

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY 5 JUNE 2007

Present: Councillor C Patching (Chair)

Councillors B Burn, R Burnip, P J Campbell,
T Longstaff, Mrs J Maslin and
T Unsworth

Also Present: Councillor Mrs J Freak – Executive Member for Social
Inclusion and Culture

Apologies: Councillors Mrs A E Laing, D Milsom and Mrs S Mason

1. **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE** held on 25 May, 2007, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were submitted.

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

2. **MATTER ARISING FROM THE MINUTES:-**

- (i) **Leisure Centres Catering Services Concession Agreement (Minute No. 4 refers)**

A Member made reference to the bar prices in the Leisure Centre. P Irwin advised that the bar and catering tariffs were not part of the partnership management agreement, however in determining prices the company should make reference to charges imposed by similar businesses operating in the area. He would refer Members comments to the Contracts Manager for discussion when the Service Unit was next due to report to the Committee in October 2007.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted and the issue of bar tariffs be considered at the Committee in October 2007.

3. **PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

There were no members of the public present.

4. **FEEDBACK FROM SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD**

The Chair reported that as part of the review of scrutiny structures feedback would be provided from Scrutiny Management Board on issues which fell within the remit of this Committee.

The Chair reported on the following matters raised at the meeting on 1 June 2007:-

- (i) Councillors A Burnip and D Raine were re-elected as Chair and Vice-Chair of the Scrutiny Management Board respectively;

Community Services Scrutiny Committee – 5 June 2007

- (ii) two reports on the proposed staffing arrangements within the Regeneration and Partnerships Unit and the Asset and Property Management Unit were agreed;
- (iii) the Board discussed the CCTV cameras erected in Seaside Lane, Easington Colliery and asked when details of the operational control of the system would be finalised. Members agreed that the matter be referred to this Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted and S Arkley, Head of Neighbourhood Initiatives be asked to address the operation of the CCTV cameras in Easington Colliery as part of his Service Unit Performance Report due at the next meeting of this Committee.

5. **FORWARD PLAN**

Consideration was given to the latest Forward Plan of key decisions which covered the period 1 June to 30 September 2007, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

The Chair advised that the purpose of circulating the Forward Plan was to allow the Committee to examine those issues that fell within the remit of Community Services Scrutiny Committee.

There were three issues within the current plan which related to Liveability and the Chair expressed concern that the decisions were due to be considered by the Executive in June 2007 which did not allow much time for the Committee to comment. He stressed the importance of involving Scrutiny Committees earlier in the reporting process as part of their role in policy development.

Therefore, in view of the tight timescale it was suggested that the Executive Member for Liveability be asked to confirm that the reports were on target and to advise if there were any issues the Committee should be aware of, particularly in relation to the decision regarding the development of a policy for the refuse collection services.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted and the Executive Member be asked to provide a response to the Chair of the Committee prior to the reports being considered by the Executive.

6. **SERVICE UNIT PERFORMANCE REPORTING - LEISURE CENTRE PARTNERSHIPS ARRANGEMENTS**

Consideration was given to the report of the Senior Cultural Development Officer which provided Members with a position statement on the operation of the Leisure Centres under the partnership arrangements with Leisure Connection Limited. A copy of the report had been circulated to each Member.

P Irwin outlined the arrangements for the management of the Council's Leisure Centres and explained that over a four year period the savings to the Council on its base year budget was £412,658.

As part of the contractual arrangements the buildings remained in the ownership of the Council and there was a schedule outlining

Community Services Scrutiny Committee – 5 June 2007

responsibility for repairs and maintenance. The company were responsible for carrying out repairs up to the value of £500 with the Council responsible for anything above this sum. Major work would be considered by the Council's Capital Programme Working Group.

As part of the contractual arrangements with Leisure Connection an agreed monitoring process was in place which allowed the Council to issue an official notice if the company did not follow agreed quality management procedures or related clauses in the contract. To date there had been two official notices issued to the company relating to maintaining cleanliness standards at the centres. The areas of concern were rectified within agreed timescales and continued to be monitored.

In addition, as part of the arrangements, the company had to present an Annual Plan to the Council which outlined the proposed pricing structure of facilities, a breakdown in attendance levels and plans for the coming year, together with details of agreed performance indicators. The table in Section 4(2) in the report showed that over a five year period there had been an increase of over 150,000 additional attendances at the centres.

To ensure the Council's management fee/subsidy paid to Leisure Connection was targeted towards priority groups within the District a 'Leisure Saver' card had been introduced which provided a range of discounts for key activities at the centres.

To date 3,482 cards had been issued which had resulted in an additional 21,400 visits to the centres. A breakdown of the age categories of the cards issued was detailed in Section 4.4 in the report. The school holiday free swim scheme had proved very successful and it was proposed that activities planned for the summer holidays would be more structured which should increase attendances further.

At future meetings of this Committee an update would be provided on key performance indicators, as detailed in Appendix 1. At the request of Members, information would be included in future reports on trends and progress in achieving the targets set.

In discussing the report, a Member referred to anti-social behaviour and cleanliness around Seaham Leisure Centre. P Irwin advised that responsibility for maintenance of the outside areas was divided between Durham County Council, Seaham Town Council and Leisure Connection. P Irwin advised that he would refer Members comments in relation to anti-social behaviour and cleanliness to Leisure Connection and ensure that areas that they were responsible for were being regularly maintained.

The Chair made reference to the accrued savings referred to in Section 3.2 in the report and P Irwin confirmed that the savings to the Council had been achieved as predicted.

A Member asked if Leisure Connection was notified of inspections in advance. P Irwin explained that health and safety inspections were diaried, however on the spot inspections were also carried out. He

added that Service Level Agreements had been established for key health and safety areas which included the responsibility for prevention of Legionnaires Disease and these were monitored closely by the Council's Health and Safety Manager.

Reference was made to the figures presented in relation to the attendance levels of children. The report referred to the success of free swims yet the information in Section 4.2 showed an overall decrease in attendances by children for 2006/7 compared to previous years. P Irwin responded that the 'Leisure Saver' cards when swiped as a swim did not identify the specific age group of the user which distorted the overall figures. There was a need to improve data collection methods.

In conclusion, Members suggested that it would be useful for a visit to be arranged to both Seaham and Peterlee Leisure Centres, preferably during recess when usage was anticipated to be higher.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted and a visit be arranged to Peterlee and Seaham Leisure Centres as detailed above.

7. **DISTRICT OF EASINGTON SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2006/07**

Consideration was given to the report of the Scrutiny Support Manager which sought approval to the District of Easington Scrutiny Annual Report for 2006/07, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

The report detailed the work of the Council's scrutiny function undertaken by the three Scrutiny Committees during 2006/7.

In April 2006 the Council established three new Scrutiny Committees based around Executive portfolios. The annual report set out the proposed areas of work that would form part of the new Committees' work programmes which included:-

- Service Unit Position Reporting
- Slippage from the 2006/7 work programmes which fell within the remit of this Committee
- Policy and Service Development issues which had been identified as Council priorities in the revised Corporate Plan.

It also detailed the challenges and areas of future development that would be faced by the Scrutiny Committees arising from both the Local Government White Paper "Strong and Prosperous Communities" and the Police and Justice Act 2006, particularly where they related to the proposals to establish Community Calls for Action.

Training had been arranged facilitated by INLOGOV which would focus on the implications of the White Paper and would be tailored to meet the Council's requirements.

RESOLVED that the District of Easington Scrutiny Annual Report 2006/07, be approved and submitted to full Council for endorsement.