

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE SERVICE DELIVERY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON MONDAY 24 OCTOBER 2005

Present: Councillor D Raine (Chair)
Councillors S Bishop, H High,
A J Holmes, Mrs A Naylor and
C Walker

T Taylor

Also Present: 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 Mrs E Huntington and D J Taylor-Gooby.

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

3 THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTVE 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.

4 PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There were no members of the public present.

5 WORK PROGRAMME

(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 James explained that the East Durham Business Service was established in July 2003 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 1 April 2005 - 30 September 2005 and showed progress made against corporate plan targets. Appendix 2 provided more information on the local performance targets set by East Durham Business Service by which it measured its overall performance.

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S James explained that the Business Service had been involved in three capital investments to improve the industrial infrastructure in the district:-

- development of a business centre;
- improvements to North East Industrial Estate;
- general improvements to four small industrial estates at Shotton Colliery, Thornley Station, Wingate Grange and Horden Sea View.

The Lifelong Learning Initiatives Fund had proved very successful with 24 groups receiving assistance utilising the total programme allocation. The Modern Apprenticeships Programme that matched young people with companies continued to prove successful with 53 young people commencing apprenticeships in 40 companies.

S James explained that the Tourism Officer had already assisted 3 local accommodation providers to achieve Visit Britain grading status. The services provided by EDBS and the success of local companies had been promoted in the Peterlee Mail's business section on a weekly basis.

Activity to encourage business starts was performing well with 131 individuals being advised on setting up their own business. A total of 58 new businesses had been set up in the district between April and September 2005.

The retail improvement programme had shown a good level of take up from shop owners due to the grants available to them to improve the external and internal appearance of their premises. 32 grants had been given to date.

Members were advised that the Workplace Health Development Specialist seconded to EDBS from the PCT continued to promote workplace health initiatives throughout businesses to assist them achieve a healthy workforce.

The Executive Member for E-Government and Scrutiny Liaison referred to website development and asked if any member of staff had specific responsibility to encourage businesses in website development and queried if the business directory would be available electronically.

S James explained that the Marketing Business Advisor, Anthony Ward was responsible in helping businesses expand their website capabilities. Compared to other areas, the East Durham Business Service was not as far advanced in this field and a lot of the small businesses did not have a website. Work needed to be developed on ways to encourage businesses to develop a website. With regards to the business forum directory, at the moment this was hard copy but would be provided electronically in the future.

The Chair queried the types of new business that had been established. S James explained that the majority were retail businesses, for example shops, hairdressers, tanning salons and very small manufacturing. The government had advised that the Business Service should be looking for more high growth businesses and discussions were ongoing to target businesses to attract them to the district.

The Chair thanked the Principal Economic Development Officer for his 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 the Leisure Centres under the partnership arrangements with Leisure Connection Limited, 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 smooth operation of the partnership. In addition, quarterly inspections were undertaken by the Health and Safety Manager.

The company over the past six months had achieved a number of targets that had been set by the Council to improve the service provided. In particular:-

- Peterlee Leisure Centre had become an 'Inclusive Fitness Initiative' accredited site which was a Sport England scheme awarded to centres which demonstrated a commitment to greater use by disabled people. The company had invested £12,000 in installing 8 pieces of accessible gym equipment together with the appointment of part time inclusive Fitness Activator whose roll was to encourage more people with disabilities to use the facility;
- the award supported the Council's commitment to ensure both Peterlee and Seaham Leisure Centres complied with the Disability Discrimination legislation. A programme of recently completed improvement works to both centres had seen improved access and egress, improved car parking, installation of an induction loop and the refurbishment of changing rooms including the creation of unisex accessible changing area with showering facilities at Peterlee Leisure Centre.

The Council's Sports Development Team continued to work in partnership with Leisure Connection staff to develop initiatives with community groups and schools as a result of funding received by the Positive Future Programme. A Saturday evening junior five a side league was to be established primarily targeting those at risk of offending.

The six month review of performance indicators developed with Leisure Connection in its annual plan that was presented to the Council on 21 March 2005 were detailed in Appendix 1.

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

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(iii) **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 period April - June 2005, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

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, MPs and elected Members.

Complaints were recorded, monitored and where possible resolved following consultation with the appropriate officer. Issues of a repetitive nature or clear trends which had emerged were discussed at the Quality Improvement Team meetings and areas for improvement were agreed.

Due to changes in legislation, in particular the e-government agenda, the Customer Services Officers roll was a changing one. The unit would become part of the Council's contact centre when it was established in December. All queries, complaints and requests for service would be directed through the contact centre using the CRM system. This would ensure a more efficient service to the customer.

The total number of complaints received during the period equated to 47 over 3 months. When split into categories this showed that of the 47 complaints received, 7 were justified, 9 were policy related issues, 15 were third party issues and 16 were unjustified complaints.

Appendix 1 provided Members of the breakdown of complaints received within each service area for the period April - June 2005. Appendix 2 provided breakdown of justified Ombudsman complaints. Appendix 3 provided a breakdown of thank you's received and Appendix 4 provided Members with an overview of general enquiries dealt with by the Customer Services Team.

It was explained that the CRM system was now being used and 8 complaints had been recorded through the system the previous week.

The Executive Member for E-Government and Scrutiny Liaison explained that once the Contact Centre was in operation from December, real time management information reports would be produced for the committee.

A Member queried how internet enquiries were dealt with. The Senior Corporate Development Officer explained that the Customer Services Team dealt with e-mails on a daily basis.

A Member referred to a recent telephone conversation he had with a member of staff who had advised that vermin could not be dealt with and poison could not be placed on private land. The Senior Corporate Development Officer explained that this would have been dealt with by Envirocall and as part of the new Contact Centre, everyone would work together.

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The Chair thanked the Senior Corporate Development Officer for her report.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

JC/MA/com.ser.del./051002
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