

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
PARTNERSHIP SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY, 24 JANUARY, 2006**

Present: Councillor R Burnip (Chair)

Councillors P J Campbell, J Haggan,
B Joyce, T Longstaff, C Patching,
W R Peardon and R J Wharrier

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

1 **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 4 January, 2006, 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
(Minute Number 2(i) refers)**

The Head of Planning and Building Control Services explained that the Regional Spatial Strategy was currently a draft document and would be subject to a formal Examination in Public in March. The draft plan included a housing allocation for Easington that met the District's current aspirations for its major regeneration sites including Seaham Colliery.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

- (ii) **Public Question and Answer Session
(Minute Number 3 refers)**

The Scrutiny Support Manager explained that a representative from Customer Services had visited Mr Golden on 5 January 2006 to make a record of his concerns. With regard to the planning issue, a formal response had been sent to Mr Golden on 23 January 2006.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

3 **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE** held on 10 January, 2006, 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 EASINGTON PRIMARY CARE TRUST – INTERIM DECLARATION AGAINST THE CORE STANDARDS

The Chair welcomed Mr Houghton to the meeting who had been invited to give an update to Members on Standards for Better Health. A progress report on Standards for Better Health had been circulated to Members.

Mr Houghton thanked Members for their comments and input following the meeting that was held in October 2005.

Mr Houghton explained that the Interim Declaration set out performance against a set of core standards relating to the services that were provided by the Primary Care Trust. The Interim Declaration was successfully submitted to the Healthcare Commission by the 31 October deadline and the Final Declaration would be submitted on or before 30 April 2006 and would be used as part of the assessment of performance.

The Healthcare Commission were now following up the Interim Declaration with formal visits to 20% of NHS Trusts which would be completed by 14 February. 10% was a random sample and 10% were those organisations at risk of not meeting the core standards. Easington PCT was not in either category.

The Healthcare Commission were building up local presence and the PCT would receive a liaison visit from the Healthcare Commission to ascertain how they were progressing with the significant lapse. Significant progress had been made and Mr. Houghton was satisfied that they would comply by 31 March 2006.

With regard to the final declaration, the PCT may be forwarded a set of specific questions that they would be asked to consider by the Healthcare Commission. As soon as they were received he would forward them on to the Scrutiny Support Manager to enable the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee to consider them. He added that he would be attending a meeting of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee in March to consider the final declaration in more detail.

Mr Houghton explained that developmental standards represented standards of good practice which health care organisations should be increasingly aiming to deliver. The standards were designed to promote the culture of continuous improvement and service quality, safety and performance. The Healthcare Commission had begun to assess progress in meeting some of the developmental standards through improvement reviews. Tobacco control and substance misuse had both been reviewed and a report would be received in 8-10 weeks time. He added that once the reports were received he would forward them to the Scrutiny Support Manager for consideration by the Committee.

The Substance Misuse review had been a countywide review by the Drug and Alcohol Action Team hosted by the PCT. This also covered the other four PCT's in County Durham. The review had gone well with some technical problems.

A Member raised concern regarding the reconfiguration of the PCT and queried if the funding would be ring-fenced. M Houghton explained that the issue of

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re-configuration was subject to public consultation and Members could represent themselves and their constituents at meetings that would be held in their locality. The PCT was working hard to build into the consultation process, the idea of having strong localities.

With regard to funding, he explained that he had seen a proposal put forward by the Strategic Health Authority that the finance in Easington would be retained. A commitment had been made but there were no guarantees.

A Member referred to the process and explained that if any slippage was encountered he would still need to consult the Committee in a timely way. M Houghton explained that he had worked within the time frames and he would have the final declaration completed by 20 February.

A Member explained that a public meeting was to be held on 20 February, 2006 at 6.30 pm in Shotton Hall regarding the consultation on the reconfiguration of the Primary Care Trusts. This was an opportunity for Members to put forward their views. At the moment the consultation did not have an option for status quo but he felt that consultees would like that option.

The Leader of the Council explained that there was an adjournment debate in the House of Commons regarding the proposed reconfiguration of PCT's on 25 January 2006 and the MP for Easington was to lobby for retention of the Easington PCT.

The Chair thanked Mr Houghton for his attendance.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted and a further update be awaited.

6 PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS

Following the attendance of the Executive Members at meetings for the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee to provide an update on partnership arrangements within their remit, the Leader of the Council had been invited to the meeting to give a political lead on the key issues facing the Council in the coming year.

Councillor Napier thanked and commended the Committee for the work that they had completed over the last twelve months especially in relation to anti-social behaviour and the recommendations contained within the report and work that had been completed regarding the Darzi Review.

Councillor Napier explained that he would like to speak about the future of Local Government. He explained that Members were aware of the three reports that had been commissioned by the ODPM. The first report was due at the end of the month from Michael Parkinson on the state of towns and cities. Birmingham was now up and running as a City Region and the City Council was working strategically and collaboratively with the other Birmingham authorities.

In the Spring, a further report from Michael Lyons would be published. Michael Lyons initial remit was to look at Local Government finance and re-evaluation of Council Tax. His remit had now changed and he was to investigate the shape and size of Local Government. A green paper had been

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expected on the ten year vision for Local Government. There would now be a white paper formed out of the outcomes from the Parkinson and Lyons reports. He explained that it was possible that the ten year vision would abolish the two tier system of Local Government and replace it with some form of unitary arrangement. He added that some of his comments were personal opinions.

Civil Servants, Mr D Prout and Mr P Rowsell had met with the Chief Executives from the 34 county areas. The District Council's Chief Executive had met with the same civil servants to discuss the abolishment of two tiers of Local Government.

There was some areas of concern regarding initiatives from the ODPM regarding a single Police Force for the Northern Region, reconfiguration of the PCT and the Health Service. Services needed to be strong at a neighbourhood level and this did not marry in with the reconfigurations. A big problem if local government re-organisation went ahead was that the government did not intend any consultation. The consultation process would involve citizens panels, of which there was one in County Durham. Meeting with the Chief Executives would be classed as consultation. There was to be some proposals by September 2006, a bill in January 2007, Royal Assent in October 2007, Elections to successor Council's had been earmarked for May 2008 and authorisation to take up responsibilities in 2009. Discussion had taken place with the other six District Councils in the County regarding this issue.

Following discussion, the Chair thanked the Leader of the Council for his attendance.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

7 IDeA MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROJECT – DEVELOPMENT OF SCRUTINY

Consideration was given to the report of the Scrutiny Support Manager which advised Members of the Committee of the potential areas arising out of the IDeA feedback report of future action for improvement in respect of the Council's scrutiny function and how these could be progressed, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

The Scrutiny Support Manager explained that on 15 November 2005, Members considered a feedback report in respect of the IDeA Member Development Project that had been undertaken between January 2004 and September 2005.

The IDeA feedback report identified key issues which would have to be addressed if the Council's scrutiny function was to progress further. A series of tables attached to the report outlined potential ways forward in addressing the key issues and those responsible for implementing the proposals.

Timescales were considered for which the proposed actions could be implemented. When applying the timescales to the potential areas for development and proposals for addressing these, implementation plans would be appropriate and were detailed in the report.

Whilst the report had been commissioned by the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee the proposed area of improvement identified in respect of the Council's Scrutiny function would, if agreed, impact upon all of the Council's

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Scrutiny Committees. It was therefore suggested that the report be referred to the Scrutiny Management Board to gauge feedback from other Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs.

The Executive Member for E-Government and Scrutiny Liaison commented that this was an excellent report.

RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the issues detailed in the report, be noted.
- (ii) the report be referred to the Scrutiny Management Board.

JC/MC/COM/PART/060103