

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2007**

Present: Councillor C. Patching (Chair)
Councillors B. Burn, R. Burnip,
Mrs. S. Mason, D. Milsom and
T. Unsworth

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

Apologies: Councillors Mrs. A.E. Laing and T. Longstaff

1. **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 30 October 2007, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

Matters Arising

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

The Scrutiny Support Manager explained that the County Waste Strategy was being worked upon and it had been suggested that a visit to Thornley Station and Coxhoe recycling depots be arranged when this was finalised.

RESOLVED that a visit to Thornley Station and Coxhoe recycling depots, be arranged once the County Durham Waste Strategy was finalised.

2. **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE** held on 6 November 2007, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were submitted.

The Committee noted the East Durham Community Development Trust contribution and the Affordable Housing Policy Statement.

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

3. **PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

There were no members of the public present.

4. **FEEDBACK FROM SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD**

At the last meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board held on 12 November 2007 the following issues were discussed:-

- Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places
- Countywide Review of Public Transport

A Member referred to the closure of Seaham Bus Station and explained that there was not sufficient signs directing the public to temporary bus stops. The Scrutiny Support Manager explained that he was gathering responses to

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feedback to the County Council and would refer this matter to Richard Startup, Integrated Transport Manager.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

5. SERVICE UNIT PERFORMANCE REPORTING - NEIGHBOURHOOD INITIATIVES

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Neighbourhood Initiatives which updated Members on the progress of the Neighbourhood Initiatives Unit, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

The report provided an update on progress on the Neighbourhood Initiatives Unit which comprised Community Safety, Youth Strategy, Social Inclusion, Pride In Easington, Arts and Sports Development.

The Parenting Initiative had now established strong links with the Streetsafe Boards, Youth Inclusion Forum, Housing Providers and other statutory and voluntary agencies. To date, 30 referrals had been received and the team were now working with 24 families and children across the District.

Two additional projects to tackle domestic violence had been established in the last quarter. The Independent Domestic Violence Advocate had engaged with 15 women who had been victims of domestic violence.

Operation Milkshake continued to attract widespread public support in producing excellent results. The fourth Operation Milkshake ran from 15 - 23 September targeting villages in the west of the District. A summary of the results were detailed in the report.

The Head of Neighbourhood Initiatives explained that the Easington Community Partnership had taken part in a Countywide problem solving initiative to address rising levels of criminal damage. The Edenhill Ward was selected as a pilot area on the basis of it having suffered the highest number of criminal damage incidents over the previous 12 months. The plan ran from August - December 2007 and during the first 3 months, criminal damage had fallen by 35% and secondary fires had reduced by 25%.

The quarterly performance figures were detailed in the report and house burglary had risen up to 27%. Intelligence suggested that the increase in burglary was largely attributable to the release from prison of a small number of persistent offenders and operations were in place to target those individuals.

A Political Speed Dating event was held in October as part of Local Democracy Week. Young people compiled a political questionnaire which would inform the production of a youth guide for Members and Council staff. Five Executive Members took part in the event which was very well received by the young people. A report on the event would be considered by Members and the Council would build upon this event.

A Climate Change Workshop was held at the Glebe Centre in Murton. CREATE, a national charity undertook a workshop on energy efficiency and waste issues involving 60 children from 9 primary schools.

The Head of Neighbourhood Initiatives explained that the second Community Cohesion Member training programme had taken place in November. The programme used the Home Office 7 Steps Model and was attended by 15

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Members. Two additional courses were being arranged to ensure that all Members were able to benefit from the training.

During the summer and October half term holidays, approximately 500 children and young people participated in taster workshops covering a wide range of art forms delivered at 20 community venues across the District. The summer holiday programme built upon the success of the 2006 initiative to offer a wide range of sport and leisure activities. 5,594 young people registered to take part in 224 sessions that were held over the 6 week summer holiday. On an average day, the programme offered almost 16 hours of coached activity at either no cost or heavily subsidised rates.

The report also provided details of achievements and non-achievements within the Unit.

A Member queried if domestic violence included domestic violence on men. The Head of Neighbourhood Initiatives explained that 99.9% was directed towards females but if a male approached them, support was given.

The Chair referred to the increase in house burglaries and the suggestion that this was due to persistent offenders being released back into the community and queried what targeted actions they received. The Head of Neighbourhood Initiatives explained that offenders were not being sentenced for long periods of time and in a matter of months, were back on the streets and re-offending.

The Chair referred to the refusal of the Youth Strategy Application and queried if there would be any consequences or alternative options. The Head of Neighbourhood Initiatives explained that the consequence was a reduction in activity. The District Council provided administration and co-ordination for the Youth Forum and the children wanted to be involved in projects. The success of the Forum was getting children involved in delivering small scale projects.

A Member explained that recent surveys conducted by the Pathfinder put anti-social behaviour and fear of crime top of the list. There had been huge changes over the years but there were still problems in the villages. He queried if there were any statistics to compare with previous years to ascertain if the interventions had been successful.

The Head of Neighbourhood Initiatives explained that recording anti-social behaviour was very complicated. Anti-social behaviour complaints had gone up by 60% and when looking at the statistics, this was not necessarily because of the lack of interventions. It was easier for members of the public to report incidents to the Street Wardens, PCSO's etc. The Home Office had also changed categories of recording anti social behaviour so it would not be like for like.

The Director of Community Services explained that in the most recent surveys completed in 2003 and 2006 across a broad range of different conceptions, the amount of concern on anti social behaviour had dropped considerably.

The Chair thanked the Head of Neighbourhood Initiatives for his report.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

6. ANY ADDITIONAL URGENT ITEMS 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 following item of business, not shown on the Agenda, be considered as a matter of urgency.

7. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE INTRODUCTION OF NEW POLICIES FOR REFUSE COLLECTION (AOB)

Consideration was given to the report of the Environmental Health and Licensing Manager which provided information on the introduction of new policies for refuse collection, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager explained that the Council had adopted new policies for refuse collection service which were being phased in. The new policies prohibit side waste, restrict the use of second bins and require bins to be brought in after refuse collection. The policy prohibiting side waste became effective on 1 October 2007 following widespread publicity. The introduction of the policy for restricting second bins had commenced by publicising an amnesty where residents may phone in and ask for extra bins to be removed.

From 1 October, refuse crews had continued to remove any side waste and had placed a yellow warning sticker for a first infringement and red warning stickers for a second infringement. A total of 465 advisory notices had been given and 254,466 collections had occurred since that time showing the level of infringements to be as low as only 0.18%. The policy was that on the third occasion the refuse would not be removed and enforcement action would be taken which may involve a spot fine. To date, this has not been necessary.

Photographs attached to the report showed actual occurrences showing a worse case scenario prior to the policy being introduced and an occurrence in October where residents in the street had followed the policy. Recycling statistics had shown that in October, re-cycling rates had increased by nearly 18% as compared to the previous month and the same month in the previous year. Since the publicity campaign commenced, there had been 909 requests for kerb it boxes to the end of October.

The BVPI 199 Autumn survey of the cleanliness of the streets was currently being carried out and early signs were that this year's result would show a fifth year of continuing improvement.

The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager explained that caution should be exercised in the interpretation of results as they were only based on six weeks of operation. The early signs were, however, that there had been almost universal compliance with the new policy and this was already resulting in increased recycling and reduced waste.

A Member queried if there had been any increase in fly tipping. The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager explained that fly tipping was monitored closely. There had been an increase in fly tipping. This had been down to large van loads and not individual fly tipping. He was satisfied that the fly tipping was not as a result of the new side waste policy.

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The Director of Community Services explained that there was no noticeable increase in relation to the new side waste policy. There was a 400% increase in terms of enforcement activities and success.

A Member referred to the winter period and inclement weather and queried what the progress of collecting missed bins due to bad weather was. The Director of Community Services explained that there would be relatively few days in the year when the bins could not be collected because of bad weather. The bins would be collected the next convenient day. Each area was located in a different zone and more effective information could be circulated.

The Chair thanked the Officers for their report.

RESOLVED the information given, be noted.

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