

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING

OF THE EXECUTIVE

HELD ON TUESDAY, 6 NOVEMBER, 2007

Present: Councillor A Napier (Chair)
Councillors R Crute, Mrs J Freak, D Myers,
Mrs A Naylor, G Patterson, F Shaw
and P G Ward

Apologies: Councillors R J Todd and Mrs E Huntington

1. **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 16 October 2007, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

2. **LOANS DIARY – TRANSACTIONS FOR THE QUARTER ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2007**

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Member for Resources which gave details of loans transactions for the quarter ended 30 September, 2007, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

The report gave details of short term lending/borrowing, treasury accounts and long term borrowing.

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

3. **EAST DURHAM COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TRUST (EDCDT)**

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Member for Social Inclusion and Culture which sought to confirm the Council's level of funding for the East Durham Community Development Trust (EDCDT) for 2007/2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Members were advised that in 2006, in a move to improve services to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in East Durham, Easington Council for Voluntary Services (ECVS) and East Durham Community Empowerment Network (EDCEN) agreed to merge and form EDCDT. The EDCDT was launched in March 2007 and the original two charities were dissolved.

The aim of the Trust was to promote charitable purposes for the benefit of urban or rural regeneration in areas of social and economic deprivation in East Durham and the surrounding area.

Details of how this could be achieved together with details of the services provided by the Trust were outlined in the report. In addition, the Trust would also establish a VCS "One Stop Shop" by establishing a new building. Building work was estimated to be completed by March 2008 and would house the new charity, and have rentable office space to VCS groups to generate income for the Trust.

The Council had previously given a four-year commitment to fund the ECVS to allow the organisation to plan ahead. In May 2004 the Council agreed to give

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a further four-year commitment to fund the ECVS until March 2008, with the actual level of funding being subject to an annual review.

At a meeting of the Executive held on 27 February 2007, it was recommended that the £30,000 grant for 2006/2007 previously approved for ECVS be transferred to EDCDT.

A further report regarding the Council's future commitment to the EDCDT would be forthcoming following discussions on the funding of the VCS throughout County Durham together with the implications for the Local Area Agreement (LAA).

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) a contribution of £30,000 to the EDCDT for 2007/2008, be approved;
- (ii) a further report on the future funding of EDCDT be awaited following countywide discussions concerning the funding of the voluntary sector.

4. GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Member for Improvement which sought approval for the draft Gender Equality Scheme, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Members were advised that the Equality Act 2006 placed a statutory Gender Equality Duty on all public authorities. The main aim of the Gender Equality Duty was to ensure public authorities addressed issues of inequality, all forms of discrimination and harassment on the grounds of a person's gender. This duty not only impacted upon the Council's role as an employer, but also the way in which internal and external services were provided. Equality impact assessments would therefore have a direct impact upon the way services were designed and adapted.

The Gender Equality Duty placed a number of specific duties on the Council details of which were outlined in the report.

The Gender Equality Scheme was an integral part of the Council's role as it aimed to place equality and diversity at the core of all its services, policies and procedures.

RESOLVED that the Gender Equality Scheme be approved.

5. AFFORDABLE HOUSING POLICY STATEMENT

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Member for Regeneration which sought approval of an Affordable Housing Policy Statement in advance of the adoption of the Easington Local Development Framework Core Strategy, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Members were advised that Planning Policy Statement 3, Housing, (PPS3) committed local authorities, when considering planning applications for residential development, to require some housing to be provided for those unable to access or afford market housing. Affordable housing was defined as both social rented and intermediate housing which could be provided through

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shared equity products or low cost homes for sale. From 1 April 2007 PPS3 was a material consideration when making planning decisions for housing developments.

The Regional Spatial Strategy required the Council to set affordable housing provision targets informed by up to date local housing assessments in the Local Development Framework (LDF). Although the existing adopted Easington District Local Plan did not include an affordable housing policy, GO-NE had advised that, where needs had been identified, the Council had a duty to secure affordable housing in accordance with the PPS.

In June 2005, the Council commissioned David Cumberland Regeneration Ltd to undertake a study into the District's affordable housing needs. Their report provided the evidence base necessary to underpin a draft policy in the Easington LDF.

Since April, affordable housing had been requested in all new development schemes. In advance of adoption of the LDF Core Strategy, approval of a draft Affordable Housing Policy Statement was needed.

The findings of the Cumberland study confirmed that choice in the District was limited to lower priced properties or to the social rented sector. The consultants recommend that more home ownership needed to be encouraged if areas were to become more sustainable. An affordable housing policy was recommended to diversify the housing supply to provide more market sector family housing.

In order to maintain a coherent and transparent approach to affordable housing thresholds, it was recommended that affordability was set at an overall rate of 20% provision of all qualifying housing schemes.

All of the Durham Districts were working to promote affordable housing and it was not considered that implementation of this policy would inhibit the local housing market in the long term.

The evidence suggested a greater need for market housing rather than for social rent in order to diversify the housing on offer and help deliver sustainable communities. The policy provided for affordable housing to be provided including provision for discounted market sale, proposed to be 70% of the market value, and for social rent.

RESOLVED that the Affordable Housing Policy Statement be approved.