

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

HELD ON TUESDAY 9 OCTOBER 2007

Present: Councillor Mrs J Maitland (Chair)
Councillors A Collinson, J Haggan,
R Taylor and Mrs V M Williams

Apologies: Councillors A Burnip, Mrs M Baird
and M Nicholls

1 **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 18 September 2007, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

2 **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE** held on 25 September 2007, 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**

At the last meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board held on 1 October 2007, the following issues were discussed:-

- (i) The Children's Trust Scrutiny Project – Young People Not in Employment, Education or Training
- (ii) Correspondence from East Durham Local Strategic Partnership regarding the review carried out by the former Partnerships Scrutiny Committee

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

5 **SERVICE UNIT PERFORMANCE REPORTING – CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT**

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Chief Executive which detailed performance of the Corporate Development Unit for the period April – September 2007, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Progress against the Team's indicators and work programme were detailed in Appendices A and B to the report.

J Brindle, Assistant Chief Executive outlined the Unit's key achievements for this period. With regard to performance and improvement, she explained that the final report and Improvement Plan for the Best Value Review of Support Services had been approved and was currently being implemented. The new Corporate Plan had also been approved which confirmed the main focus of the Council for the next 3 years.

The performance washup report had been produced which formed the basis of the annual Best Value Performance Plan. During 2007/2008, in addition to continuing

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to concentrate on improving in poor performing areas, focus was to be given to achieving top quartile performance for a number of indicators. Performance Improvement Teams (PITs) had been established for benefits satisfaction, rents and housing re-let times, with PIT work continuing in the areas of planning, recycling and public buildings and DDA compliance.

The Unit had also been involved with the Audit Commission's inspection of the Regeneration Service, in the value for money review into the Horticultural Services and the annual Use of Resources Assessment which commenced in July 2007.

At a sub-regional and regional level, the Unit continued to support the regional Districts Improvement Partnership and was taking a lead role in the Countywide Local Area Agreement project team.

The review of the Council's approach to community engagement had been completed and Terms of Reference were being drafted for the Neighbourhood Forums, led by the Heads of Democratic Services and Administration and Neighbourhood Initiatives. Progress had been made in establishing a Citizens Panel which had been consulted on proposed dog control orders as a pilot exercise. The Unit was also working with the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder on piloting "performance through residents eyes".

The Equality and Diversity Officer had been involved in a number of initiatives and these were detailed in Section 4.5 in the report for Members consideration.

Other key areas of work during this period relating to organisational development, risk assessments and policy work were also detailed in the report. Members were advised that the Unit was currently supporting Managers in carrying out appraisals, and continued to assist with Local Government Review work and the production of the Community Strategy.

To conclude, she advised that there had been very little slippage in planned work and Officers within the Unit continued to support East Durham Homes in relation to performance management.

Members referred to the PITs for 2007/8 and in particular the Team established to improve housing re-let times. J Brindle advised that performance in this area was improving although it would take some time before this was reflected in quartile positioning. A Member commented that in circumstances where a tenant vacated one EDH property to occupy another, current policy only allowed one week for the move. She felt that this period of time was inadequate and could, on occasions, create a situation whereby a tenant would be required to pay rent on both properties until the move was completed. J Brindle advised that procedural issues such as this were considered by the PIT and she would forward the comments to EDH. A further comment was made by a Member concerning the benefits procedures for handling 'change in circumstances' in such situations.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.