

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY 11 DECEMBER 2007

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

Also Present: Councillor Mrs 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 20 November 2007, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

2 **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE** held on 27 November 2007, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were submitted.

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

3 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

- (i) **Renewal of the Contract for the Kerbside Collection Materials for Recycling (Minute no 8 refers)**

The Chair advised that in accordance with the procedure within the Constitution relating to call-in and urgency, the Executive had agreed that the decision taken in relation to the award of the contract for the kerbside collection of materials for recycling within the District was urgent. Accordingly, the Scrutiny Chairs and the Chair of the Council had been consulted and had agreed to the request for the reasons detailed in the Minutes of the Executive.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

4 **PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

There were no members of the public present.

5 **FEEDBACK FROM SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD**

The Chair advised that at the last meeting of Scrutiny Management Board held on 3 December 2007 the following issue was discussed:-

- (i) **Scrutiny Review of East Durham Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)**

Scrutiny Management Board received a report from the Partnership Support Officer which provided detailed feedback on the findings of the former Partnerships Scrutiny Committee's review of East Durham LSP.

Scrutiny Management Board responded to the report and asked that it be kept informed of GONE assessment findings and receive periodic reports from the LSP Sub-Groups, with any substantive work to be referred to Community Services Scrutiny Committee.

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.

C Duff, Energy Manager explained that the Warm Homes Campaign was the main corporate mechanism for promoting advice and support to residents on home insulation grant schemes. The campaign was one of only twelve local authorities nationally to receive an award from National Energy Action for its success in working to reduce fuel poverty within Easington District over the past ten years.

Over this period the Campaign had brought over £6.4m of external funding into the District for home insulation grant schemes in around 14,000 private sector homes. The receipt of the award would be publicised nationally and was to feature in the forthcoming issue of Infopoint.

The Over 60's Free Home Insulation Scheme was targeted at private home owners and for the period August to November 2007, 101 homes had been insulated at a cost of £30,500.

With regard to the insulation programme to Council dwellings, he advised that the scheme was nearing completion in Peterlee with flats expected to be finished by February 2008. Over the period 181 homes had been insulated at a cost of £69,000.

The Government's Warm Front Scheme provided grants for central heating and insulation measures and over the period a total of 175 homes had been insulated with Government funding of £83,000 brought into the District.

A series of Community Energy Champion training events had taken place with community groups throughout the District aimed at developing a district wide community referral network. A total of 96 residents from various settlements attended the training events and information would be distributed by these on behalf of the Warm Homes Campaign.

In order to reduce heating bills at the Council complex all buildings had now been insulated and the lighting to the Council Chamber replaced with low energy light bulbs as part of the Invest to Save programme. A recent event had been held with staff in partnership with the Energy Saving Trust around saving energy in the home and an energy audit had been carried out on all office accommodation.

A Member asked if 'cold-calling' was used as a way of promoting campaigns. C Duff explained that there were a number of mechanisms used to communicate campaigns to residents. Door to door promotions were effective, however Council Officers would never 'cold-call'. It was Council policy to distribute a letter of introduction initially which would then be followed up by a visit from an Officer with identification.

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In response to a question in relation to the criteria for receiving central heating and insulation measures under the Warm Front Scheme if elderly and registered disabled, C Duff advised that to qualify residents had to be in receipt of benefits or disability premium. However, he would refer this to the Grants Agency for clarification. With regard to the measures available under the Scheme, he explained that gas central heating would only be replaced if the system had failed or was about to fail. Solid fuel systems would be upgraded to either a closed appliance or replaced with gas.

In response to a further question C Duff confirmed that properties already insulated would qualify for a 'top-up' to the required 250mm as part of a loft insulation scheme.

To conclude, the Executive Member for Social Inclusion and Culture congratulated the Energy Manager and the Fuel Poverty Officer on the national award from National Energy Action. The Chair reiterated this, adding that the Committee welcomed the report which confirmed the continuing high achievements of the Unit. He conveyed congratulations to the Energy Manager and all staff concerned.

RESOLVED that the information contained within the report, be noted and clarification be sought from the Grants Agency in relation to the criteria for qualification for the Warm Front Scheme.

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