

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING**  
**OF THE RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**HELD ON TUESDAY 7 MARCH 2006**

Present: Councillor A Burnip (Chair)  
Councillors A Collinson, Mrs S Mason,  
C Patching and M Routledge

Also Present: Councillor D Myers – Executive Member for  
E-Government and Scrutiny Liaison  
Councillor G Patterson – Executive Member for  
Environment and Transport

Apologies: Councillors Mrs E Connor, R Taylor and B Burn

1 **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 14 February 2006, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

2 **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE** held on 21 February 2006, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were submitted.

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

3 **MATTERS ARISING**

(i) **Procurement Strategy**

Councillor A Collinson expressed concern at the frequency of times reports submitted to Executive sought approval to waive Standing Orders for Contracts.

Councillor D Myers explained that there were instances where Standing Orders for Contracts were waived to allow the authority to work in partnership with other Authorities to procure goods and services in such a way that achieved efficiency savings. These changes to working practices had resulted in the Council's Standing Orders for Contracts being out of line with the Procurement Strategy and in need of review.

O Sherratt, Director of Community Services pointed out that there were various reasons why the waiving of Standing Orders for Contracts had become more common and used the replacement of ride on grass cutting machines as an example.

Councillor Collinson reiterated that Standing Orders for Contracts were being waived too often. The Chair accepted that Standing Orders for Contracts were out of line with the Procurement Strategy and were in need of a review.

O Sherratt pointed out that all waivers were properly reported to Executive and were the exception to the rule. Changes to Standing Orders for Contracts were proposed which would reduce the incidents on waiving further.

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Councillor D Myers suggested that the Scrutiny Support Manager advise the Director of Corporate Services that the Resources Scrutiny Committee would like the Council's Standing Orders for Contracts reviewed as soon as possible.

**RESOLVED** that in view of the concerns raised by the Resources Scrutiny Committee, the Director of Finance and Corporate Services be advised that the Council's Standing Orders for Contracts should be reviewed in line with the Council's agreed Procurement Strategy and an update report on the progress of such a review be reported to a future meeting of this Committee.

(ii) **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 item of business on the grounds that it involved the disclosure of exempt information, as defined in Paragraph 1, Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

(iii) **Externally Funded Posts (Minute No 10 refers)**

O Sherratt, Director of Community Services, explained that at a meeting of the Executive held on 21 February 2006 approval was granted for the continued support of a number of posts within the Council which were externally funded. It was explained that the posts of LSP Manager and LSP Support Officer were mainstreamed and the Youth Forum Officer and Coast and Countryside Rangers posts were extended until 31 March 2008.

Members were advised that the LSP Manager had been in post for over four years and it was therefore deemed that this position should be made permanent. In relation to the LSP Support Officer, this post was filled by a temporary 'acting up' arrangement by an Officer from the Corporate Development Unit which left a vacant post that was difficult to fill. As it was likely the role of the LSP would increase this post would be needed for the foreseeable future. There was the prospect of continued support from NRF for these posts however, the work was of a long term and ongoing nature.

It was proposed to extend the Youth Forum Officer and the Coast and Countryside Rangers posts for a further two years while NRF and other grant funding was sought, however the NRF programme was over subscribed. By extending the contracts it would allow an assessment of impact, viability and long-term future of the posts. The Council were being asked to underwrite the posts in the event that funding did not materialise or was less than expected. There would however be a thorough assessment of the position in Autumn 2007 related to the future of the posts.

S Arkley, Head of Neighbourhood Initiatives, advised that the Youth Strategy was adopted in 2003 and the Youth Forum established in 2004. The Youth Forum consisted of approximately 60 young people who met monthly and helped drive forward youth initiatives. The Youth Forum was very successful and had assisted in developing a number of projects which

included the skate park, mobile cinema, healthy dinners programme, peer diaries initiative, website, Galaxy Radio and the Blitz Bus. In addition the Youth Forum were represented on the LSP and had voting nights. The Youth Forum Officer acted as a mentor to the young people and provided vital support and encouragement that was critical to the Youth Forums success.

Mr K Parkinson, Environmental Health and Licensing Manager advised that the Durham Heritage Coast Management Team, following complaints regarding coastal footpaths and cycleways, initiated the Coastal Rangers initiative. The posts were established in April 2005. Part of the Coastal Ranger's role was to develop a group of volunteers which now stood at 53. The Rangers provided a link between existing partner services, ie Durham County Council, National Trust and Sustrans as well as Envirocall, Street Wardens and Police.

The initiative had been very successful in its first nine months with weekly routines of foot and cycleway patrols and Members were provided further details of the work undertaken by the Rangers.

Members were advised that funding for the Coastal Rangers was initially provided through Liveability Funding, which had ceased, and whilst approval had not been sought to mainstream these posts it was felt that in order to gain any benefit from the initiative it did need to run for a longer period of time.

Councillor M Routledge queried the cost of mainstreaming the two LSP posts. O Sherratt advised that there was no cost over the next two years as this was provided by NRF and outlined what the costs would be thereafter.

Councillor P Ward expressed concern that the Resources Scrutiny Committee had not been consulted on any of the proposals considered by Executive. O Sherratt advised that he was aware that the Resources Scrutiny Committee had previously been involved in the review of externally funded posts however this was a relatively small number of posts and for those extended on a temporary basis there would be a comprehensive assessment of performance in Autumn 2007.

The Chair advised that all four Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs were concerned that they had not been consulted and requested that in future all issues related to externally funded posts should be referred initially to the Scrutiny Management Board.

**RESOLVED** that the information given, be noted.

4 **PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

There were no members of the public present.

5 **COMMUNICATION AND PUBLICITY**

There were no items to report.

**6 REFUSE COLLECTION SERVICE – REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL WHEELED BINS**

The Chair advised that following a request from a resident for an additional wheeled bin, the Director of Community Services had been requested to clarify the Council's policy relating to the issuing of additional wheeled bins.

O Sherratt advised that the authority proposed to investigate the refuse collection service over the coming months, which would include investigating the number of wheeled bins, the number of second bins, the affect on the Council's contract and the Council's overall policy on the issuing of second and replacement bins.

O Sherratt pointed out that the authority needed to reduce the amount of household waste it produced and circulated figures based on last years performance which demonstrated that the authority were below the bottom quartile for household waste collected per head within the district. A lot of work had been done to increase recycling but household waste overall needed to be reduced further. Members may wish to consider this poor performance when considering future policy on second bins.

It was explained that a policy was being developed and the Council had carried out an audit which highlighted 825 properties with second bins throughout the district, which was 2% of the total amount of bins. There was no written policy on second bin ownership and guidance was based on the number of people per household ie 6 or over or if there was a particular need. The authority needed a clear policy on the issuing of second bins and needed to consider if it would charge for the second bin that did not meet the criteria.

Charitable organisations currently received a 240-litre bin free of charge and if a larger bin was required a discount was given, however the authority could charge for these bins at trade waste levels.

Replacement bins were currently issued free of charge and the authority could introduce a charge for replacement bins.

O Sherratt advised that there were further options which could be considered. The authority currently picked up all side waste however this was not a countywide pattern and it could be deemed as fly tipped rubbish. There were also a number of enforcement options available through the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act, i.e. fines for putting bins out too early or for not recycling. These options would be picked up in the review of current procedures/policy.

Overall the Authority's performance was poor in relation to household waste, however, all the options were being investigated and would be reported to Members in due course.

Councillor P Ward pointed out that education was needed in relation to recycling. O Sherratt agreed that further education was needed on what household waste could be recycled.

**RESOLVED** that the information given, be noted.