

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

HELD ON TUESDAY 9 OCTOBER 2007

Present:- Councillor C. Patching (Chair)
Councillors B. Burn, R. Burnip,
Mrs. A.E. Laing, T. Longstaff,
D. Milsom and T. Unsworth

Also Present:- Councillor A. Collinson,
Councillors Mrs. A. Naylor - Executive Member for Neighbourhood
Engagement and Communications

Apologies:- Councillor Mrs. S. Mason

1. **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 18 September 2007, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed, subject to Councillor Mrs. S. Mason being added to the apologies for absence.

2. **MATTERS ARISING**

(i) **Feedback from Scrutiny Management Board
(Minute No. 4 refers)**

The Chair advised that Councillor Mrs. A.E. Laing had been nominated for the Scrutiny of the Children's Trust.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(ii) **Service Unit Performance Reporting - Environmental Services
(Minute No. 6 refers)**

B. Weatherall advised that in the current financial year, an additional £50,000 had been added to the bus shelter maintenance budget to bring all shelters in the District up to an acceptable standard.

The bus shelters ordered and which would be in place in the next 2-3 weeks were:-

- * Dixon Estate, Shotton Colliery
- * Yoden Way, Horden
- * Front Street, Wingate (3 shelters)

The shelters awaiting order which would be installed by Christmas were

- * Maritime Crescent, Grants Houses
- * Station Road, Easington Colliery
- * Horden Hall/Webb Square, Horden
- * Edenhill Road, Peterlee

Major roof repairs and replacements had been issued and the bus shelters in Stockton Road East, Hawthorn; Front Street, Hutton Henry near The Oaks would be repaired within the next 3 weeks.

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The following bus shelters would be repaired by the end of March 2008:-

- * Station Road, Shotton near Salters Lane junction
- * Pemberton Arms, Haswell Moor
- * Gregson Terrace, South Hetton
- * Cold Hesledon near the Industrial Estate
- * Dene View, High Hesleden
- * Castle Eden (5 Shelters)

A Districtwide trial of a new perforated steel panel for the shelters that had historically suffered from a high level of vandalism, had been carried out. These works had been undertaken in Crawford Avenue and Yoden Road, Peterlee. Various shelters in Haswell; Front Street, Shotton Colliery; Station Road, Easington Colliery; Woods Terrace, Murton (roof panels only) and East Moor Estate, Murton.

The £50,000 additional budget was now almost fully committed to cover the works detailed, and the annual routine maintenance budget of £38,300 currently had approximately £29,000 remaining to cover shelter repairs for this financial year.

A Member referred to the shelter in Grants Houses and asked when this would be completed. B. Weatherall explained that he had not listed the shelter in Inchcape Terrace as this was being replaced through an insurance claim. The shelter had now been ordered and would be replaced in the next 2-3 weeks.

A Member queried if there was any damage to any of the shelters in Seaham. B. Weatherall explained that the Council held back installing shelters with the solid steel panels as it was the main through route. One shelter opposite the shops in Parkside may have steel panels installed as it was being repeatedly vandalised.

Councillor Collinson commented that it was 6 months into the financial year and queried if any of the £50,000 had been expended. B. Weatherall explained that all of the funding was committed and some works had been carried out.

Councillor Collinson referred to the bus shelter at Dixon Estate in Shotton and explained that there had been a hole in the roof for more than two years. This had been reported on numerous occasions by District and Parish Councillors but had not been repaired. B. Weatherall explained that the bus shelter had been ordered and would be installed in approximately 2-3 weeks. He commented that Councillors should not have to repeatedly report repairs.

The Director of Community Services commented that a lot of the bus shelters were being repaired and replaced and a press release should be circulated explaining which shelters were included in the programme.

Councillor Collinson queried the procedure for providing new shelters. There was no shelter near the Aged Miners Homes in Shotton and he had requested that a shelter be provided a number of years ago. B. Weatherall explained that he had had discussions with Shotton Parish Council to contribute towards a new shelter but funding had not been available. He added that with the additional budget, there should be no problem providing a bus shelter in that location.

Councillor Collinson queried if shelters in country lanes which were no longer used, would be removed to alleviate the pressure on the budget for

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maintenance. B. Weatherall explained that a lot of the shelters away from villages were brick built and did not need a lot of maintenance. There was an argument that they should stay because they were not on a main bus route.

A Member queried if there were statistics to show how many times a bus shelter had been damaged. B. Weatherall explained that every repair was logged and the problem area stood out very quickly.

Councillor Collinson queried the reporting procedure for damaged shelters. B. Weatherall explained that there was a periodic full inspection every 12-18 months and the cleansing operatives had a pre-printed book to complete when they found a defect. Once the defect has been reported to him, he would then issue the order. It was 7 days for a non-urgent repair and 24 hours for an urgent repair to make the shelter safe. With more complex works, timescales were negotiated.

The Director of Community Services explained that over the past 2 years, efficiency had been improved on the period notified for repairs in relation to bus shelters. B. Weatherall recorded the percentage of repairs undertaken within 7 days and this had shown a considerable improvement. He added that he would be happy to review the procedures with the Clean and Green teams.

A Member queried if there was much difference in cost of replacing the plastic with steel. B. Weatherall explained that the cost of steel was approximately £2 more.

RESOLVED that the information given be noted.

3. **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.

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 1 October 2007, the following issues were discussed:-

- * Scrutiny of the Children's Trust;
- * Letter from East Durham Local Strategic Partnership in relation to the work undertaken by the Partnership Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED that the information given be noted.

6. **SERVICE UNIT PERFORMANCE REPORTING - COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING**

Consideration was given to the report of the Communications and Marketing Manager which updated Members on the performance of the Communications and Marketing Unit, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

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The Unit's 2006/2007 Service Plans were affected by unexpected changes to two Service Level Agreements with East Durham Homes and Easington Primary Care Trust and by the impact of the Local Government Review.

The Communications and Marketing Officer explained that in the year to the end of March 2007, local and regional newspapers carried 1,355 articles about the Council and its activities, 21% increase on the previous year. Of these, 60% were positive stories, 13% were negative.

Infopoint remained a very important communication channel for the Council and its quarterly publication distribution was a vital ongoing task. Plans to review the design, content and frequency of Infopoint were on hold pending the outcome of the Local Government Review.

The Pride In Easington initiative had helped positive press coverage for the District Council. It had been highlighted that not as much work had gone into regeneration youth services, e-government and community engagement and they were currently working to maximise positive media activities.

There were no official performance indicators for the Unit, only local performance indicators which were outlined in the report.

The Chair referred to the separation of the functions under the Service Level Agreements with the PCT and East Durham Homes and queried who handled their publicity. The Communications and Marketing Officer explained that the new County Durham PCT they had their own PR and Marketing function. East Durham Homes had employed a Communications Manager the previous year. She left post in December 2006 and the Council carried out their work on a temporary basis until her successor was appointed in July 2007.

The Chair referred to the review of the Communications Strategy and raised concerns that it was outdated. The Communications and Marketing Officer explained that it was being worked upon at the moment but did not need a lot of alteration.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhood Engagement and Communications explained that an event was to be held on 17 October which coincided with Local Democracy Week.

The Scrutiny Support Manager explained that because of timescales involved and the need to launch the event in Local Democracy Week, the invitation to Members was to observe the process only and other events would be held where Members would have the opportunity to participate.

The Chair thanked the Communications and Marketing Officer for her report.

RESOLVED that the information given be noted.

CERTIFIED TRUE RECORD

CHAIR

DATE