

**THE MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE
DISTRICT COUNCIL OF EASINGTON
HELD ON MONDAY, 30TH JUNE, 2008**

Present: Councillor R. Taylor (Chair)
Councillors Mrs. Baird, B. Bates, S. Bishop,
Mrs. G. Bleasdale, B. Burn, A. Burnip,
R. Burnip, A. Collinson, Mrs. E. M. Connor,
R. Crute, R. Davison, Mrs. S. Forster,
Mrs. J. Freak, H. High, A. J. Holmes, T. Longstaff,
Mrs. J. Maitland, Mrs. S. Mason, K. McGonnell,
D. Milsom, A. Napier, Mrs. A. Naylor, G. Patterson,
G. Pinkney, F. Shaw, Mrs. B. Sloan, R. J. Todd,
T. Unsworth and Mrs. V. M. Williams

1. THE STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2007/2008

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Finance and Corporate Services in relation to the Statement of Accounts for 2007/2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

The Accounts and Audit Regulations issued by Central Government set out the requirements for the production and publication of the Statement of Accounts, which were required to be presented to Members for approval by no later than 30 June 2008.

The full Statement of Accounts for year ended 31 March 2008 had been circulated separately, and Appendix 1 of the report provided a summary of the financial statements.

T Bell, Director of Finance and Corporate Services outlined the key results for the year, explaining that the General Fund showed an operational surplus of £1.638m, which included a surplus on the base budget of £849k, a variance of 4.7% when compared to budget. During the year a further £800k windfall income had been received in particular through LABGI, the majority of which was reserved to sustain future regeneration in the area. This brought the surplus up to £2.4m.

Balances had been reviewed in year in order to finance the transitional plan of priorities. It was hoped that the new Unitary Council would respect those plans to enable programmes and schemes to be completed. The year-end balance was £3.96m which was on target.

With regard to the key results in respect of the Housing Revenue Account he advised that there was a surplus on the account of £1.58m mainly as a result of increased rent income but reserves and surpluses of around £2.6m had also been committed in the year. Reserves at the year-end amounted to around £2.8m which included commitments of £700k.

As part of the close-down process, Members of the Executive agreed to commit a further £300k to aids and adaptations. This work would be carried out through the Capital Programme and would clear the current backlog.

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Prior to submission to Council, the Statement of Accounts had been considered by the Executive on 25th June, 2008 and by the Audit Committee on 26th June, 2008 as part of its governance role. It was pleasing to note that no material issues were raised at either of these meetings other than an agreement in principle to releasing further reserves which would be subject to consultation with Members and further reports. In addition Officers had discussed the main issues with the Chair of the Council who was required to 'sign off' the Accounts.

To conclude, he stated that the message from the accounts was one of financial stability which would enable the Council to deliver its priorities up to 1 April 2009 and hopefully in the medium term by the new Unitary Council.

The Council's strong financial position was due to the efforts of Members and Officers across the Council as it placed financial stability as a cornerstone to setting and achieving the priorities set out in the Council's Corporate Plan. As this was the last Statement to be produced by the District of Easington he conveyed his thanks to Officers involved in the process, and expressed his appreciation to Members for their support.

On behalf of Members, the Leader of the Council reiterated the comments of the Director and thanked everyone involved in helping to achieve and maintain the strong financial position the Council was in.

RESOLVED that the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st March, 2008 be approved.

2. **END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE REVIEW/BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN**

Consideration was given to the report of the Principal Corporate Development Officer which gave an overview of the Council's performance during 2007/2008, reported on the progress of the Performance Improvement Teams and sought approval to the publication of the Best Value Performance Plan. A copy of the report had been circulated to each Member.

M Readman, Principal Corporate Development Officer, explained that for 2007/8 there were 72 statutory Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) against which the Council could track progress and a full performance table of these was attached at Appendix 1.

In overall terms, the information recorded how the Council had performed in each indicator compared to the previous four years. The graph at 5.3 in the report demonstrated that the Council had achieved a high rate of improvement year on year over this period.

These improvements had resulted because of focus on poor performing areas and the work carried out in relation to target setting. She explained that over the last couple of years a more considered approach to target setting had been taken to ensure that the targets set were not only realistic but also reflected the Council's desires to improve its services in areas where resources had been targeted as a priority. This was demonstrated in table 5.7 in the report which showed that in comparison to last year's BVPI results performance at achieving the targets was better.

In terms of quartile positioning, it was pleasing to note that the number of indicators in top and middle quartile positions had significantly improved over the course of the last five years and the number in the bottom quartile had pleasingly reduced. This showed that the Council had driven up its performance and service improvements were being achieved at a significant rate.

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During 2007/2008 the Council moved into the top quartile in the following indicators:-

BVPI 66c - tenants of Council-owned homes in rent arrears with notices seeking possession served

BVPI 79a - accuracy of benefits calculation

BVPI 199c - percentage of land with unacceptable levels of fly posting

BVPI 204 - percentage of appeals allowed against the Council's decision to refuse planning applications

BVPI 213 - number of homelessness cases prevented

BVPI 79b(ii) - housing benefits over-payments recovered as a percentage of housing benefits overpayments debt

BVPI 106 - percentage of new homes built on brownfield land

BVPI 127B - robberies per thousand population.

With regard to the eight areas of performance identified to receive particular attention during 2007/2008 by way of Performance Improvement Teams, the report summarised the actions taken and the resulting outcomes for those BVPIs.

Six of the eight poor performing indicators had improved, five had achieved, and most of these had significantly exceeded, the targets set for them. Four had moved from bottom quartile positions and one had moved from bottom to top quartile positioning.

M. Readman discussed the fourteen PIs in the bottom quartile in 2007/2008 which compared to twenty six in the previous year. Those indicators were listed in the report with an explanation given for those with a decline in performance.

In terms of the Local Performance Indicators, the Council's set reflected the key areas of work for Easington, either where there were no applicable national BVPIs or where it was felt that local indicators would give more context to the national indicators. Of the twenty-nine indicators within the data set, eighteen had improved, eight had declined in performance, two had stayed at last year's level and there was one new indicator (wheeled-bin arson). The full set was detailed in Appendix 2 of the report.

M Readman highlighted areas of success, which included a reduction in secondary and deliberate fires, total crime, criminal damage, homelessness presentations and housing applications from those fleeing domestic violence. Whilst performance had improved in relation to indicator DSC1 - percentage of standard searches carried out in ten working days, this would continue to be monitored over the next year.

Last year's Corporate Plan described the focus of work for the next three years for the Council. M. Readman highlighted to Members some of the key areas that had been delivered against the Corporate Plan, which included the introduction of a Dog Control Order and a Side Waste Policy, a review of parks/open spaces operations, the introduction of pilot Neighbourhood Forums in the north of the District, Pride in Easington, a significant reduction in litter and detritus, the integration of additional services into the Customer Services Centre, implementation of a number of regeneration schemes and the provision of assistance to new business start-ups and apprenticeships across the District.

Following the onset of the local government review, the Council had approved a Transitional Plan to accommodate the work of setting up the new Unitary Council, highlighting priorities and key areas of focus for the transitional year. Progress in achieving the actions was monitored on a monthly basis by Management Team and any action to address shortfalls in targets or delivery was subsequently managed through

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Corporate Support Team. Progress on service specific measures and targets would continue to be reported to scrutiny on a regular basis.

She continued that the information contained within the report was required for the Best Value Performance Plan which had to be published by 30th June 2008, and Members were asked to agree that the report be used as the basis for the publication of this year's Plan.

A general discussion ensued on the housing related BVPIs and in particular BVPI 212 average time taken to re-let Council homes which had improved considerably. Members also discussed decent homes standards and the provision of the housing service under the new unitary arrangements.

Members were also pleased to note the improvements made in the eight poor performing areas identified for focus by way of Performance Improvement Teams and commended the work carried out.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** that:-

- (a) the information on performance against the BVPIs, Local PIs and Corporate Plan, be noted;
- (b) approval be granted to publish the Best Value Performance Plan in accordance with the statutory deadline and guidance.

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1 August, 2008