

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
SERVICE DELIVERY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON MONDAY, 6 JUNE, 2005**

Present: Councillors S Bishop, D Chaytor,
H High, A J Holmes, Mrs E Huntington,
Mrs A Naylor, D Raine, D J Taylor-Gooby
and C Walker

T Taylor

Also present: Councillors R Crute, D Myers, G Patterson,
C Reynolds, F Shaw, R J Todd, M Nicholls,
P J Campbell, J Haggan, B Quinn and R Taylor

1 **ELECTION OF CHAIR**

RESOLVED that Councillor D Raine be elected Chair of the Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee for the ensuing year.

COUNCILLOR D RAINE TOOK THE CHAIR

2 **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR**

RESOLVED that Councillor Mrs A Naylor be appointed Vice-Chair of the Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee for the ensuing year.

3 **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 9 May, 2005, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

4 **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE** held on 24 May, 2005, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were submitted.

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

5 **PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

There were no members of the public present.

6 **WORK PROGRAMME ISSUES**

(i) **Neighbourhood Initiatives Unit – Performance Report**

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Neighbourhood Initiatives which provided an update on the performance of the Neighbourhood Initiatives Unit, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Members were provided with details of progress made with regard to Community Safety, Youth Strategy, Social Inclusion, Sports Development and Arts.

Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee – 6 June, 2005

The report provided details of achievements and non-achievements within the Unit. In relation to non-achievements it was explained that the failure to produce a Sport and Recreation Plan and an Arts Plan was due to difficulties in identifying resources and the revised target date was December 2005.

Members were advised that sickness levels had significantly improved with a rate of 1.44 over the last quarter.

A Member queried the success of the Youth Shelters and asked if they had been the target of vandalism. S Arkley advised that the shelters had suffered some vandalism and whilst they were popular with youths this was not always the case with residents.

In relation to collating statistics Councillor D.J. Taylor-Gooby queried how the Unit defined criminal damage. S Arkley advised that the criteria varied and was subject to change. In the past it had been based on anything with a value over £20 but there was over 100 categories that could be used to define criminal damage.

Councillor Mrs. E. Huntington asked if the targets set by Government Office were achievable, were there any timescales involved and if the targets were not met would sanctions be imposed on the authority. S Arkley advised that since the Unit had been re-structured and a two tier Strategy produced the targets were considered to be achievable and the Unit was fully committed to working with all agencies to tackle and reduce crime. The timescale for all the targets was over 3 years to 2008. In relation to targets not being met there were no specific sanctions that would be imposed on the authority, however if the targets were achieved the Authority would have access to additional funding.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(ii) **Complaints Analysis Report**

Consideration was given to the report of the Senior Corporate Development Officer, which gave details of the number and nature of complaints received over the periods October to December 2004 and January to March 2005, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

The Senior Corporate Development Officer advised that the report did not include information on East Durham Homes which in future would be reported to the East Durham Homes Board, and the Housing Strategy Unit would carry out performance monitoring.

Members were advised that individual units collated and monitored their own first level complaints under arrangements implemented by the Ombudsman. The Customer Services Team collated, analysed and reported all second level complaints and acted as an independent case examiner between the Council, the public, the Ombudsman, MP's and Elected Members.

Complaints were recorded, monitored and, where possible, resolved following consultation with the appropriate Officer. Issues of a

Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee – 6 June, 2005

repetitive nature, or clear trends which had emerged, were discussed at the Quality Improvement Team meetings and areas for improvement were agreed.

The total number of complaints received during the report period was 94, of which 14 were justified, 10 were policy related, 21 were third party issues and 49 were unjustified.

Councillor B Quinn asked if complaints relating to East Durham Homes would be reported to this Committee in the future. A Carr advised that in future the information would be provided as part of the performance report for East Durham Homes and reported to this Committee.

The Chair advised that a Committee had been established to discuss repairs and two Members from this Committee had been invited to attend.

Councillor Mrs A Naylor asked if Customer Services had access to the CRM system. A Carr advised that the CRM system was being used now but would not be fully operational until December 2005.

Reference was made to the attitude of some staff members employed at both the Deneside and Peterlee Area Offices. J James advised that he would take this issue up with the Directors of East Durham Homes.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

PRIOR TO CONSIDERATION OF THE FOLLOWING ITEM OF BUSINESS COUNCILLOR D J TAYLOR-GOOPY DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST

(iii) Monitoring Performance of East Durham Homes

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Regeneration and Development which gave details of the performance of East Durham Homes for the year end 2004/2005, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

The report provided monitoring information in respect of the service areas managed by East Durham Homes which covered Housing Management, Care Services and Repairs and Maintenance. All three areas were subject to performance monitoring by way of either statutory Best Value Performance Indicators (BV) or East Durham Homes Local Performance Indicators (EDH).

Appendix 1 to the report set out East Durham Homes' performance and targets which had been set.

Appendix 2 to the report provided details of the Capital Works (HIP) Programme for 2004/2005.

In relation to re-lets and voids Councillor B Quinn expressed concern at the time East Durham Homes were taking to carry out all the relevant inspections before void properties could be re-let.

J James advised that East Durham Homes were looking to Performance Manage all of its services which included the time taken

Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee – 6 June, 2005

to re-let void properties and it was hoped that with further improvement this figure would reduce.

Councillor F Shaw explained that budget constraints were also a factor which could restrict the turnaround of void properties.

Councillor R J Todd made reference to the substantial loss of rent in relation to fire-damaged properties which could stand empty for considerable lengths of time while insurance claims were settled. It was suggested that if the process for settling claims could be reduced then the void time would also reduce.

Councillor Todd made particular reference to a property in South Hetton that had stood empty for a year. S Brown advised that if Councillor Todd could provide further details of the property after the meeting the matter would be investigated.

Councillor B Quinn made reference to the repairs still outstanding from the storms which occurred in January, particularly fences which had been blown down and damaged. J James advised that work was still outstanding and East Durham Homes had established a dedicated team of operatives to address the various outstanding jobs related to the severe storms. Part of the teams remit was to prioritise the outstanding categories of work prior to works being commenced.

Councillor Mrs E Huntington suggested that if East Durham Homes did not have adequate manpower then contractors should be employed to carry out the works.

M Copping advised that the type of severe storms experienced in January were very rare and the authority were not insured for that type of incident.

Reference was made to the estate walkabouts and the reluctance of residents to take part in them due to the lack of feedback they received. T Taylor advised that the situation was currently being investigated and various options were being considered.

Councillor B Quinn made reference to the underspend in relation to decent homes standards and stated that assurances had previously been given by Officers that the money would be spent by the end of the financial year. He expressed concern that it now appeared there could be a further underspend this year.

M. Copping acknowledged the underspend and advised that the difficulties experienced last year were being rectified and would be closely monitored in future.

T. Taylor advised that the Tenants Federation had also discussed the underspend with the Chief Executive of East Durham Homes.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(iv) **Environmental Strategy Team – Recycling Performance**

Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee – 6 June, 2005

Consideration was given to the report of the Environmental Health and Licensing Manager which gave an update on recycling performance within the District, in particular the out-turn for 2004/2005 and proposals for 2005/2006, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Members were advised that the Government had introduced performance targets that the Council must hit regarding the percentage of household waste arising within the District that was recycled or composted.

Easington's statutory minimum target for 2003/2004 was to recycle or compost 10% of all household waste collected. The next target was to recycle or compost 18% of household waste by 2005/2006.

During 2003/2004 the authority failed to hit the minimum 10% performance standard and as a result a number of major changes had been introduced, details of which were outlined in the report.

During 2004/2005, recycling rates within the District increased to 13.6% which was attributable to benefits of kerb-it and improvements in the aerobic digester output during the year. The Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, together with the Audit Commission had approved the incorporation of water loss within these figures, which had contributed to the improved performance.

The total household waste arising within the District had risen from 462 kg per household to 476 kg. This was a cause for concern, and represented the highest in County Durham. Efforts to reduce this would not only save resources in waste collection and disposal, but would have a consequential benefit for recycle rates.

Details of recycling performance for the District during 2003/2004 and 2004/2005 were outlined together with targets for 2005/2006.

The number of households participating in the kerb-it scheme in Easington was lower than other participating Durham Districts. A programme of intensive publicity was being developed with a range of incentives to encourage residents to participate in the Kerb-it scheme and significant promotion of recycling would be undertaken over the coming year to boost performance.

The green waste collection had proved successful with 120 tonnes collected for composting per week. There had been calls for the scheme to be extended, and it was proposed to submit further reports relating to this covering options and resource implications for Members consideration later in the year.

It was also proposed to review the bottle banks throughout the District and make improvements to increase their use.

Negotiations were currently underway to establish how the aerobic digester contribution would be shared out across the County and officers were seeking to get the best deal for the Council.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

7 REPORTS FROM PANELS/FORUMS/BOARDS/WORKING PARTIES

- (i) **The Notes of the Meetings Re: Rose Cottages, Shotton Colliery** held on 6 and 27 April, 2005, copies of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

Councillor Mrs E Huntington expressed concern that since the last meeting no progress had been made. S Gwilym agreed to investigate the current situation.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

- (ii) **The Minutes of the Informal Meeting of the Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee** held on 16 May, 2005, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

8 DISTRICT OF EASINGTON SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2004/2005

Consideration was given to the report of the Scrutiny Support Manager, which sought approval of the draft District of Easington Scrutiny Annual Report 2004/2005, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

The Scrutiny Support Manager explained that under Article 6 of the Council's Constitution, Scrutiny Committees had to report annually to Council on their work and make recommendations for future work programmes.

The report had been produced jointly on behalf of the four Scrutiny Committees and aimed to demonstrate the principle that the Scrutiny Committees worked together in ensuring that they complemented the strategic work of the Executive and that the corporate priorities and performance targets agreed by the Council were met.

The report detailed the principles behind effective scrutiny within the Council, highlighted the co-ordinating role of the Scrutiny Management Board, reviewed the work undertaken by the Scrutiny Committees, set out the proposed areas of work which formed the Scrutiny committee's Future Work Programme and proposed further ways through which the scrutiny process could be developed.

District Council would consider the report on 7 July 2005, and any comments and/or amendments would be incorporated into the final document if received by the Scrutiny Support Manager prior to 17 June, 2005.

Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee – 6 June, 2005

RESOLVED that the District of Easington Scrutiny Annual Report 2004/2005 be agreed, subject to any amendments and submitted to full Council for endorsement.

CERTIFIED TRUE RECORD

CHAIR

DATE

JW/MC/COM/SERDEL/050604
8 June 2005