

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE DISTRICT COUNCIL OF EASINGTON
HELD ON THURSDAY 8 JANUARY 2009**

Present: Councillor R. Taylor (Chair)

Councillors Mrs M Baird, E. Bell, S Bishop,
Mrs G Bleasdale, A Burnip, A Collinson,
Mrs E M Connor, R Crute, R Davison,
Mrs S Forster, J Haggan, G Johnson,
Mrs A E Laing, R Liddle, T Longstaff,
D Maddison, Mrs S Mason, K. McGonnell,
D. Milsom, D Myers, G. Patterson,
Mrs B A Sloan, D J Taylor Gooby,
R J Todd, T Unsworth and C. Walker

1. **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE DISTRICT COUNCIL OF EASINGTON** held on 4 December 2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

2. **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE** held on 26 November 2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were submitted.

RESOLVED that the decision taken, be noted.

3. **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE REGULATORY APPEALS PANEL** held on 10 December 2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were submitted.

RESOLVED that the decision taken, be noted.

4. **DIRECTION OF TRAVEL STATEMENT – SELF ASSESSMENT**

M Readman, Principal Corporate Development Officer was in attendance to give a presentation to Members on Direction of Travel and the District of Easington's self-assessment for 2008, together with a profile of improvement over the last 3 years.

She explained that the self assessment was used by the Audit Commission together with the Use of Resources judgement to inform the Annual Audit Letter. It pulled together the main achievements of the Council and its work with partners over the last year, highlighting the impact made on the physical, social and economic landscape of the District.

In terms of the Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) she explained that the Council had achieved the highest ever number of top quartile positions last year, and subject to confirmation by the Audit Commission, was to be ranked 18th out of 388 local authorities in terms of improvement.

As part of the exercise the percentage change in BVPI performance had been examined for the period 2004/2005 to 2007/2008. It was pleasing to note that the Council's BVPI performance had improved by 73%. Easington had also

District Council of Easington – 8 January 2009

performed well when compared with other local authorities in that the average improvement for all district authorities over this period was between 56.9 - 59.1%.

She continued that the self assessment was informed by the following areas that the Council had identified for focus in 2008:-

- Transitional Plan
- Regeneration Statement
- Growth Point Status
- Capital Investment Programme
- Performance Improvement Activity
- Community Engagement Approach

She then proceeded to discuss the Council's nine Corporate Objectives which aimed to improve the lives of residents of the District and regenerate communities, and in taking Members through each of these, highlighted some of the achievements made by the Council and its partners.

In terms of 'Quality Services for Our People' the Council had continued to develop its customer services and was runner up in the 2008 North East Contact Centre of the Year Awards.

As part of the corporate objective 'Excellence in the Workplace' the Council had succeeded in meeting efficiency targets for the year and had strong financial planning and management systems which were aligned to the Council's priorities.

With regard to 'Sustainable Jobs for Everyone' she explained that the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative programme had enabled 314 people to set up as self-employed with 288 new businesses established and 70 young people had been supported into Modern Apprenticeships. Plans for Peterlee Town Centre and the Coalfield Housing Programme (Easington Colliery and Dawdon) had been completed. Examples of major new developments included the proposed film and media village in Seaham, and the development of St John's Square, North Dock, Hawthorn Business Park and Murton 'Network Village'.

Achievements against 'Better Transport' included the introduction of the new national concessionary fares scheme which now had 18,100 users, and a review of taxi licensing which looked at disability access standards and introduced MOT health checks for drivers.

Last year had seen considerable improvements in relation to 'Decent Homes for All' with savings and efficiencies achieved due to 'rightsizing' of East Durham Homes and the transfer of capital works, and the repairs and maintenance services. Savings made had been invested into housing delivery. Other achievements included the reduction in void turnover from 41 days to 25 days, and the number of tenants in rent arrears with notices seeking possession which had moved from bottom to top quartile positioning.

Significant achievements had also been made in relation to 'Clean, Tidy Communities' with the rollout of the District Wide Green Waste Collection Service, the No Side Waste Policy, and the new recycling contract. The Council was also one of the first in the country to introduce Dog Control Orders, and the Clean and Green Teams which had now been in operation for five years had been a success with year on year improvements in performance.

District Council of Easington – 8 January 2009

In relation to 'Making the District Safe', an 11% reduction in total recorded crime had been achieved in 2007/8 and there had been a significant reduction in criminal damage and secondary/deliberate fires. Joint working supported a reduction in youth related anti-social behaviour in several villages and 24 families had been supported by the Parenting Programme.

With regard to 'Building Healthy Communities' achievements included the establishment of the countywide health and well-being partnership, the largest ever holiday activity programme and the development of a Community Sports Network. The Council had also actively promoted benefit take-up, and lottery and matched funding had resulted in a £900 package for Play.

Finally with regard to 'Learning Opportunities for All' focus had been on activities which raised educational attainment, skills and aspirations. The Council currently had 5 apprentices in paid employment and 7 were undertaking work based training.

To conclude, she reiterated that this was a self assessment which would be validated by the Audit Commission in the Annual Audit Letter to be submitted to Council in March 2009.

J Johnson, Chief Executive referred to local government reorganisation and stated that the Council had continued to maintain its focus on improving performance in the transition period. The last year had seen the highest ever levels of improvement in performance and it was hoped that areas of 'best practice' would be taken on board by the new Council to ensure that services for the residents of the District continued to improve beyond Vesting Day.

The Deputy Leader of the Council added that these improvements could not have been achieved without good leadership and the dedication of Officers. On behalf of the Council he wished to congratulate Officers for their efforts, and hoped that the improvements made would be sustained in the future.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** that the information given, be noted and Officers be thanked for their hard work and commitment.

5. **EXECUTIVE ARRANGEMENTS**

Consideration was given to the joint report of the Head of Democratic Services and the Monitoring Officer regarding the Council's executive arrangements, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

B Garside, Head of Democratic Services reported that on 2 December 2008, Councillor Mrs E Huntington resigned as a Member of the Council's Executive.

Following discussion between the Leader, Deputy Leader and the Chief Executive it was felt that due to the time remaining for this Council it would be reasonable and practicable to operate the Executive with a membership of nine.

If the Executive was to function with a reduced membership, a change to the Constitution would be required.

He continued that Councillor Mrs Huntington previously represented the Council on a number of outside bodies in her capacity as Executive Member for Health. The Council was therefore requested to nominate one Member to replace

District Council of Easington – 8 January 2009

Councillor Mrs Huntington on each of those organisations set out in paragraph 5.1 of the report.

RESOLVED that

- (a) the resignation of Councillor Mrs E Huntington as Executive Member for Health, be noted;
- (b) paragraph 7.2 of Article 7 of the Constitution be amended to read as follows:-

“The Executive will consist of the Leader, Deputy Leader and up to 8 Councillors appointed to the Executive by the Council”.

- (c) approval be granted for the Executive to operate with a membership of 9 for the remaining life of the Council;
- (d) Councillor Mrs Huntington continue as the Council’s nominated Member on North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust, and Councillor R J Todd, Executive Member for Housing be nominated to sit on the following outside bodies:-

Local Strategic Partnership – Health Implementation Group
Healthworks Steering Group
Smoking Alliance Group
Easington Local Children’s Board.

6. TO SEAL DOCUMENTS

RESOLVED that the action taken in affixing the Common Seal to documents numbered 19873 to 19880, as listed in the Council’s Seal Register, be endorsed.

At the close of business the Deputy Leader of the Council congratulated Oliver Sherratt, the Director of Community Services on his recent appointment to the position of Head of Direct Services with Durham County Council, and on behalf of Members wished him every success in the future.

J Johnson, Chief Executive reiterated this and on behalf of Management Team thanked him for his contribution and support throughout his time at Easington.