

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
DISTRICT COUNCIL OF EASINGTON
HELD ON THURSDAY, 1ST MARCH, 2007**

Present: Councillor C. Walker (Chair)

Councillors B. Bates, S. Bishop, Mrs. G. Bleasdale, A. Burnip, R. Burnip, P.J. Campbell, A. Collinson, Mrs. E.M. Connor, R. Davison, Mrs. J. Freak, J. Goodwin, J. Haggan, H. High, B. Joyce, T. Longstaff, Mrs. S. Mason, D. Milsom, D. Myers, A. Napier, Mrs. A. Naylor, Mrs. M. Nugent, C. Patching, G. Patterson, W.R. Peardon, G. Pinkney, B. Quinn, D. Raine, M. Routledge, F. Shaw, Mrs. B.A. Sloan, R. Taylor and R.J. Todd

1. **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE DISTRICT COUNCIL EASINGTON** held on 1st February, 2007, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.
2. **THE MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE DISTRICT COUNCIL OF EASINGTON** held on 23rd January, 2007, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were submitted.

RESOLVED that the information contained within the Minutes, be noted.

3. **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE REGULATORY APPEALS PANEL** held on 8th February, 2007, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were submitted.

RESOLVED that the information contained within the Minutes, be noted.

4. **TREE PRESERVATION ORDER AT DAIRY FARM, LITTLETHORPE**

It was noted that this report had been withdrawn.

5. **DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME**

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Chief Executive which sought approval to the draft Disability Equality Scheme, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

The Disability Equality Scheme had been developed with the involvement of disabled people and disability organisations from across the District and County. A County-wide consultation event was held in conjunction with the other six District Councils, Durham County Council, Durham Constabulary, Durham Police Authority and Durham University.

The Equality and Diversity Officer had also developed an "Improving Services for Disabled People" Involvement Group which consisted of key officers from the District of Easington, East Durham Homes, local disabled people and disability organisations.

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A copy of the draft Disability Equality Scheme was attached to the report for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that the Disability Equality Scheme for 2006/2009 be adopted.

6. CIVIL CONTINGENCIES/BUSINESS CONTINUITY

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Member for Improvement which gave details of the business continuity requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act and sought approval of the Business Continuity Plan, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Members were advised that the proposals were based upon the Business Continuity Management requirements within the Civil Contingencies Act and "Preparing for Emergencies" Guidance Document.

Details of the Plan were set out in the report for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that the Business Continuity Plan be adopted as a working document, continually updated by the Business Continuity Management Working Group and Durham and Darlington Civil Contingencies Unit, and reviewed on an annual basis.

7. TO SEAL DOCUMENTS

RESOLVED that the action taken in affixing the Common Seal to the following documents, be endorsed:-

- 19433 Deed of Rectification made between Adams and Reid Developments Limited (1) and EDC (2) relating to 24 Williamson Square Wingate
- 19434 Transfer of Part of registered title(s) made between EDC (1) and Sarah Eleanor Megin (2) relating to 7 William Road, Murton
- 19435 Transfer of Part of registered title(s) made between EDC (1) and Stephen Witten (2) relating to Land at George Street Industrial Estate, Seaham
- 19436 Agreement made between EDC (1) and Dunnill Mechanical Services (2) relating to proposed refurbishment of male and female showers at Seaham Leisure Centre and family changing room at Peterlee Leisure Centre
- 19437 Agreement relating to EDC (1) and Dunnill Mechanical Services (2) relating to proposed refurbishment of male and female showers at Seaham Leisure Centre and family changing rooms at Peterlee Leisure Centre
- 19438 Transfer of Part of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and Christopher Robert Ball and Julia Ball (2) relating to 62 Jasper Avenue, Seaham
- 19439 Transfer of Part of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and Joan McCarthy and David Anthony McCarthy (2) relating to 28 Smillie Road, Horden
- 19440 Transfer of Part of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and Darren Robinson and Helen Louise Davison (2) relating to 9 Kings Road, Wingate

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- 19441 Transfer of Part of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and Colin Manchester and Dorothy Manchester (2) relating to 76-77 Newholme Estate, Station Town
- 19442 Transfer of Part of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and Matthew Hodgson and Janice Hodgson (2) relating to 5 Avon Road, Peterlee
- 19443 Transfer of Part of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and Jackson (2) relating to 28 South Crescent, Horden
- 19444 Transfer of Part of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and J. Jackson Properties Limited (2) relating to 30 South Crescent, Horden
- 19445 Cancellation of Entries relating to a Registered Charge relating to 6 Tees Close, Peterlee - DU181605
- 19446 Transfer of Part of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and Edward Coates and Clare Louise Coates (2) relating to 42 Cotswold Place, Peterlee
- 19447 Transfer of Part of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and Kelly Robinson and Darren Hepburn (2) relating to 10 Eskdale Close, Seaham
- 19448 Transfer of Part of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and Irene Robson (2) relating to 16 Naisbitt Road, Horden
- 19449 Transfer of Part of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and James Anthony Maslen and Ellen Maslen (2) relating to 49 Attlee Avenue, Blackhall Colliery
- 19450 Transfer of Part of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and Hazel Long and Michael Long (2) relating to 83 Luke Terrace, Wheatley Hill
- 19451 Transfer of Part of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and Jackson (2) relating to 25/26 South Crescent Horden
- 19452 Transfer of Part of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and Duncan Lyall (2) relating to 9 Bude Square, Murton
- 19453 Transfer of Part of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and Trudy Gibson (2) relating to 42 Kings Road, Wingate
- 19454 Transfer of Part of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and Edward William Fenwick (2) relating to 33 Bude Square, Murton
- 19455 Conveyance made between EDC (1) and Michael Ian Norman Imms and Agnes Maria Imms (2) relating to 24 Kent Walk, Peterlee
- 19456 Transfer of Part of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and Jackson (2) relating to 28 South Crescent, Horden
- 19457 Transfer of Part of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and Mrs. Piasecki (2) relating to land between 10 and 11 Dormand Drive, Peterlee
- 19458 Agreement made between EDC (1) and Abercorn Homes Limited (2) relating to external renovation scheme to residential dwellings at Mount Stewart Street, Dawdon, Seaham

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- 19459 Cancellation of Entries relating to a Registered Charge relating to 33 Shinwell Terrace, Murton - DU90389
- 19460 Transfer of Part of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and County Council of Durham (2) relating to land at The Graham Way, Seaham
- 19461 Transfer of Part of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and Ray Sagar and Betsy Sagar (2) relating to 30 Exeter Avenue, Seaham
- 19462 Transfer of Part of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and Paul Spandon (2) relating to 56 Welland Close Peterlee
- 19463 Deed of Release made between EDC (1) and Mr and Mrs Singh (2) relating to 120 Edenhill Road, Peterlee
- 19464 Lease made between EDC (1) and Miss J. Watson and Mrs. J. Murray (2) relating to 15 Linacre Court, Peterlee

8. ADDITIONAL URGENT ITEM OF BUSINESS

In accordance with the Local Government Act, 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, Section 100B(4)(b) the Chair, following consultation with the Proper Officer, agreed that the following item of business, not shown on the Agenda, be considered as a matter of urgency.

9. THE POST OFFICE NETWORK - DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY CONSULTATION (AOB)

Consideration was given to the joint report of the Executive Members for Social Inclusion and Culture which advised of the Department of Trade and Industry consultation exercise regarding the future of the Post Office Network and sought agreement to a response to the exercise by the Council. A copy of the report had been circulated to each Member.

It was reported that the Government proposed to create a sustainable Post Office Network to enable Post Office Limited to modernise and restore crown offices to profitability, invest in new product offerings and look at innovative ways to deliver the services that people needed.

The Post Office anticipated that sustainability could be achieved via a reduction in the network through Post Office closures (up to 2500 to be split between urban and rural settlements equally) and the development of new services that allowed the Post Office to become more competitive.

In recognition of the important social role that Post Offices played in communities across the country, the document proposed new minimum access criteria for the network. This was set out in the report for Members' consideration.

Ministers and Post Office Limited argued that urban area closures were necessary to prevent the terminal decline of Post Offices, as many had been struggling financially with too few customers and rises in running costs. The situation had been made worse by recent reforms to how benefits were paid.

The report gave details of the impact the Government's plans for modernising and reform of Post Offices on the District. Basic services that individuals had come to rely

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on such as sending parcels, cash point facilities, or collection of benefits could become a problem especially in the most deprived areas. The services that they offered could be lost in parts of the District as there was not an appropriate venue or a Post Office nearby where these services could be easily accessed.

The situation was made worse with banks and building societies reducing the number of branches locally. Internet access was not in every household and transport was a major issue in deprived urban and rural areas such as Easington.

It was explained that previous representations had been made on this issue and that the Council's Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee had undertaken a review of implications for residents of the Post Office Limited's Urban Reinvention Programme in 2004. Details of those representations were set out in the report for Members' information.

Further representations were made by the Committee in 2006 regarding the future of rural Post Offices arising from press reports that there was a potential for 10,000 local Post Offices to close by 2010. These representations mirrored those made in 2004.

The current consultation had been considered by each of the Council's Scrutiny Committees. They each reiterated those concerns expressed previously although in the absence of any specific detail, these centred around general issues regarding the access to services for the vulnerable sections of the community, low levels of car ownership within the District, poor public transport links, low internet usage and the perception that the Government's proposals were centred around the commercial viability of the Post Office rather than the value provided by such facilities in the more rural areas of the District.

The Council had previously sought to resist any changes to the level of Post Office service provision within the District and the reasons for this were as applicable now as they were in 2004 and 2006. The District had an ageing population which would become increasingly dependent on the Post Office for services in the future. It was therefore essential that the Council responded to the consultation exercise by reaffirming its previous stance that Post Office closures be resisted and that the Government and Post Office Limited look to increasing the range of services provided at Post Offices to ensure their long term viability.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the information given, be noted;
- (b) a formal response to the DTI's consultation exercise be submitted by the Leader, on behalf of the Council, expressing the Council's continued resistance to Post Office closures within the District of Easington based on the factors highlighted in sections 4 and 5 of the report;
- (c) the response to the consultation exercise be copied to the District's two Members of Parliament;
- (d) a press release be produced stating the Council's position regarding the DTI's consultation exercise;
- (e) further work be undertaken in respect of the implications of the proposals.

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12th March, 2007