

NORTH DORSET DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT OF THE MEETING

Committee: Service Review Committee

Date: **Wednesday, 9 July 2008 starting at 10.00 am**

Venue: Council Chamber, Nordon, Salisbury Road,
Blandford Forum

Present: Cllr Vic Fox (Chairman)
Cllr Mervyn Jeffery (Vice Chairman)
Cllr Derek Beer
Cllr Michael Cox
Cllr David Fox
Cllr Joe Hickish
Cllr Della Jones MBE
Cllr Nick Mason
Cllr John Tanner
Cllr Chris Tomlinson

Officers Present: Hilary Ritchie, Regeneration Manager
Stephen Hill, General Manager, Development and Resources

Apologies: Cllr Mark White

6.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST The following declaration of interest was made by a Member under the Code of Conduct. Cllr John Tanner – Personal and Prejudicial Interest in Minute No.9 in relation to any discussion undertaken on tourism or the production of the Rural Dorset Guide as an owner of a Bed and Breakfast establishment advertised within the publication.
7.	REPORT OF THE LAST MEETING The report of the meeting held on 14 April 2008 was confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
8.	URGENT BUSINESS There were no items of urgent business.

9.

EVALUATION OF REGENERATION SERVICES

The Regeneration Manager presented the papers attached to the agenda and advised members that they were a summary of a report which would be presented to Cabinet on 21 July.

She advised members that the report highlighted the work undertaken by the Service in the previous year and outlined the changes which had taken place in areas such as staffing, range and scope of work and working arrangements. It was emphasised that a wide range of mainly discretionary areas were covered by the two remaining members of staff. It was therefore important that as the service was limited in budget and time priorities were established. To achieve this the Regeneration Manager stated that she had asked the Senior Management Team and Partners to advise where the priorities lay.

She highlighted that in the forthcoming year increased emphasis would be placed on regeneration and the economy. This area of work is not straightforward with a number of external factors that could affect these issues.

At present the priority was on community planning which was time intensive and not the easiest area to deal with as it involves a lot of people with strong views and it took a lot of leadership to ensure they were all working together.

She added that it was important to look at new ways of working and delivery of the service to reduce the strain on resources. Partnership working had come to the fore and it was important to maintain this in order to maximise local resources. However, it was important that resources were made available from this authority as partners would be put in a difficult position if they had to undertake the financial and staff burden on their own.

The Chairman asked about the situation with regard to Liveability and questioned if there was much work still to be undertaken. He was advised that there was a sum of £850,000 still to be drawn down for projects in Gillingham and Blandford.

Members questioned the role of Dorset Squared Ltd. The Regeneration Manager advised that the Company were now employing staff and managing projects on a county-wide basis. They were dealing with projects such as

- Chalk and Cheese Leader+
- Rural Renaissance
- Liveability

Cllr Beer stated that a lot of work had been undertaken by the Service in mainly discretionary areas and questioned whether the Regeneration Manager felt the service was in a strong position to be able to continue the support given to date, if issues arise. She highlighted that she had pulled together the response to the closure of Faccenda working alongside Jobcentre Plus. This kind of response would be undertaken when ever it is required and she added that the Service had to be responsive to the

business needs of the community.

Cllr Mason raised his concern that by moving towards a county-wide provision and providing less input than others the role of the Service within North Dorset could be put at risk. He felt that it was essential to maintain efforts to get funding in the current financial climate.

The Regeneration Manager responded that bids for funding were highly competitive and it was important that included within them was the likely impact on the community. It was therefore important to take a more strategic approach covering a wider area. She highlighted that a bid which had just been completed which included the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB which she had written on behalf of Community Partnership Executive North Dorset. If successful the Regeneration Company will manage the administration and the local communities would take the lead to use the funding.

She felt that it was important that resources remained in place to enable successful bids to be followed up in North Dorset. She highlighted that during the time highlighted in the report the Service had gone from 8 members of staff down to two, and the need to prioritise was greater than ever.

Cllr Tanner queried the work undertaken on Parish Planning and stated that currently monies raised from 106 agreements with developers were used for projects which the relevant communities had no say over. He was advised that the current requirements meant that the spending of these funds had to be linked to a need. She added that with the move towards the Local Development Framework this could be the opportunity to change the current system and the needs of communities could be more closely aligned to spatial and community planning.

Cllr D Fox felt that it was important that community assets had the capacity to generate income which could be used to further enhance the community. He raised the issue of whether communities had the capacity to be able to deal with these types of issue and felt that there could be a need to try to inject business skills within communities. The Regeneration Manager responded that there were lots of solutions but it was important to look to the regeneration company to ensure that a management role is taken on.

Members felt that the Regeneration Manager had been an asset to the authority and her work had brought significant benefit to the area. They highlighted the need to ensure that the work of the service continued, and perhaps enhanced to ensure monies available were not lost due to a lack of resources to submit bids.

The Scrutiny Officer advised members that she would put together their views and advise the Portfolio Holder of these. If members felt that additional resources should be an aim this would need to be included within the budget setting process which would be undertaken in October and November.

10.

ASSET MANAGEMENT MONITORING REPORT

The Chairman advised members that this item had been brought forward following discussion relating to the Forward Plan. It had been indicated that a report would be taken to Cabinet relating to maintenance at Nordon, but that no further detail was available and members felt it important to look at this in more detail.

The General Manager, Development and Resources stated that within the Capital Programme an amount was set aside for maintenance at Nordon and was currently

- £75,000 in 2009/10
- £50,000 in 2010/11
- £25,000 from 2011 onwards

In addition to the capital monies a revenue budget was held by the Facilities Team which was in the order of £5,000 to £10,000 for everyday maintenance.

The Facilities Team Leader and the Principal Technical Officer drew up a list of maintenance needs. He highlighted that at present the following issues were being considered

- Some windows within the building are in a bad state of repair and would either need replacing or repair.
- The staff toilets need refurbishment as they were not upgraded when the accommodation moves were undertaken.
- The floor covering in the hall outside the members' room needs replacing.

Cllr Cox questioned why a move to a purpose built facility was not considered. The General Manager stated that a number of issues such as the Local Government Pathfinder which could have an impact on issues such as accommodation were still to be considered. He highlighted that Dorset County Council were currently undertaking a review of accommodation under their 'Fit for Future' programme.

Cllr Fox asked it was feasible for a joint property review with eg the Police and Primary Care Trust which could allow office space to be shared and therefore maximised. Cllr Tanner stated that if buildings were combined this could result in energy savings with the possibility of 'bulk buying' for a large group. The General Manager responded that he was attending a meeting with these groups and would raise the issues with them.

Looking at other areas of Asset Management the Chairman highlighted the Rolls Mill Site. This was no longer to be used as a depot and was an asset which was not being utilised. The General Manager stated that Rolls Mill formed part of the North Dorset Business Park which itself was underutilised. He felt it important to look at the Waste Pathfinder proposals before making any firm decisions on action to be taken.

Cllr Fox raised a concern relating to a water course running between the

	<p>Rolls Mill site and the County Highways site and felt that if this area was purchased from the current owners the site could be better utilised. The General Manager advised that negotiations were currently taking place to facilitate this.</p> <p>Cllr Tanner stated that he felt that in the current financial climate the programme of selling assets should be closely monitored. The General Manager advised that there was little left to sell therefore this was not an issue at present.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked the General Manager for his attendance.</p>
	<p><i>The meeting ended at 12.05 pm</i></p> <p><i>Chairman</i></p>