

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
REGENERATION SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON MONDAY, 27TH OCTOBER, 2008**

Present: Councillor D. Raine (Chair)
Councillors S. Bishop, Mrs. E.M. Connor,
Mrs. S. Forster, H High, M Routledge,
Mrs. B.A. Sloan and C Walker

Apologies: Councillor D J Taylor Gooby

1. **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 6th October, 2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

MATTERS ARISING

The Scrutiny Support Manager advised that arrangements had been made for Mrs V Fee to attend the next meeting to discuss the County Durham Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee's review of "Seizing the Future" proposals by Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust.

The Scrutiny Support Manager reported that he had attended a meeting of the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee which was looking at the options for the siting of a new hospital at Wynyard. Copies of the papers related to this were available on request and a briefing paper prepared by the Scrutiny Support Manager would be circulated to Members.

Members were advised that it had been decided to locate the new hospital at Wynyard Business Park. Easington was one of only nine to respond to the consultation and whilst it supported the proposals for a new hospital it was with the proviso that there would be appropriate transport infrastructure to access healthcare on the site and that there would be no deterioration of existing services for the people in Easington.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

2. **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE** held on 14th October, 2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were submitted.

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

3. **PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

There were no members of the public present.

4. **FEEDBACK FROM SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD**

The Chair reported that at the last meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board held on 20th October, 2008 the following was discussed:

- Minutes of the Executive – 14 October 2008.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

5. SERVICE UNIT PERFORMANCE REPORTING – PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL SERVICES

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Planning and Building Control Services which provided information on the performance of the Planning and Building Control Services Unit, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Members were advised that performance improvement continued to focus on indicators related to the determination of planning applications. Current performance was outlined in the report together with performance for 2006/07 and 2007/08. Figures for the first quarter in 2008/09 showed further improvement and whilst figures for the second quarter were slightly lower they were still good.

The trend continued to show significant and continuous improvement and now matched or exceeded all national and Council service targets. When considered as part of a basket of regulatory indicators, the Audit Commission had provisionally ranked Easington as first out of 388 authorities with 100% of indicators improved since last year and 50% of indicators in the top quartile for performance. The final audit report was awaiting verification and a more detailed report would be forthcoming.

Preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF) was now in transition between finalising the draft LDF Core Strategy for Easington and commencing preparation work for the development of a new LDF for County Durham.

The draft Easington Core Strategy was published for consultation in May and the results of this would be reported to Council. Further development of the Strategy would then cease, but the draft Strategy would provide an important policy context for the development of priorities for the new Council. The work undertaken by Easington was amongst the most advanced in the County and the strategy adopted was recognised as being the clearest. This would help to advance LDF preparation for the County by providing an established and viable basis for future plan preparation and had also informed the development of the Growth Point initiative.

Over the coming months, the service would also bring to a conclusion the various technical studies undertaken to provide an evidence base for the LDF. Reports would be submitted to Council for approval to underpin the core strategy and would then be assimilated with similar reports prepared by the other Durham Districts, in order to underpin future plan making activity for the new Council.

Draft transitional regulations provided for the early transfer of development plan preparation to the new authority. In anticipation of the enactment of these regulations, the early integration of development plan activity was agreed by each of the Durham Authorities. Members of the development plan team now met twice a week to ensure the delivery of all the statutory requirements necessary for the new authority to fulfil its new role and to enable it to commence the development of the new LDF in January.

Two of the first tasks of the new team were to deliver a Local Development Scheme (LDS) and a combined Annual Monitoring Report for County Durham. The Government required submission of both reports before December and publication of these documents was on target. The documents were amongst a number of 'must haves' to be delivered by the planning and building control service before Vesting Day to ensure a smooth service transition. To achieve these deliverables, three sub-workstreams had been established to deliver the 'must haves' for the Development Control,

Regeneration Services Scrutiny Committee - 27th October, 2008

Development Plans and Building Control. Each sub-workstream provided progress reports to the Planning Workstream on a fortnightly basis.

Development of a New Growth Point for South and East Durham was approved by the Government in July. The County Durham Growth Point bid covered the Districts of Easington, Sedgefield and Wear Valley and work was progressing to develop an accelerated programme of housing delivery and regeneration across the area covered by the three Districts by the October deadline.

Accelerated housing development in the current economic climate was problematic, but the programme focused development in the period to 2016 and would continue to deliver growth after that date. Development of the bid had helped to inform the future work programme of the Planning Service and had been incorporated in the draft LDS for the new Council. If the Government approved the Programme of Development later this year, it would help to accelerate development plan preparation across the new authority and ensure that the appropriate plans were in place to deliver the accelerated housing programme when market conditions improved.

Councillor H High referred to the New Growth Point for South and East Durham and asked if the new development would be contained within existing village boundaries. G Reed confirmed that any new development would be contained within existing boundaries.

Councillor M Routledge referred to the new unitary Council and queried the arrangements for Member panel meetings and training related to planning issues. G Reed advised that the workstream looking at this area of work were aware that Member training was needed. As yet no structure of delivery had been agreed but the current proposal was for one central panel and 3 smaller panels. The Democracy workstream looking at committee structures were liaising with the Planning workstream regarding proposals for Panel meetings.

The Chair expressed concern that following LGR residents would be uncertain about where to go and who to approach for advice in relation to planning matters. G Reed advised that workstreams were concentrating on local delivery of services however it would be for the new Council to determine the new Committee structures.

The Chair thanked the Officer for his report.

RESOLVED the information given, be noted.

AT THIS POINT COUNCILLORS MRS. E.M. CONNOR AND MRS. B.A. SLOAN DECLARED A PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTEREST AND LEFT THE MEETING.

6. **EAST DURHAM HOMES – DELIVERY PLAN**

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Housing which gave details of progress on delivery of the East Durham Homes (EDH) Annual Delivery Plan 2008/09 from 1 April to 30 September 2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Members were advised that under the terms of the formal 10 year Management Agreement with EDH the Company was required to produce an annual update to the Delivery Plan and to seek approval from Council.

As there had been significant changes in both EDH and the District Council since the Company was established in 2004, the Delivery Plan Document itself was updated to

Regeneration Services Scrutiny Committee - 27th October, 2008

reflect the changes in delegated duties, operational activities and the developing relationship between the Council and Company. The 2008/09 Delivery Plan was agreed by Full Council on 31 March 2008.

The 2008/09 Delivery Plan was developed to provide detailed information about the delegated housing services provided by the Company with specific reference to key actions to be undertaken during the 2008/09 financial year.

The Plan included a detailed Service Improvement Plan which consisted of the key actions from the Company's individual Service Plans, the 'Service Promises' to customers of each service area, key Performance Indicators, and a summary of the 2008/09 Capital Programme. In each section there were clearly identified 'Key Activities' to be undertaken and these Activities were captured within the Service Improvement Plan as a series of Actions with specific resources and responsible Officers attributed to enable future monitoring by the Company and the Council.

A detailed summary of key achievements by EDH against the main objectives set out in the Delivery Plan were outlined in Appendix 1 to the report and P Tanney took Members through these in detail.

In summary, EDH had made significant progress against the key objectives set out in the 2008/09 Delivery Plan and had a comprehensive suite of Service Plans in place to ensure that progress continued towards a re-inspection of the Company by the Audit Commission Housing Inspectorate.

I Morris advised that next years Delivery Plan was currently being developed and would be considered by Full Council in February/March 2009.

Councillor H High made reference to a house in Shotton which had not been re-let in almost two years. P Tanney advised that he would speak to Councillor High following the meeting regarding this individual case.

The Chair expressed concern that a number of residents had been given inadequate or vague information regarding dates when works to their properties would be undertaken. P Tanney advised that until EDH achieved two star status the amount of money they would receive was still uncertain. Residents had been consulted on the future programme of improvements but this would not be published until the finance was confirmed, and it was approved by the Board. With regard to this year's agreed programme of works it was available to view on the web site.

Councillor S Bishop asked where the telephone number for those using a mobile telephone could be found. P Tanney advised that the number was available on the web site and had been widely publicised in the local press. It had also been advertised in "Insight" which had gone to every household in the district in September.

Councillor Bishop referred to the Repairs Focus Group and queried where the 16 members were drawn from. P Tanney advised that an advert was placed in "Insight" for volunteers to sit on the group. There had been a good response to the advert and the group was made up of residents from throughout the district.

Councillor M Routledge made reference to the shortlist of contractors and queried the names of the seven companies through to the next stage. P Tanney advised that at this stage he would prefer not to name the companies but would take advice and speak to Councillor Routledge following the meeting.

Regeneration Services Scrutiny Committee - 27th October, 2008

The Chair hoped that EDH would achieve the two stars and thanked the Officers for their report.

RESOLVED that the information given be noted and the performance monitoring of delivery of the Plan continue to be undertaken by the Head of Housing and included in the quarterly Housing Service reports to this Committee.

7. BRACKENHILL BUSINESS PARK (AOB)

Councillor H High requested a progress report on problems associated with traffic management at Brackenhill Business Park.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Support Manager investigate and an update be given to a future meeting.

JT/PH com/regen scr/081002
27th October, 2008