

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 4TH JANUARY, 2006**

Present: Councillor C. Patching (Chair)

Councillors P.J. Campbell, J. Haggan,
B. Joyce, T. Longstaff, Mrs. S. Mason
and W.R. Peardon

Also present: Councillor D. Myers - Executive Member for E-government and
Scrutiny Liaison

1. **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 6th December, 2005, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

2. **MATTERS ARISING**

(i) **Partnership Arrangements, Regional Spatial Strategy and Seaham Colliery Site**

Further to the request for information at the last meeting, it was reported that as the Seaham Colliery site had been allocated in the Local Plan for housing and had outline planning permission, its development potential had been factored into the assessment made by the North of England Assembly for housing requirement for the District in the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). On commencement of the development, the actual number of houses built would have to be part of the overall allocation as they were new and not replacement housing.

Members expressed concern that if the Seaham Colliery site and others were considered new developments, this would cause problems for the Council for future development proposals under the RSS.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that the Head of Planning and Building Control Services be invited to the next meeting of the Committee to provide clarification in relation to the RSS and how this would affect proposed housing developments.

3. **PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

The Chair welcomed Mr. J. Golden of 5 Dene Avenue, Easington Colliery to the meeting. Mr. Golden advised that in July, 2005, scaffolding had been erected at numbers 10, 12 and 17 Dene Avenue, Easington Colliery. He understood from the District Council that there had been no planning applications submitted and the works on the properties had been stopped, however the scaffolding was still in place. He had contacted the Council on a number of occasions for progress but had heard nothing further since. He asked what the current position was and why his requests for information had been ignored.

The Chair confirmed with Mr. Golden that his areas of concern were the planning issues relating to the scaffolding and that he had not been kept informed of progress.

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He advised that whilst the matter was outside the remit of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee, Mr. Golden's concerns would be followed up immediately with the appropriate Departments.

RESOLVED that the matter be investigated and a response be provided to Mr. Golden with an update given to Members at the next meeting of the Committee.

4. **THE DARZI REVIEW OF ACUTE HEALTH SERVICES NORTH AND SOUTH OF THE TEES**

Consideration was given to the report of the Committee into the Darzi Review of Acute Health Services North and South of the Tees, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

The purpose of the report was to highlight the results of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee's investigation into the implications of the Darzi Review of Acute Health Services North and South of the Tees for the residents of the District in terms of access/transport to NHS services.

It was reported that at the last meeting, the preparation of the final report was delegated to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee and the Scrutiny Support Manager prior to its submission as part of the Council's response to the Darzi consultation. Members were therefore asked to endorse the content of the report and the action taken in submitting the response by 23rd December, 2005.

The Scrutiny Support Manager advised that the report outlined the Terms of Reference for the investigation and the work involved which included presentations from Dr. R. Bolas from Easington Primary Care Trust, Mr. T. McCully from the PPI Forum, Mr. L. Weatherill, Project Manager for East Durham Community Transport and Mr. S. Lockwood, Rural Transport Team Leader, Durham County Council. As part of the formal consultation exercise a local stakeholder event had been held by Easington Primary Care Trust on Monday, 17th October, 2005 at the Glebe Centre, Murton which considered the recommendations of Professor Darzi in respect of Acute Hospitals North and South of the Tees. During the course of the event transport issues arising from the Darzi Review were also discussed.

In conclusion it was clear from the evidence presented that there were a number of issues which needed to be addressed in order to ensure that the proposals suggested did not further impact upon the ability to access health services by the residents of Easington.

These issues included the availability, reliability and affordability of public transport, particularly bus services. Given that hospital services affected by the Darzi Review were all outside the District of Easington, existing problems relating to access to these services for residents of the District, would be exacerbated.

Considerable discussion had taken place throughout the investigation regarding the potential use of community transport schemes as a real alternative solution to commercial operators in meeting the transportation gaps identified. However, whilst the Committee supported this there was an acknowledgement that significant investment in such schemes would need to be made to ensure their sustainability and this could be pursued through the LSP's Transport Working Group.

There was a need to ensure that patients and visitors could access health services when they needed to, therefore health practitioners should ensure that appointments and services met transport availability.

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In addition, real-time travel information should be readily available for patients and practitioners. It was the view of the Committee that whatever solutions were implemented to address the difficulties of access to hospital arising out of the Darzi report, there needed to be a tangible improvement in the quality of information available to the public.

RESOLVED that the recommendations of the Committee, as outlined in section 10 of the report, be approved and submitted to Executive for consideration.

5. ANY 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 agreed that consideration be given to the following item of business not shown on the Agenda as a matter of urgency, following consultation with the Proper Officer.

6. TEES REVIEW – ACUTE SERVICES – JOINT COMMITTEE

The Scrutiny Support Manager referred to a report he had received which was to be considered by Durham County Council's Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee in relation to the Tees Review. He advised that the issues contained within the report mirrored the conclusions drawn by the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee in their investigation in relation to transport. There was also an assurance sought within that report that there would be close liaison with the Transport Partnership to ensure that the best transport arrangements were in place prior to the implementation of the Darzi proposals.

He advised that he would circulate the report to all Members of the Committee for information.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.