

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY 25 OCTOBER 2005

Present: Councillor C Patching (Chair)
Councillors R Burnip, J Haggan,
T Longstaff, Mrs S Mason, W R Peardon,
Mrs B A Sloan and R G Wharrier

Also Present: Councillor D Myers – Executive Member for
E-Government and Scrutiny Liaison
Councillor Mrs J Freak – Executive Member for
Social Inclusion

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors B Joyce and P J Campbell.

2 THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING held on 4 October 2005, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed subject to the following alteration:-

second page, first paragraph insert 'he' between 'and' and 'did' on the fourth line.

3 THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE held on 11 October 2005, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were submitted.

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

4 PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There were no members of the public present.

5 THE DARZI REVIEW OF ACUTE HEALTH SERVICES NORTH AND SOUTH OF THE TEES

The Chair welcomed Liam Weatherill, Project Manager for East Durham Community Transport and explained that he had been invited to attend to discuss the implications of the Darzi Review upon Community Transport Services.

Mr Weatherill explained that the Local Transport Plan (LTP2) report had recently been published and in 2004/5 Durham County Council had been awarded the 'Centre of Excellence' status from government. There was a major problem especially in transport and access to health. JMP Consultants had been commissioned to conduct a mapping exercise for accessibility across the county. He explained that he would be attending the LSP Sub-Group for transport on 27 October to receive the results of the exercise which were anticipated to confirm that the County was generally accessible to all in terms of the availability of public transport. Mr Weatherill suggested that both he and Members of the Committee knew that the reality was otherwise.

Mr Weatherill advised that he had worked for 15 years in the petrol chemical industry and had worked for Community Care from 2002 – 2003. During the

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previous year he had obtained £650,000 worth of funding for accessible services in Easington district. He had moved to East Durham Community Transport in 2004 and replaced 4 vehicles and secured funding for the next 2 years. East Durham Community Transport provided subsidised fares to community groups and other organisations.

Mr Weatherill explained that there was a low car ownership in the district of 37% and 40% of residents had long term illness this was especially problematic when all hospitals were sited outside the District of Easington. Every public consultation he had been involved in highlighted transport as an issue. 40% of buses in the County had a low floor access, but they could only accommodate one wheelchair and the bus operators could not guarantee which routes had the low floor service. To access the University Hospital of Hartlepool, the public had to leave the bus on the main road and walk through the grounds which caused a problem for people with mobility. In an emergency, the University Hospital of Hartlepool sent patients home in a taxi which were mostly inaccessible to people with mobility problems and this cost approximately £50,000 per year to the NHS.

Communicare provided a hospital link service at £2 for a return journey but a lot of the public were not aware of the service. There was also a GP car scheme that was funded until March 06 which consisted of volunteer drivers using their own cars, but again these were not always accessible for people with disabilities. Mr Weatherill explained that East Durham Community Transport had 6 vehicles and Communicare had 2.

Mr Weatherill referred to the Local Transport Plan 2 and explained that Community Transport had not been mentioned once in the whole report. He added that he had recently been drafted onto the Tees Health and Transport Partnership Group and he was hoping that any funding that was obtained would be targeted towards transport. The proposal to have a shuttle bus operating from the University Hospital of Hartlepool to the University Hospital of North Tees would cost £90,000 and the value of this needed to be assessed. The 'Choose and Book' Scheme needed demand responsive services that were fully accessible.

Mr Weatherill explained that there was a requirement to meet the needs of the people in the district and Community Transport was a real alternative to achieving this.

A Member referred to a meeting he had attended some time ago in Middlesbrough whereby an appointment system to suit the patients needs had been discussed. He had been advised that this was to be implemented but had recently been told that nothing had been implemented. There needed to be a long term solution for a transport system that was adequate for all.

The Chair explained that the bus services in this area had some of the worst vehicles, least reliable service and the public were reluctant to use them. He added that he recognised it would be other organisations with greater resources and responsibilities that could provide solutions to the transport problem.

Mr Weatherill explained that Peterlee depot came bottom of the depots in the County and could not compete with city depots.

A Member referred to the number of patient journeys and asked what percentage this was. Mr Weatherill explained that 70% of patients attended hospitals by car.

A Member commented that there were no cross border links for day passes and concessionary fares and this was a barrier to using public transport.

A Member referred to the community care service and explained that a lot of people who used the service were devastated that this could cease. The Executive Member for Social Inclusion explained that she had been trying to obtain funding for a third bus but there was no driver to operate it. The funding was to be used for the two existing buses and the District Council were doing all they could to save the service.

The Chair thanked Mr Weatherill for his attendance.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

6 **PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS**

The Executive Member for Social Inclusion had been invited to the meeting to update Members on progress on partnership working within her remit.

The Executive Member for Social Inclusion gave details of her priority targets as follows:-

(a) **Social Inclusion Strategy**

This was to be in place by December 2005. There were 9 drivers of social inclusion and an away day had been held with 100 partners and colleagues. The strategy was currently in draft and would be presented to all District Council and East Durham Homes Service Heads. A stakeholder away day was to be held in November/December and the final draft of the Strategy would be ready for adoption thereafter;

(b) **Pension Credit/Affordable Warmth Programmes**

The Council had been ranked 37 out of 408 for the take up of pension credit which had now risen to 25th. The Council had obtained £1m in pension credit in the last financial year for residents of the district and at present £400,000 had been secured. This was an average increase to households of £23 per week. With regard to affordable warmth, free insulation had been given to private households and £3m had been secured for the Affordable Warmth Programme;

(c) **Youth Forum/EDPIP (Disabled Children, Young People and their Families)**

The Youth Forum was established and a number of initiatives had taken place over the summer holidays eg a mobile cinema. An ice rink feasibility study had been completed and £12,500 had been secured from Dalton Park;

(d) **Older Persons Strategy**

It was explained that the over 80s would increase by 42% in the next 10 years to 2,441 and half of the tenants would be elderly. There were 587 people in the 90-99 year old category, 32,672 in the 50-90 year old category which was almost 35%. 70% were owner/occupiers and would increase to 80% by 2011;

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(e) **Counselling/Bereavement/Drug and Alcohol Abuse/Relationship Breakdowns**

£67,000 had been secured from Neighbourhood Renewal Funding but had been held up by the reconfiguration of the PCT. A drug and alcohol centre in Seaham called Free the Way was also available;

The Executive Member for Social Inclusion explained that the key targets and challenges were as follows:-

- a Disabled Forum would be established by December 2006 together with communities of interest consultation panels for the district;
- develop in partnership with the voluntary and community sector a Community Research Unit by June 2006;
- establish and organise annual volunteer presentation events for rewarding citizens;
- explore crime, fear of crime and survey elderly citizens;
- explore transport issues;
- Disabled Sports Officer post.

Members were advised that the Executive Member for Social Inclusion continued to support the voluntary sector and community sector CVS and Age Concern. The Youth Forum was to be developed further to include disabilities and ethnic minorities and role models. Young people had been appointed to the LSP.

East Durham Positive Inclusion Partnership was to be supported in 5 key areas. A co-ordinator was in post for 12 months and had 50/50 funding. Toy libraries would be continued to be supported and funding would be sought for 2005/2008. The name was to be changed to Learning Libraries.

The following work would be continued to be developed:-

- support Every Child Matters agenda;
- engage with ethnic minorities and Racial Equality Council regarding travellers and equality and diversity issues;
- continue to support carers and carers collaborative. There were currently 12,000 carers in the district and £40,000 of funding had been obtained for IT to be used in 20 homes for one year;
- homelessness issues;
- visual and hearing impaired;
- lesbian/gay/bisexual and transgender group;
- Macmillan cancer support;
- explore possibility of a credit union for the district;

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- support social inclusion management group for young people, PAYP, positive futures, Yes Yip, sorted and peer alcohol project;
- support breakfast clubs (15 in place by September);
- support teenage parents strategy;
- support family learning, literacy and numeracy;
- establish parents focus group for children with disabilities and special needs;
- promote basic elements of citizenship;
- supporting people with focus on housing related support services for vulnerable people. £15m had been secured for County Durham. This included the 7 districts, 5 PCTs and a number of other organisations. 42 projects were currently running in Easington district for people with disabilities;
- womens refuge/domestic violence;
- explore funding for community radio and encourage participation in the decision making process and identify training needs of residents to help them develop their sense of belonging.

It was explained that there were 20,000 people in the district who were hearing impaired. Browse Aloud was now on the Council's website and work was ongoing with the Leisure Centres for the hearing impaired.

The Executive Member for Social Inclusion explained that funding had been obtained for visual display equipment at the community hospital. Because of improvement works to the hospital, this would now be located at the health centre in Peterlee town centre. With regard to the elderly, 6 aged persons units had been upgraded and piloting was still ongoing with toileting services and aids. DISC were also working to install security locks for aged persons.

The Executive Member for Social Inclusion explained that the Wingate Job Centre was to close on 9 December and this would have a huge impact on the villages it served.

A Member referred to the blitz bus and asked if it was still being used around the district. The Executive Member for Social Inclusion explained that the blitz bus would be reviewed in March 2006 to ascertain if it had been cost effective.

The Chair thanked the Executive Member for Social Inclusion on her very comprehensive report and explained that he was very impressed and Members of the Council valued what she did for the community.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.