

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING

OF THE EXECUTIVE

HELD ON TUESDAY 24 JULY 2007

Present: Councillor A Napier (Chair)
Councillors Mrs J Freak, Mrs E Huntington,
D Myers, Mrs A Naylor, G Patterson,
F Shaw, R J Todd and P G Ward

Also present: Councillor C. Patching

Apology: Councillor R Crute

1 **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 3 July 2007, together with those of the **SPECIAL MEETING** held on 25 June 2007, copies of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

2 **LOCAL AVERAGE RATE OF INTEREST – HOUSING ACT 1985, SECTION 438 AND SCHEDULE 16, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING ACT 1989 SCHEDULE 11**

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Member for Resources which sought approval for the local average rate of interest to be applied to local authority mortgages, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

The purpose of the report was to re-determine the local rate of interest to be applied to (a) advances and transfers and (b) sums left outstanding on disposal of Council owned dwellings

The Council's local average rate was set at 7.38% from 1 April 2007.

RESOLVED that the local average rate of interest to be set at 7.37% from 1 October 2007 for a further 6 months.

3 **ANNUAL TREASURY REPORT**

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Member for Resources which gave details of treasury transactions during the financial year 2006/2007, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

The annual report covered the Council's current treasury position, performance measurement, compliance with treasury limits and prudential indicators.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

4 **BEST VALUE REVIEW OF SUPPORT SERVICES - FINAL REPORT**

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Member for Improvement, which gave details of the findings of the Best Value Review of Support Services, and the proposed Improvement Plan, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

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Members were advised that the review covered Democratic Services and Administration, Finance and Audit, Corporate Development, Personnel and Information Services.

J Brindle, Assistant Chief Executive commenced by briefing Members on the background and purpose of the review explaining that the aim was to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the Council's support services in terms of cost, performance and quality, and to ensure that the Council had the right support services to respond to the Council's priorities, together with the current and future needs of its customers. It also aimed to improve support service processes and to realise efficiency savings which could be ploughed into frontline service delivery.

Members were advised of the scope of the review and the tools employed to ensure effective challenge, comparison, exploration of the market place and consultation which included benchmarking through a range of sources, customer satisfaction surveys, business process mapping and diary analysis, service PROBE, best practice visits and soft market testing.

J Brindle outlined the key findings of the review which concluded that Easington support services were generally comparatively low cost and were of a high quality. Satisfaction was high in most areas although there was room for improvement. The review had identified efficiencies and areas of growth where either the Council was not investing enough resources or needed to provide more focus in terms of emerging agendas. These were set out in Section 6.3 of the report.

Through soft market testing, the review had identified that opportunities did exist for both shared service development and strategic partnering with the private sector. The appetite for the former was limited at the time of the testing, however, the private sector had indicated that a package of services such as that set out in the review, was not in itself sufficient enough to attract interest.

Three options for improvement had been analysed as follows:-

- an enhanced mixed economy
- large scale strategic partnering
- large scale shared service arrangements

In the light of the analysis, it was recommended that the Council take a two pronged approach to implementing improvement as a result of the review:-

- (i) immediately pursue improvements to the current mixed economy based on the review findings, including making use of some of the review efficiencies to fund growth in selected areas;
- (ii) set aside review efficiencies to help pump prime work across the County to develop shared services arrangements for support and other services over a two year period.

The draft Improvement Plan was based on this approach and to conclude J Brindle took Members through the Plan, as detailed in section 14 in the report.

The review would assist the Council in its objective of delivering organisational excellence and delivery of efficiency and value for money commitments. The review findings would also assist in improving performance management in support

services and specific actions in the Improvement Plan reflected this. This would result in changes to how support service performance was scrutinised.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Chief Executive and staff involved for the effort that had gone into this piece of work.

RESOLVED that the findings and draft Improvement Plan of the Best Value Review of Support Services be approved.

5 ADDITIONAL URGENT ITEM OF BUSINESS

In accordance with the Local Government Act, 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, Section 100B(4)(b) the Chair, following consultation with the Proper Officer, agreed that the following item of business, not shown on the Agenda, be considered as a matter of urgency.

6 REVISION OF POLICIES FOR REFUSE COLLECTION (AOB)

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Member for Liveability which sought approval for the revision of policies for refuse collection services, which were aimed at encouraging residents to produce less waste and recycle more, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Members were advised that local residents had taken part in workshops which had helped shape the proposed policies. Residents took part in a series of "ask the audience" polls and a summary of the findings was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

Councillor Patching advised that the Community Services Scrutiny Committee endorsed this report at their meeting on 20 July 2007. The Committee had also requested that they receive a further report 6 months, or sooner if necessary, following implementation of the policies in order to review the effectiveness and impact of the new arrangements.

Details of the following suggested policies were outlined to Members.

- standard of refuse container to be provided free of charge to residents;
- weekly refuse collection arrangements;
- arrangements for the disposal of extra waste generated by households;
- acceptable times for refuse containers to be put out in the street for emptying;
- charge for the collection of bulky household waste (special collections)

Reference was made to the residents who had taken part in the workshops and the Chair expressed the authority's appreciation for their efforts and interest.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the Executive confirm the authority's commitment to weekly refuse collections for the foreseeable future;
- (ii) the policies outlined in the report relating to side waste, second bins and bins left for collection, be approved and implemented from 1 October 2007. In appropriate circumstances a £40 annual charge be made to households that requested a second bin;

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- (iii) the Director of Community Services, in consultation with the Executive Member for Liveability, be authorised to finalise the procedures and Charter set out in Appendices 3 and 4 of the report;
- (iv) the proposals for sensitive application of any enforcement procedures only as a last resort be noted and the following powers be authorised: -
 - (a) the Environmental Health and Licensing Manager and Environmental Services Managers be authorised to serve Notices under Section 46 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990;
 - (b) the Environmental Health and Licensing Manager, Environmental Services Managers, Neighbourhood Enforcement Officers, Environmental Co-ordinators, Street Wardens and Environmental Wardens be authorised to issue spot fines under the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act 2005;
 - (c) the level of fixed penalty for failing to comply with a Section 46 Notice be set in line with litter fixed penalties, namely £80 with a reduced level of £50 if paid within 10 days;
- (v) the majority of bulky household items continue to be collected free of charge, with the exception of some fixtures and fittings, where the current charge would increase by £2.00

7 **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED that in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the disclosure of exempt information, as defined in Paragraphs 3 and 6, Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

PRIOR TO CONSIDERATION OF THE FOLLOWING ITEM OF BUSINESS COUNCILLOR D. MYERS DECLARED A PERSONAL BUT NOT PREJUDICIAL INTEREST.

8 **COMPREHENSIVE RE-DEVELOPMENT OF ST JOHN'S SQUARE, SEAHAM**

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Member for Regeneration which provided an update on progress with the re-development proposals for St John's Square and sought approval to a number of actions to allow the scheme to progress, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) approval be granted to appoint a Master Planning and Urban Design Consultant to undertake a review of the St John's Square Master Plan, design the central public realm area and project manage (if appropriate) the physical works stage to completion;
- (ii) the serving of Statutory Notices under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 on both Go-Ahead Northern and the tenants of Seaham Bus Station, on the basis the site was required for the implementation of the regeneration scheme, be endorsed;

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- (iii) the use of Compulsory Purchase Order powers under the Town and Country Planning Act to acquire all third party/unknown land ownerships where agreement to purchase by negotiation was not possible, be approved;
- (iv) the use of planning/highway powers to stop up, extinguish or divert any existing footpaths/roadways running through the site to facilitate the redevelopment proposals, under the Town and Country Planning Act and Highways Act, be approved.

9 EAST DURHAM LINK ROAD AND HAWTHORN PRESTIGE BUSINESS PARK

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Member for Regeneration which gave details of progress on the East Durham Link Road and Hawthorn Prestige Business Park, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the Director of Regeneration and Development, in consultation with the Executive Member for Regeneration, be delegated authority to negotiate and finalise the terms of the development agreement between English Partnerships and the District of Easington;
- (ii) the necessity to make financial provision for the highway mitigation works referred to in section 4.12 of the report be noted;
- (iii) the Director of Regeneration and Development, in consultation with the Executive Member for Regeneration, be delegated authority to acquire land from Durham County Council for the purposes of the road and in turn gift this along with an area already in Council ownership back to the Highway Authority to comply with funding conditions and requirements of the County Council for highway maintenance;
- (iv) the Director of Regeneration and Development, in consultation with the Executive Member for Regeneration, be delegated authority to enter into contractual arrangements for the delivery of the overall scheme;
- (v) the Director of Regeneration and Development, in consultation with the Executive Member for Regeneration, be delegated authority to progress detailed design in respect of the East Durham Link Road Stage 2 and pursue funding opportunities to realise the scheme.

10 LAND AND PROPERTY AT ARGYLE PLACE, SOUTH HETTON

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Member for Regeneration which sought approval to dispose of two areas of land at South Hetton to the Accent Housing Group by private treaty subject to Accent securing funding from the Housing Corporation, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) approval be granted to dispose of 0.89 hectares of land to Accent Housing on the terms outlined in the report plus nomination rights in favour of the Council subject to the provision of an overage clause in the conveyance and Accent Housing receiving planning approval for the scheme;

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- (ii) approval be granted for the sale at an under value of £810,002 by using powers related to the disposal of land for less than best consideration (Local Government Act 1972 General Disposal Consent (England) 2003) on the basis that the land was to be used for the provision of social housing which would contribute to the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the residents of South Hetton and its immediate area.

11 LAND AT EDENHILL, PETERLEE

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Member for Regeneration which sought approval to dispose of land and property at Edenhill, Peterlee to Gladedale (Sunderland) Limited for residential development, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

RESOLVED that approval be granted to dispose of the identified land and property at Edenhill, Peterlee to Gladedale (Sunderland) Limited on the terms outlined in the report.