

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

HELD ON TUESDAY, 17TH JULY, 2007

Present: Councillor C. Patching (Chair)
Councillors Mrs. A.E. Laing, T. Longstaff,
Mrs. J. Maslin, Mrs. S. Mason, D. Milsom
and T. Unsworth

Also present: Councillor G. Patterson - Executive Member for Liveability
Councillor Mrs. J. Freak - Executive Member for Social Inclusion
and Culture

Apologies: Councillors B. Burn, P.J. Campbell and R. Burnip

1. **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 26th June, 2007, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

2. **MATTERS ARISING**

**Policy Development Waste Strategy for England
(Minute No. 7 refers)**

The Chair explained that consultation with the resident focus groups had been held the previous night at the Glebe Centre and was to be held that evening at Shotton Hall at 6.30 p.m. Feedback would be given to a Special Meeting of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee on Friday, 20th July, 2007.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

3. **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE** held on 3rd July, 2007 and of the **SPECIAL MEETING** held on 25th June, 2007, copies 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**

At the last meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board held on 11th July, 2007, the following issue was discussed:-

- * North East Regional Overview and Scrutiny Annual Conference

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

6. SERVICE UNIT PERFORMANCE REPORTING - ENERGY CONSERVATION

Consideration was given to the report of the Energy Manager which provided information on progress with the District of Easington Fuel Poverty, Energy Conservation and Utility Management Schemes, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

The District of Easington's Affordable Warmth Strategy sought to maximise external funding opportunities for energy conservation and fuel poverty schemes. Delivery was via the Corporate Warm Homes Campaign to provide warmer, healthier homes through a variety of schemes.

Details were given of the schemes which assisted vulnerable households within the District.

(a) Over 60's Free Home Insulation Scheme

121 homes had been insulated through the over 60's scheme at a cost of £36,500. The scheme was carried out by one contractor, Dyson, and customer satisfaction surveys were distributed. At present there was no waiting list.

(b) Insulation Programme to Council Dwellings

Over the period April to June 2007, 165 Council properties had been insulated at a cost of £23,500 from the Capital Programme and £17,000 matched funding. The programme targeted settlements on a needs basis. Peterlee would be concluded in six weeks and the next settlement was to be Seaham. All tenants would receive a letter in advance of the commencement of the programme.

(c) Warm Front Scheme

129 Homes had been insulated through the Warm Front Scheme at a total cost of £63,000. The scheme was publicised in 233 local venues and the Fuel Poverty Officer assisted with applications.

The Council worked in partnership with the PCT and Social Services. Briefing sessions were continuing with Primary Care Trust staff and community groups across the District. These sessions aimed to promote fuel poverty intervention schemes to partner organisation in order to reach vulnerable households. A series of energy training events were planned with community groups during 2007/8 with the aim of developing a District-wide community referral network. Members should have received a letter to request nominations for community groups within their ward. Training sessions for community volunteers would be held and once the list was compiled, Members would be advised of the community volunteers within their ward.

A Member referred to the Warm Front Scheme and queried if a pension was classed as a benefit. The Energy Manager explained that there were fifteen different benefits that qualified for the scheme although a state pension was not one of those. Tenants were encouraged to take a benefits health check and they were often entitled to extra benefits, therefore qualifying for the scheme.

Community Services Scrutiny Committee - 17th July, 2007

A Member referred to the over 60's free insulation scheme and queried why some householders could not receive the insulation. The Energy Manager explained that non-traditional built houses were exempt from the scheme because to insulate the property could cause a structural defect. The contractor would attend the property and do a physical survey to ascertain its suitability.

The Chair queried if there was a definition of fuel poverty from government. The Energy Manager explained that the fuel poverty definition by Government was when a household paid in excess of 10% of their disposable income on energy costs. The living room should be 21 degrees and the rest of the property 18 degrees. There was a holistic package available and advice was also given on fuel tariffs and energy advice in the home.

The Chair referred to the figures of matched funding in the report and explained that they did not match exactly. The Energy Manager explained that the overall matched sum did match the whole of the programme.

The Chair thanked the Energy Manager for his report.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

7. **POLICY DEVELOPMENT - DISTRICT OF EASINGTON DOG CONTROL ORDER**

The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager explained that the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act came into force in 2005 and gave local authorities new powers. The Dog Control Order would replace existing controls that the Council had under the Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act 1996. It was an offence to foul in a designated area and there was a £50 fixed penalty notice and up to £1000 on prosecution in court.

At present, approximately 100 spot fines were issued each year and 400/500 stray dogs were seized. Approximately 900 complaints from residents were received and investigated.

Preventative measures included dog waste bins, warning signs, publicity and education, warning letters, area clean ups and free dog chipping. If an area needed cleaning up anyone could call Envirocall and request that this be done. Last year, a free dog chipping scheme was introduced and 1000 dogs had been chipped.

The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager explained that there were problems with the existing law and new estates could not be added to designated areas as well as the level of spot fine could not be increased above £50 and could only be limited to controlling fouling.

The benefits of a Dog Control Order included:-

- brought in additional controls
- extended the designated areas where dog owners were required to clean up their dog faeces
- designated areas where owners must keep their dogs on a lead
- designated areas where dogs were prohibited

Community Services Scrutiny Committee - 17th July, 2007

- designated areas where a person could only take a specified maximum number of dogs

Restrictions must be realistic and enforceable and be easy for the public to understand. Restrictions must also take account of dog owners needs and would require good signage and publicity.

In designing a Dog Control Area, the Council proposed to apply no fouling to all built up areas. A decision needed to be made on which areas would be "dogs on lead only", which areas the dog prohibition would apply and if the Council wanted to apply a maximum limit on the number of dogs a person could walk.

There were a number of options available:-

Option 1 – a simple approach which would designate no fouling controls only:-

- targeted fouling as priority concern
- easier to enforce
- easier for residents to understand
- easier to publicise
- cheaper

Option 2 – applying no fouling control as Option 1 and have limited amount of dog on lead controls and dog prohibitions where problems justify:-

- more complex to enforce
- more complex to understand
- more signage required
- may be more costly

Option 3 – the complete mix of these controls applying across the district with specific controls to suit Town/Parish Council land:-

- required joint enforcement approach
- harder to understand and required extensive signage
- more costly and would take longer to implement

The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager explained that he was recommending that Option 1 be adopted and once information was gathered from Town and Parish Councils a further report would be brought back to the Committee for consultation.

The Chair queried how he would make communities aware of the Dog Control Order. The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager explained that the Council must publicise the draft order and he would be liaising with the Communications and Marketing Manager to carry out the publicity.

Community Services Scrutiny Committee - 17th July, 2007

The Director of Community Services explained that feedback was still awaited from Town and Parish Councils and all three options could not be looked at as yet, therefore Option 1 was being recommended.

The Executive Member for Liveability explained that the Council was continually looking at the problem with dog fouling and had been reasonably successful and was trying to develop this work further.

The Director of Community Services explained that it would be more difficult when looking at individual areas but was crucial that there was local consultation.

RESOLVED that:-

- (i) Option 1 should be taken forward;
- (ii) Further reports be awaited.

JC/PH com/cssc/070701
18 July 2007