

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE REGENERATION SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

HELD ON MONDAY 28 JANUARY 2008

Present:- Councillor Mrs. E.M. Connor (Chair)
Councillors S. Bishop, Mrs. S. Forster,
H. High, A.J. Holmes, M. Routledge,
D.J. Taylor-Gooby and C. Walker.

Apologies:- Councillor D. Raine

1. **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 7 January 2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.
2. **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE** held on 15 January 2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were submitted.

Item 3 - Dog Control Orders for the District of Easington

A Member requested more information on the Dog Control Orders. K. Parkinson explained that a report had been considered at the Community Services Scrutiny Committee and Executive and was now in the final publicity period. On expiration of the publicity period, District Council would make the Order. The Council could make separate Orders and a decision had been made to make a Fouling of Land by Dogs (District of Easington) Order. Under the old legislation, fines could only be levied at £50 and could now be increased to £80 although there was a £30 discount if the fine was paid within 10 days. The Order would be made by District Council in March and there would be publicity and signs erected across the District before its implementation in April.

A Member queried if dogs were to be kept on leads. K. Parkinson explained that there had been a lot of public consultation carried out and members of the public were interested in the controls. A lot more consultation needed to be carried out before other Orders could be implemented.

A Member referred to Noses Point and explained that an excellent job had been carried out in that location but there were residents walking their greyhounds and not cleaning up. K. Parkinson explained that until the new Order was made, this was not part of the designation, but from the 1 April owners would have to clean up after their dogs or would be fined.

A Member queried what happened to the people who were on benefits and could not pay the £80 fine. K. Parkinson explained that it was always a policy of the Council to fine anyone who committed an offence. The maximum was £80 but there was a discount for payment within 10 days and residents could pay over a number of months and still receive the discount.

RESOLVED that the information contained within the Minutes, be noted.

3. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

The Chair welcomed Mrs. Taylor-Gooby to the meeting. Mrs. Taylor-Gooby explained that she had been a member on the Easington PCT and since they had combined into the County Durham PCT, she felt that residents did not know what was going on, especially regarding Peterlee Hospital. There had been some rumours and press articles that North Tees and Hartlepool Trust was to hand over Peterlee Community Hospital to County Durham PCT and convert it to a health clinic.

Professor Darzi's study had concluded that there should be more care in the community and more services should be provided closer to people's homes. There would be less visits to hospital, less travel and less infections but the facilities had to be excellent. The Easington PCT had recognised the importance of moving services into the community. The Urgent Care Centre in Peterlee had been developed and because of its huge success the facilities had to be expanded but there was a lack of space. The PCT only leased part of the building and it was owned by North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Trust. North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Trust had offered the PCT the chance to purchase the building. She explained that it had huge running costs and was not fit for purpose. The PCT had commissioned Officers to inspect the buildings and look at the floor space and its findings were that it was not fit for purpose, too small and badly designed.

The District Council had been approached to work with the PCT to identify various pieces of land for a new build hospital. One area identified was near Walkers Crisps and the other at land on Deneside School. At that time, nothing was concrete and the initiative was now lost.

Mrs. Taylor-Gooby explained that there had been discussions about closing the University Hospital of Hartlepool and Wynyard had even been identified as a potential site. She was concerned for the future of the Peterlee Community Hospital and would like to ask Durham PCT what their plans were for delivering services and treatment in Easington District and to anticipate what would happen when the University of Hartlepool closed.

A Member suggested that the Committee write to the County Durham PCT to ascertain what their current activities were in Easington District. He had major concerns that the District had been forgotten about.

A Member referred to Cherry Knowle Hospital in Ryhope which was rumoured to close and he felt that there could be a centralised hospital on that location. A decision had not yet been made on North Tees and Hartlepool Hospitals and Sunderland City Hospital was built in the middle of the city.

A Member commented that it was national policy to have treatment in communities but it had to be high quality and make sure that the District had the best facilities.

The Scrutiny Support Manager explained that following Councillor David Taylor-Gooby's attendance at the 'Big Conversation' in Wheatley Hill Community Centre, the Committee's concerns were brought to the attention of the County Durham PCT. A follow up letter would be sent and an invitation to attend a future meeting.

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RESOLVED that a letter be sent to County Durham PCT inviting them to attend a future meeting of the Committee.

4. FEEDBACK FROM SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

At the last meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board held on 21 January, 2008, the following issue was discussed:-

Evaluation of Overview and Scrutiny in County Durham.

The Scrutiny Support Manager explained that it had been agreed that an evaluation of the Overview and Scrutiny procedures in County Durham would be undertaken. This would identify areas of Best Practice, potential improvement and produce a road map for the new authority. The County Durham network of Members and Officers were keen to ensure that scrutiny practitioners had influenced the model. Scrutiny Management Board had been consulted and the draft document circulated.

RESOLVED that the information given be noted.

5. SERVICE UNIT PERFORMANCE REPORTING - ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND LICENSING

Consideration was given to the report of the Environmental Health and Licensing Manager which provided information on the Commercial Enforcement and Licensing Teams of the Environmental Health and Licensing Unit, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Work on the Environmental Health and Licensing Unit was divided according to teams. The report provided details on the commercial and enforcement team which included food safety and infectious disease control, food premises inspection, complaints relating to food safety or food premises, cases of food related infectious disease and outbreaks of infectious disease, Health and Safety at Work enforcement, inspection of premises for Health and Safety, complaints relating to Health and Safety, notifications of workplace accidents, pollution control, authorised process inspections, assessment of local air quality, investigation of pollution, noise and public health complaints from commercial and industrial activities and contaminated land assessments and consultations.

J. Benson explained that the 'Scores on the Doors' was a full assessment of a shops hygiene and a certificate was given so the public was aware of how hygienic the shop was.

A Member queried if permission from the owner of the shop was required. J. Benson explained that this initiative had been tried in a number of areas across the country. The good shops would display their results although all scores were published and it was beyond the owners control.

A Member queried how the Council handled illegal food outlets. J. Benson explained that the Council had powers of entry in any food business. The business was required to register and had to give 28 days notice prior to opening.

A Member commented that a food premises had opened in Seaham and did not have permission for change of use. J. Benson explained that he had met the

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owner personally and he had the necessary food safety permissions. The issue was a planning matter regarding change of use. Environmental Health could not take into account whether or not the owner had the correct planning permissions.

The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager explained that food law was independent of planning law. His advice to owners would be to gain the necessary planning permissions before any works were undertaken to alter the premises.

A Member queried if the legislation covered burger vans. J. Benson explained that if the van was registered in the District, then they were included in the inspection programme. If the van did not trade in the District, then it would be inspected under the licensing legislation.

A Member referred to the smoke free legislation and asked if this applied to Members of the public standing outside. J. Benson explained that there was nothing in the legislation regarding smoking next to a building. The Council had adopted an enforcement policy. An individual would be helped in the first instance, then receive a written warning, then the law would be enforced.

A Member queried if Environmental Health tested the sea water. J. Benson explained that staff from the Environment Agency were responsible for testing the sea water once per year during the bathing months. The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager explained that this was a national system set up by Government. The Environment Agency sampled the water and local authorities were responsible for publishing results.

A Member commented that he felt it would be preferable if this work was carried out by the District Council as he had grave concerns regarding the minewater that was polluting the sea off the east coast. The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager explained that for the District Council to sample the sea water, would be very expensive as they did not have the expertise.

A Member suggested that the Environment Agency be invited to a future meeting to answer Members queries regarding the testing of sea water and mine water pollution.

A Member queried if there was an age limit on taxi licensing vehicles. The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager explained that at present, the vehicle should be no more than 5 years old. The Council could extend this if the vehicle was maintained to a high standard for an additional year. He had been approached by taxi companies asking if they could consider changing the policy as vehicles were now lasting longer.

The Chair thanked the Officers for their report.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the information given be noted;
- (ii) the Environment Agency be invited to a future meeting to answer Members' queries on the testing of sea water and minewater pollution.

6. ANY ADDITIONAL URGENT ITEMS 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 following item of business, not shown on the Agenda, be considered as a matter of urgency.

7. MOMENTUM - PATHWAYS TO HEALTH CARE CONSULTATION PROCESS (AOB)

The Scrutiny Support Manager explained that in August 2007, representatives from Hartlepool and North Tees NHS Trust had attended a meeting on the Pathways to Health Care Consultation Process which centred around hospital services and the road map of a potential new hospital. A copy of the letter had been sent to Durham County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee who was a formal consultee regarding changes in the timescales of the programme. The consultation process would commence in June 2008. He had asked representatives to attend a future meeting together with Durham County Council's Scrutiny Officer and the Chair of the Health Scrutiny Committee as they were formal consultees. He wanted to ensure that the District Council's issues and concerns were taken into consideration.

RESOLVED that representatives from Hartlepool and North Tees NHS Trust, Durham County Council's Scrutiny Officer and the Chair of the Health Scrutiny Committee be invited to a future meeting.