

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE**

HELD ON TUESDAY, 11TH OCTOBER, 2005

Present: Councillor A. Napier (Chair)
Councillors R. Crute, Mrs. J. Freak,
J. Goodwin, D. Myers, G. Patterson and
R.J. Todd

Apologies: Councillor F. Shaw

1. **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 20th September, 2005, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

2. **GENERAL FUND/HOUSING REVENUE - 2005/2006 MONITORING STATEMENT**

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Finance and Corporate Services, which gave details of the financial position for the period 1st April to 31st August, 2005, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services outlined in detail the revised forecast position on the General Fund which included reasons for variations and summarised the position on the Housing Revenue Account.

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

3. **LOCAL ENTERPRISE GROWTH INITIATIVE**

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Member for Regeneration, which provided an update on the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI), and the proposed arrangements for making the LEGI bid. In addition, the report sought approval to utilise part of the pump-priming money the District had been awarded, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Members were advised that a briefing note had previously been circulated which highlighted the background of LEGI and the Council's response to the Government's consultation document. The aim of the LEGI was to release the productivity and economic potential of deprived local areas and their inhabitants through enterprise and investment.

It was explained that LEGI monies were available to the 88 Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) areas and Easington was therefore eligible to bid for the monies available. The three other eligible local authorities in County Durham were Derwentside, Sedgefield and Wear Valley. Indications were that only ten bids per year would be approved throughout the three bidding rounds of the programme, and successful authorities could expect to receive between £2M - £10M depending on the resources required.

To help prepare and develop the bid, the District had been awarded £80,000 of pump-priming money. Due to common enterprise and economic development issues being faced by disadvantaged communities within the NRF local authorities in County Durham, and the need for a co-ordinated and cross-boundary approach it was felt that the District should form part of a joint bid with the other eligible local authorities in the county for the first round of LEGI.

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Government guidance stated that LEGI bids, where successful, were to be channelled through Local Area Agreements (LAA) where they were in place. A LAA for County Durham was being developed, and it was prudent, therefore, to follow this approach through a single County Durham bid.

To meet the requirements of the bid, proposals needed to be fully evidenced, consulted upon, and make a real difference on the ground. Due to the work involved and the tight timescales, consultants would be appointed to carry out background research work and develop initiatives following stakeholder consultation.

Following the selection process, it was proposed that Derwentside District Council would appoint the consultant's on behalf of all the authorities and all four would pay an equal contribution towards the fees from their pump-priming monies, initially estimated to be up to £40,000 per authority.

The joint bid authorities would establish a small management group to work with the consultant's. In terms of the preparation of the bid, it was suggested that the actions governing the management and coordination of this process be delegated to the Director of Regeneration and Development in consultation with the Executive Member for Regeneration.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the approach to the LEGI bid submission on a County Durham basis with the other three eligible NRF districts be approved;
- (ii) the management of the LEGI bid preparation submission process, including the use of pump-priming monies, be delegated to the Director of Regeneration and Development in liaison with the Executive Member for Regeneration.

4. ADDITIONAL URGENT ITEMS 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 three items of business, not shown on the Agenda, be considered as a matter of urgency. However, due to the exempt nature of one of the items of business it be considered following the exclusion of the press and public.

5. THE PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL IT SYSTEM (AOB)

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Member for Environment and Transport which sought approval to purchase technical support for the introduction of the Planning and Building Control IT system and to waive Contract Standing Orders, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Members were advised that in July 2005, the Council approved the purchase of a new Planning and Building Control IT system. Implementation was co-ordinated by a project implementation group and would go live in December 2005.

A project of this scale would normally be implementation over an 18-24 month period and be supported by two experienced members of staff seconded during implementation. In the circumstances, it had only been possible to second one member of staff for 6-9 months, however, an experienced external consultant employed by TerraQuest, who had both project management and Sx3 systems expertise had been identified. Initial project meetings and assessments had been undertaken and 18 days consultancy work would support the introduction of the new system at a cost of £11,700 plus on site expenses. Technical expertise was also

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required to assist to populate the new IT system with existing planning and building control data. The TerraQuest consultant would be able to supervise this work using technical assistance at a cost of £18,000 plus on site expenses.

Once the system was live, licenses would be required to enable staff to utilise the Geographic Information System function and these would need to be procured through Northgate. The cost of 31 licenses for existing users was £12,500 in the first year and £2,340 per year thereafter.

The new system also provided the opportunity to access old records in electronic format. The cost of scanning a single year's planning and building control records was estimated to be £6,500 and it was likely that three to four years of records would initially be scanned.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) approval be granted to purchase the supplies and services outlined in paragraphs 4.1 to 4.4 of the report;
- (ii) Contract Standing Orders 4(A)(v) and 4(A)(ii) be waived in relation to the services supplied by TerraQuest and Northgate Sx3 and the procurement of scanning services.

6. LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE FORMULA GRANT DISTRIBUTION - CONSULTATION PAPER (AOB)

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Finance and Corporate Services which sought approval to a response to a consultation paper from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) on the Local Government Formula Grant distribution, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Members were advised that the main formula was last reviewed for the 2003/2004 Local Government Finance settlement and had remained frozen to provide local authorities with some stability in their funding. The freeze effectively came to an end with the 2005/2006 settlement.

During the period the ODPM had worked with local authorities to consider changes to the formula. The paper provided the basis of consultation on options for formula changes that could be introduced from 2006/2007 onwards.

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services took Members through the report and proposed response in detail. Following a lengthy discussion it was suggested that the Council's response be forwarded to J. Cummings MP and the Rt Hon T. Blair MP.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the Council's response outlined in Appendix 3 to the report be approved;
- (ii) authority be delegated to the Director of Finance and Corporate Services to amend the response to reflect any further options which emerged and were of benefit to the Council;
- (iii) a copy of the response be forwarded to J. Cummings MP and The Rt Hon T. Blair MP.

7. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the disclosure of exempt information, as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 8, Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

8. SELECTION OF CONSULTANT TO PREPARE AFFORDABLE HOUSING STRATEGY

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Member for Environment and Transport which sought approval to appoint a consultant to prepare an Affordable Housing Strategy to meet local affordable housing needs, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

RESOLVED that approval be granted to commission David Cumberland Housing Regeneration Ltd to undertake the preparation of an Affordable Housing Strategy.

9. APPOINTMENT OF HEAD OF CUSTOMER SERVICES (AOB)

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Member for e-Government and Scrutiny Liaison, which sought approval to appoint a Head of Customer Services to manage and develop the Contact Centre and customer services function. In addition, the report sought agreement to the role and position of the Contact Centre and Customer Services in the Authority's organisational structure, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

The Executive Member for e-Government and Scrutiny Liaison commended all those who had been involved in progressing e-Government issues across the authority.

RESOLVED that:-

- (i) approval be granted to appoint a Head of Customer Services to manage and develop the Contact Centre;
- (ii) the Head of Customer Services and Contact Centre be established as part of the existing Corporate Development Unit and report direct to the Assistant Chief Executive.