

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY, 11TH DECEMBER, 2007**

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

Apologies: Councillor Mrs M Baird and D Maddison

1. **THE MINUTES OF THE LASTING MEETING** held on 20th November, 2007, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

2. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

- (I) **East Durham Community Development Trust (EDCDT)**

The Scrutiny Support Manager advised that a briefing note in relation to the monitoring arrangements of the EDCDT had been circulated to each Member.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

3. **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE** held on 27th November, 2007, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were submitted.

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

4. **PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

There were no members of the public present.

5. **FEEDBACK FROM SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD**

The Chair advised that at the last meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board held on 3 December, 2007 the following issues were discussed.

- (i) Waiving of call-in related to the renewal of the contract for the kerbside collection of materials for re-cycling
 - (ii) Scrutiny review of East Durham Local Strategic Partnership

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

6. **SERVICE UNIT PERFORMANCE REPORTING – DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND ADMINISTRATION**

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Democratic Services and Administration which gave an update on the performance of the Democratic Services and Administration unit, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

The report provided an update on the previous three months of the unit which comprised the following service areas:

Resources Scrutiny Committee - 11th December, 2007

- Democratic and Member Services
- Elections and Electoral Registration
- Legal and Administration Services
- Risk Management

With regard to political management arrangements the unit was involved in ongoing community engagement work, some of which related to the Council's existing area engagement activities. Staff had worked in conjunction with Durham Constabulary to examine the potential of joined-up working in this area. This followed a series of community engagement events at which the views of the community were invited regarding the Council's current activities in this area. It was also a feature of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act.

Development work in this area was ongoing and it was anticipated that a report on options for reviewing the Council's area engagement activities would be brought before Members early in the New Year.

Councillor Mrs J Maitland asked how often the proposed new locally based forums would be held and if District Council Officers would still attend. B Garside explained that the process was on going and it was proposed that meetings would be held on a quarterly basis. District Council Officers would continue to support the meetings and front line staff would also be present.

Details of progress made against the Scrutiny work programmes for Regeneration and Community Services and Resources Scrutiny Committees was outlined in the report.

There were a number of countywide Scrutiny initiatives in which the Council was involved by virtue of having members "at the table".

A Press release was issued on behalf of the Council seeking community views in respect of the County Durham Overview and Scrutiny network review regarding Public Transport in County Durham. The Scrutiny Support Manager was leading the collation of community responses to the review.

Arrangements for Scrutiny of the County Durham Children's Trust had been developed. The first issue to be considered by the Scrutiny Working Group was Young People not in Education, Employment or Training. The Council was also represented on the Joint Health Scrutiny Sub Committee.

It was explained that as Local Government Review progressed the Council could become more involved in County Scrutiny issues.

In relation to Member Training and Development events continued to be arranged based upon both the needs identified by Members themselves as well as those arising from Council priorities.

Details of training and development initiatives that had been delivered were outlined in the report.

The Member Development Steering Group would reconvene to discuss the Council's approach to Member Development in light of Local Government Review and linked to this would be the review of Member Personal Development Plans.

Resources Scrutiny Committee - 11th December, 2007

With regard to Local Democracy Week/Community Engagement the unit took a lead role in organising a Political Speed Dating event held during "Local Democracy Week".

As part of the event, six Members of the Council's Executive answered questions posed by young people from the District of Easington Youth Forum, East Durham Positive Inclusion Partnership and Dawdon Community Centre. The event gave young people the chance to learn about how local government worked in the District but also the democratic process as a whole. It was expected that similar events would be held in the future.

Members were advised that the Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced a duty on Councils to review all polling districts and polling places by the end of 2007. The aim of the review was to ensure that all electors had reasonable facilities for voting as were practicable in the circumstances, and as far as was reasonable and practicable polling places were accessible to all electors including disabled people.

A comprehensive consultation process was undertaken and a Working Group was established to consider the authority's proposals together with representations received. Final proposals were approved by District Council on 23 November 2007.

The annual canvass was carried out by post and for the first time the authority provided a telephone registration service which enabled householders to confirm "no change" registrations. Electoral Reform Services undertook this on the authority's behalf and a total of 9233 households (22%) responded by telephone.

A door-to-door canvass of those households, who had not responded, after the initial request and the first reminder, was undertaken following which a final letter was sent to remaining non responders. Prior to publishing the Register, the overall total household response rate was 95%, however, through further exercises this had now increased to 96%.

The Chair queried how many first time voters were registered. B Garside advised that he would provide the Chair with this figure following the meeting.

Details of the election process for the May 2008 Unitary elections were outlined to Members. Meetings were currently being held with neighbouring District Councils to discuss the sharing of services. A draft timetable was available to any Member who required a copy.

Reference was made to the Risk Management function, details of which were outlined in the report. It was explained that a quarterly progress report was provided to the Audit Committee on the Council's approach to managing risk and the implementation of the Council's Risk Management Strategy to provide assurance that the Council effectively managed its risks.

A Risk Management Performance Workplan had been developed for use as a tool to measure performance and progress initiatives and actions within the risk management function and corporately across the Council.

In relation to the Corporate Risk Review for 2007/2008 Service Plan risks had been completed and the Risk Register had been fully updated to take account of these.

It was pointed out that effective sickness monitoring continued to be carried out in the unit. Sickness figures for September to November 2007 was 4.18 days, overall sickness for the unit for the last twelve months was 4.83 days. The Councils corporate target for 2007/2008 was 8 days.

Resources Scrutiny Committee - 11th December, 2007

With regard to Local Government Review, Management Team had given consideration to the single unitary decision and its impact on Council priorities and work streams. The Council would be fully involved in shaping the new unitary and in order to do this additional capacity may be required during the next 18 months which would be reviewed as implementation evolved. It may be necessary to "de-prioritise" current objectives within the Service Plan, a copy of the current delivery plan included within the Service Plan was attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

Councillor Mrs V Williams made reference to specific Member training events where places were limited and Members were unable to secure a place. The Scrutiny Support Manager advised that in some instances the authority were not advised of the number of places available, however where Members were unsuccessful in gaining a place on a particular event their names were retained to attend if the course was repeated.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

7. 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.

8. CENTRALISATION OF HACKWORTH ROAD DEPOT (AOB)

Councillor A Collinson requested an update on the centralisation of depots to Hackworth Road, Peterlee.

The Scrutiny Support Manager advised that O Sherratt, Director of Community Services would be requested to provide an update.

RESOLVED that O Sherratt, Director of Community Services be requested to provide an update on the centralisation of depots to Hackworth Road, Peterlee.