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P. J. Edwards, J. E. Little, S. M. Lugg and P. W. Richardson.

151. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8th July, 2013 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

152. Declarations of Interest by Members

There were no declarations of interest made on this occasion.

153. Announcements

The Chairman announced that, since the last Council meeting, he had attended a number of events; he made particular reference to the Knoll Gardens Secret Garden event. In addition the Chairman thanked Members for attending his charity air show fundraiser which he had hosted at the Miramar Hotel, in relation to this the Chairman advised that the event had been a real success and had raised £1000.

The Leader of the Council reminded Members of the migration of Members to the new ICT platform, and encouraged all members to make an appointment with IT in order to be moved over. In relation to this the Leader informed Members that once migrated Members will have access to Council Intranet which provided a vast amount of information, including news topics, officers contact details and the ability to see where officers were working. In addition the Leader made reference to the Core Strategy and the Examination in Public which was taking place over the forthcoming weeks, in relation to this Members were advised that it is anticipated that

the Core Strategy will be submitted to Council for approval in April/ May 2014.

The Chief Executive reminded Members of the forthcoming Members Joint Event with Purbeck which was scheduled to be held on 5th September, 2013 at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber at East Dorset District Council. In relation to this the Chief Executive encouraged all Members to attend this important event.

154. Questions by Members of the Public

The Chairman reported that there had been no questions submitted under Council Procedure Rule 8(2).

155. Petitions by Members of the Public

The Chairman reported that there had been no petitions submitted under Council Procedure Rule 8(3).

156. Deputations by Members of the Public

The Chairman reported that there had been no deputations made under Council Procedure Rule 8(3).

157. Questions by Members of the Council

The Chairman reported that two questions had been received by Member of the Council under Council Procedure Rule 9(2).

Question to the Leader of the Council from Councillor Mrs A Holland

“In order for councillors to fulfil their roles it should be of paramount importance that they are given quick and easy access to their own council officers. Induction training for new councillors used to include a tour of the offices and contact information for members. Now getting any information is like getting blood out of a stone. Why all the secrecy? Is it because all the reviewed services are now in Christchurch ready for Furzehill’s closure and EDDC members are very disadvantaged in comparison to their Christchurch colleagues?”

The Chief Executive of the Council provided the following response.

“Chairman

As Cllr Holland’s question relates to operational matters concerning access to officers it is more appropriate that I provide the response rather than the Leader or one of his colleagues.

I am disappointed to read the question for several reasons.

Firstly I have an agreement with Mrs Holland, as the Leader of the Opposition, that I will be available to her at her request. She raised similar

points about access to officers with me via e-mail early in August and I invited her to arrange to meet. We are due to do so a week tomorrow. I would have thought that she might have waited so that we could have discussed the issues in person.

Secondly, Mrs Holland has raised this same matter on occasions before August but she has been unable to give me the specifics of the difficulties she is having so that I can look into them.

In my more recent e-mail correspondence I suggested that if in doubt she should ring the East Dorset switchboard and ask to be put through to whichever officer deals with the particular issue she wanted to resolve. After all, very few officers at EDDC have had direct dial numbers so most calls over the years have come through the switchboard. If the officer concerned is in Christchurch then the call can be transferred.

Our intranet allows access to staff structures, contact details and the actual availability of officers as well as information on starters and leavers, team briefs, back copies of Members newsletters, etc. It is a key source of information, efficient for us to maintain and removes the need for expensive paper copies that quickly become out of date. I explained this to Mrs Holland some weeks ago and that we do not routinely keep paper versions of structure charts and phone lists for this reason.

In April, the ICT team contacted all Members to arrange to upgrade them to the new domain and hence allow access to the Councils intranet. There have been several reminders since. To date Cllr Holland has yet to confirm a date when she can be migrated. There is no secrecy. Infact we are trying to give you access to more information than you have ever had before.

Finally, I have reported to Members in the past how staff are allocated office space once a review of their service has taken place. They continue to be based either here or at Christchurch depending on a number of criteria. The Council has agreed to a feasibility study to explore office accommodation options and that is underway. There is no plan to move staff to Christchurch in the meantime. I have no idea why Cllr Holland would suggest this. One of her Group is on the Members Office Accommodation Working Party and so I assume she is kept up to date.

Chairman, these are challenging times and officers are working in increasingly flexible and innovative ways in order to maximise efficiency for the sole purpose of maintaining services to our communities.

There is no secrecy and Cllr Holland is not being disadvantaged. For her to suggest that she is, is emotive, unhelpful and without evidence. Neither does it give any regard for how hard your officers continue to work on your

behalf and the need for us all to be modern and flexible in our respective roles.

Chairman, I have not enjoyed providing this answer but I believe it is appropriate that I make the Council aware of the context and some of the background.

Thank you.”

Question by Councillor Derek Burt

“The Council has agreed to relocate ‘partnership staff’ to Christchurch and Wimborne and to dispose of the Furzehill site.

Can I be assured that only essential repairs/maintenance will be carried out at the Furzehill site and that, due to the limited funds in the capital budget, no further capital monies will be spent at the Furzehill offices.”

The Leader of the Council, Councillor S. G. Flower, provided the following response.

“As a member of the Office Accommodation Working Party, Cllr Burt will be aware that no decision has been made to move staff to Christchurch and Wimborne. What this Council has agreed to is a feasibility to explore that option and the matter will be reported back to the appropriate Committee in due course so that Members can consider the options.

In the meantime we are only spending capital and revenue budgets on essential property items.

158. Committee Minutes

- (a) The Council and Committee Minutes for the last cycle of meetings (Bound Copy – Cycle 2) were received.
- (b) The recommendations, arising from the meeting of the Community Committee on 16 July 2013 was then considered and approved:-
Housing Strategy 2013-2016 Minute No. 107
- (c) The recommendations, arising from the meeting of Resources Committee on 24 July 2013 was then considered and approved:-
Provision of a Revenues and Benefits Service Minute No. 139
Partnership Between Stour Valley Partnership
and Borough of Poole
- (d) The recommendations, arising from the meetings of the Ethical Governance Committee held on 1 July and 20 August 2013 were then considered and approved:-
 - (i) Review of Constitutions – Protocol Minute No. 7
 - (ii) Continuing Review of Constitutions – Protocols Minute No. 14

Voting: (a) – Nem. Con. (1 abstention), (b) Nem. Con. (1 abstention), (c) Unanimous, (d) (i) and (ii) Unanimous

159. Change of Leader/Deputy Leader and Constitutional Amendments

A report was submitted to Council, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'A' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

Members of the Council were asked to consider approval of the appointment of a new Leader and Deputy Leader with additional amendments to the Constitution.

Upon being appointed the new Leader of Council, Councillor Monks thanked Councillor Flower for his hard work and dedication during his time as Leader. Further to this the Chief Executive thanked Councillor Flower for his valued contributions during his role as Leader.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) Members approve the appointment of Councillor Ian Monks as Leader of the Council and Councillor Simon Tong as Deputy Leader, and**
- (2) Members agree the changes to the Constitution with immediate effect so that the Leader of the Council will be Chairman of the Resources Committee and the Deputy Leader will be Chairman of the Community Committee, and**
- (3) Members agree the changes to representation on Partnerships / Outside Bodies as detailed in the report.**

Voting: Unanimous

160. Representation from Outside Bodies

The Chairman advised that there were no reports from Councillors on this occasion.

The meeting ended at 7.25 p.m.

CHAIRMAN