

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

Present: Councillor A Burnip (Chair)
Councillors D Armstrong, B Burn, A Collinson,
Mrs S Mason and C Patching

Also Present: Councillor D Myers – Executive Member for
e-Government and Scrutiny Liaison

Apologies: Councillors Mrs E M Connor, R Taylor
and P G Ward

1 **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 4 October 2005, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

2 **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.

3 **PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

There were no members of the public present.

4 **COMMUNICATION AND PUBLICITY**

There were no issues to report.

5 **CLEANSING AND MAINTENANCE OF BUS SHELTERS**

The Chair welcomed P Penman, Environmental Services Operations Manager who was in attendance at the meeting to discuss the cleansing and maintenance of bus shelters throughout the district.

Members were advised that the District Council owned and maintained 250 bus shelters located throughout the district. An additional 50 were owned and maintained by Adshell.

P Penman explained that in the past the shelters had not been cleaned or maintained to an acceptably high standard. As a result Performance Indicators were introduced and all shelters were now inspected on a daily basis and any defects or maintenance issues were logged and reported immediately.

Targets were introduced in August 2005 and routine repairs were now undertaken within 5 working days and emergency works were carried out within 24 hours. During September 81% was achieved on the general repairs and 100% on emergency works. Since the introduction of the targets there had been a significant reduction in the number of complaints received.

P Penman made particular reference to the shelter opposite Seaton Holme, Easington Village that was positioned very close to a wall and as a result had moss

growing over which was very hard to remove. There was also a shelter in South Hetton which had similar problems.

Councillor A Collinson made reference to the shelter at the entrance to East Durham Homes, which appeared to have never been cleaned. P Penman gave an assurance that this shelter was cleaned on a regular basis.

Members were advised that a major review of Environmental Services was ongoing and it was hoped that standards would be raised as a result of the review.

Councillor D Armstrong made reference to the frequency with which the shelters owned by Adshell were cleaned and asked if Members could be provided with a comprehensive list of shelters throughout the District including those owned by Adshell. P Penman advised that Adshell had 14 days to attend to graffiti or damage to their shelters. He agreed to circulate a list of all bus shelters located in the District to Members of this Committee.

Councillor A Collinson expressed concern in relation to the underspend on the budget for the cleansing and maintenance of bus shelters and asked if this was a regular occurrence or unique to this financial year. P Penman advised that to the best of his knowledge the underspend had occurred in this financial year only. It was explained that there had been problems with high levels of sickness however monitoring processes were now in place to ensure the situation was not repeated. Councillor Collinson requested that the last three to four financial years budgets for cleansing of bus shelters be examined to ascertain if the underspend during 2004/2005 was a one of occurrence.

Councillor A Collinson pointed out that where budgets were under spent then service delivery would be affected. P Penman advised that monthly monitoring meetings were held and if standards dropped immediate action would be taken to rectify the problem. Recently introduced Performance Indicators were available for Members inspection and could be placed in the Members' library.

Councillor B Burn asked if Seaham bus station had been cleaned. P Penman advised that the Seaham bus station had been thoroughly cleaned within the last month.

P Penman made reference to 4 public conveniences located in the district. Standards at all four facilities was low and measures were being taken to undertake improvements.

RESOLVED that:-

- (i) P Penman circulate a list of all shelters throughout the District, including those owned by Adshell to all Members of this Committee.
- (ii) the last three to four financial years budgets for cleansing of bus shelters be examined to ascertain if the underspend during 2004/2005 was a one of occurrence.

6 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.

7 VOID PROPERTIES (AOB)

Councillor D Armstrong expressed concern at the number of void Council properties that stood empty for months. Particular reference was made to 13 houses in Horden that had been void for over a year. Councillor Armstrong queried the amount of rental income that was being lost and the level of expenditure being spent on void properties.

It was suggested that the Head of Housing Strategy be invited to attend a future meeting to discuss void properties.

S Gwilym, Scrutiny Support Manager suggested that a briefing paper considered at the Audit Scrutiny Committee held on 3 October 2005 be circulated to Members of this Committee for information.

RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the Head of Housing Strategy be invited to attend a future meeting of the Resources Scrutiny Committee to discuss void properties.
- (ii) S Gwilym, Scrutiny Support Manager, circulate a copy of the report considered by Audit Scrutiny Committee to all Members of the Resources Scrutiny Committee.