

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
SERVICE DELIVERY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON MONDAY, 9TH MAY, 2005**

Present: Councillor D. Raine (Chair)

Councillors S. Bishop, D. Chaytor, H. High,
A.J. Holmes, Mrs. E. Huntington, Mrs. A. Naylor,
C. Walker and T. Taylor

Also present: Councillor S. Huntington - Executive Member for Corporate
Services
Councillor D. Myers - Executive Member for E-Government and
Scrutiny Liaison
Councillor J. Goodwin - Executive Member for Community and
Culture

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors D.J. Taylor-Gooby and R. Crute.

2. THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING held on 18 April 2005 a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

3. THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE held on 26th April, 2005, 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. WORK PROGRAMME ISSUES

(i) East Durham Business Service Performance Report

Consideration was given to the report of the East Durham Business Service Manager which gave details of performance of the East Durham Business Service, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

S. Slaven explained that the East Durham Business Services was established in 2003/04 as a joint working arrangement between the Council's Economic Development function and East Durham Development Agency. East Durham Business Service provided a single point of contact for support and advice to businesses in Easington District.

Appendix 1 to the report outlined the performance from 1st April, 2004 to 31st March, 2005 and included Service Delivery Objectives, Risk Management Action Plan, Service Improvement Plan, complaints and customer feedback, sickness, financial performance and Environmental Policy Action Plan.

Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee – 9th May, 2005

There had been several changes during the course of the year to staffing and a copy of the latest structure chart for the Business Services was attached at Appendix 2.

S. Slaven gave details of the review of activity in 2004/05 and provided examples of the range of services provided by East Durham Business Service and the work carried out by the following members of staff during 2004/05

- **Principal Economic Development Officer**

The postholder acted as Team Leader for the Projects Team and was responsible for capital projects, policy and strategy. It was explained that two key capital projects had been progressed since the last report.

- **Economic Development Officer**

The Economic Development Officer had been working on one main project, general improvements to small industrial estates within the District, which had been funded by NRF. This post also assisted and co-ordinated the LSP Economy Group and Business Sites Group.

- **Marketing Manager**

The Marketing Manager promoted the East Durham Business Service and its work in the business and wider community.

- **Lifelong Learning Co-ordinator**

The role of the post was to promote a culture of lifelong learning, co-ordinating any fragmented delivery of similar learning activities, signposting organisations and individuals to learning opportunities and supporting the Learning and Skills Forum of the LSP. Twenty-three community based organisations were supported through the Life Long Learning Initiatives Fund which provided small grants up to £500 to support and encourage learning activities that fell outside mainstream funding.

- **Tourism Officer**

The Tourism Officer had established a website for visitors and Residents to use to gain information on activities and services in the District as well as producing a 'What's On' guide to promote local and regional events.

- **Company Growth and Expansion - Account Managers**

During the year, 182 companies were advised on expanding their business. Twenty-nine companies expanded or located in East Durham pledging 581 jobs over the lifetime of the project.

- **Business Start-up Advisor**

The Start-up Advisor advised 346 individuals on setting up business during 2004/05. 61 individuals started, all of whom received a start-

Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee – 9th May, 2005

up grant from the new NRF Start-up Grants package. A further 15 Start-up businesses through other Start-up providers also received grants through the package.

- **Retail Advisor**

The Retail Advisor provided advice to 89 retailers during 2004/05 and developed a new Retail Grants Package for internal shop fittings. 9 applications had been approved by the Independent Retail Panel but the work on all of those would not be fully completed until some time in 2005/06.

- **Marketing Advisor**

The Marketing Advisor had advised 73 companies during 2004/05 on marketing related issues including market research, strategy and planning, literature design, PR and communications and e-commerce.

S. Slaven explained that East Durham Business Service had made very good progress so far in setting the new joint working arrangement, establishing a new base in the heart of businesses on Peterlee South West Industrial Estate and developing new ways of working by bring together the staff from the Council and EDDA.

All Business Services staff had participated in the Service Planning Day in February 2005 in order to review progress against targets for 2004/05 and to develop the Service Plan for 2005/06. Appendix 3 outlined the proposed targets for 2005/06 and progress against these targets would be reported to the Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee during the forthcoming year.

A Member referred to the Retail Advisor and commented that some businesses were at a disadvantage to the businesses gaining advice from the Retail Advisor. S. Slaven explained that the Retail Advisor was available to all businesses and the advice that was given was on a consistent basis.

A Member queried why some of the targets in Appendix 3 were not available. S. Slaven explained that the targets with 'not applicable' were new targets for the year 2005/06 and were therefore not recorded in 2004/05.

T. Taylor referred to tenants, residents and community associations and asked if East Durham Business Service gave advice on business planning. S. Slaven explained that East Durham Business Service gave advice to businesses rather than community enterprises. Community enterprises were included in the Regeneration and Partnerships Unit.

The Chair explained that he would like future reports to include information on how local businesses had progressed.

The Chair thanked the East Durham Business Service Manager for her report.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(ii) **Leisure Centre Partnership Arrangements**

Consideration was given to the report of the Senior Cultural Development Officer which provided Members with a position statement on the operation of

Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee – 9th May, 2005

the leisure centres under the partnership arrangements with Leisure Connection, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Monthly monitoring meetings were held with Leisure Connection staff and the Senior Cultural Development Officer, to ensure the smooth operation of the partnership. In addition, the Health and Safety Manager conducted quarterly inspections at both centres.

The company, over the past 12 months, had achieved a number of targets that had been set by the Council to improve the service provided, in particular:

- Achieved Sport England “Quest” Quality Accreditation for both centres. Improvement Plans had been developed from the Independent Assessment Process carried out which would further improve the service provided
- Completed the Sport England Benchmarking Surveys which would be used as a tool to measure how the centres were performing against similar facilities in the country
- Peterlee Leisure Centre had received an 'in principle' award from the “Inclusive Fitness Initiative”, a Sport England Scheme awarded to centres which demonstrated a commitment to greater use by disabled people. This award supported the Council's commitment towards improving access into the centres.

Performance indicators had been developed jointly with Leisure Connection as presented in the Annual Plan to the Council on 25th March, 2004. The 12 month review for the period 1st April, 2004 to 31st March, 2005 was detailed in Appendix 1. The company's Annual Plan for the period 1st April, 2005 to 31st March, 2006 was presented to the Council and agreed on 21st March, 2005.

Members of the Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee conducted their annual visit of the centres on 20th April, 2005 and met with the Company Chief Executive and also inspected and monitored the improvement works that were currently ongoing and had been completed at both sites.

The Senior Cultural Development Officer gave details of the key performance indicators which included service objectives, actions required, indicator targets and actions taken to date.

A breakdown of customer complaints for both Peterlee and Seaham Leisure Centres were also outlined in Appendix 1.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(iii) Regeneration and Partnerships Unit Quarterly Programme Report

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Regeneration and Partnerships which provided information on the performance of the Regeneration and Partnership Unit, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Details of the unit's performance from 1st April, 2004 to mid-quarter 4 (February, 2005) was outlined in Appendix 1 to the report. This was the fifth

Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee – 9th May, 2005

report on the overall performance of the unit as it had been established for just short of 2 years. Whilst many elements of the service were established it was still undergoing development.

P Coe explained that it had been agreed that the Community Development function of the Council had become an integral part of the Unit within the recent restructure and that the administrative function of the Local Strategic Partnership and the Sustainability Officer had transferred to Corporate Development. These changes had been effective in quarter 3 of the financial year and the report was the first to reflect those changes. The report highlighted the functions that the unit had been responsible for delivering over the past year.

The Head of Regeneration and Partnerships gave details of the achievements and non-achievements which were outlined in Appendix 1 to the report.

Appendix 1 included the publication of the facilitation of the development process of the Local Strategic Partnership including the development of the Performance Management Framework for the LSP, continued management and administration of regeneration funds. The introduction and development of the Government's Liveability Pilot and the introduction of the ODPM's brownfield land pilot had also been a recent development.

It was reported that the service had also continued to manage and facilitate large infrastructure, investment and development projects. Details and progress were also given on the Easington Colliery and Horden Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder, sustainability function, regeneration policy, e-government and Liveability Fund.

The Head of Regeneration and Partnerships explained that it should be noted that the Unit Service Plan had not yet been reviewed due to the recent staffing restructure that had impacted upon the service.

A Member referred to European Funding and asked if the Head of Regeneration and Partnerships had any information on future funding. The Head of Regeneration and Partnerships explained that there had been no clarification for the next programme of European funding as to how resources would be administered. There was likely to be a transitional resource but no clarification as to the structure had been received.

A Member referred to the regeneration funding that would be required if the European funding was withdrawn, he was concerned that the Council would have to manage decline. The Head of Regeneration and Partnerships explained that some funding streams had changed and had caused concern for the Durham Districts. He felt that the Council would not have to manage decline but would need to keep abreast of the changes and regeneration was an area that was identified in the Regional Spatial Strategy. The indications were that the allocation of NRF was hopefully to be increased for 2006/08.

Members expressed concern regarding the lengthy and complicated forms that needed to be completed to obtain funding and felt that community groups should be given more support. The Head of Regeneration and Partnerships explained that this had been recognised for some time, although the Council had limited influence beyond the structural funds that it controlled and even then many of the processes were prescriptive. Support for community groups was being provided through the Unit and particularly the Community

Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee – 9th May, 2005

Development Team, although the resources available were limited and a review was required on how the service was delivered throughout the District.

A Member referred to European funding and asked if it was politically more difficult to 'push the District's case' since the European MPs were now regional. The Head of Regeneration Partnerships explained that in regional terms the District Council had an increasingly stronger voice which meant the needs of the area were beginning to be understood better. However, it was recognised that the new European structures would provide a risk that they did not align currently with domestic arrangements, politically or operationally. This was a potential threat for establishing influence and the situation needed continual monitoring to understand the implications for the District as they emerged.

The Chair thanked the Head of Regeneration and Partnerships for his report.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

6. **REPORTS FROM PANELS/FORUMS/BOARDS/WORKING PARTIES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Service Delivery Anti-Social Behaviour Working Party held on 21st January, 2005, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

CERTIFIED TRUE RECORD

CHAIR

Date

JC/PH servdel/050501
9th May, 2005