

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

HELD ON TUESDAY 1 APRIL 2008

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

Also Present: Councillor Mrs J Freak – Executive Member
for Social Inclusion and Culture

Apologies: Councillors P J Campbell and B Burn

1 **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 11 March 2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

2 **MATTERS ARISING**

Post Office Limited Network Change Programme – Area Plan Proposal for Cleveland with South Durham and Richmond (Minute No 6 refers)

The Scrutiny Support Manager explained that timescales had not permitted a meeting to be held but he had spoken to the Clerk to Hutton Henry Parish Council, who had informed him that the Parish Council were opposed to the closing of the post office as this was the only retail outlet in the village. They had also called into question some of the evidence provided by the post office, namely the public transport and other facilities. The bus journey would be 2-3 hours rather than 1 hour. He had incorporated the Parish Council's concerns within the letter sent on behalf of the committee and also reiterated the points that were raised the previous year, together with the comment that the committee was pleased that 8 out of the 9 post offices were being retained.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

3 **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE** held on 18 March 2008, 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**

The last meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board held on 26 March 2008 the following issues were discussed:-

(i) **LSP Performance Reporting - 'Light Touch' Inspection**

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(ii) **Aerobic Digester**

A Member explained that during the visit to the aerobic digester, assurances had been given that the waste was safe. Recent articles in the press indicated that this was not the case and felt a full explanation should be sought from Premier Waste.

The Director of Community Services explained that at the moment the issue was still a matter for dispute between Premier Waste, the BBC and other agencies. Premier Waste had explained that it posed no health risks whatsoever and pointed out that the BBC samples could be contaminated from the landfill rather than from the digester. The Environment Agency had instructed Premier Waste to landfill all the waste and cease operations into the aerobic digester until the temperature was stabilised. The recent instruction by the Environment Agency would adversely affect performance.

The Chair commented that Members wished to seek any explanation that Premier Waste may have.

RESOLVED that Premier Waste be requested to provide the committee with an explanation on the problems with the aerobic digester.

6 SERVICE UNIT PERFORMANCE REPORTING

(i) **Neighbourhood Initiatives – Performance Report**

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Neighbourhood Initiatives which updated Members on 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 current Crime and Disorder Strategy which set out the priorities of the partnership for 2005-2008 would be replaced by a new partnership plan on 1 April 2008. The new priorities were to tackle anti-social behaviour and criminal damage, focus on domestic violence, target the misuse of drugs and alcohol and reduce re-offending particularly amongst priority and persistent offenders (PPOs).

The quarterly performance figures were detailed in the report and overall BCS crime was now down 5% on the baseline year. However, given the changes in recording standards which resulted in huge increases in wounding and the position at the end of 2006/7, this was quite a remarkable achievement. Criminal damage had fallen by 17% compared with the previous year and the successful reductions that had been achieved in tackling house burglary and vehicular crime maintained.

The Pride in Easington programme had been submitted for 3 local government awards, 2 of which were national competitions and 1 for the North East. Pride was shortlisted for all 3 awards won the top award in

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the LGC awards and was commended in the Sustainable Community Awards.

The Chair referred to youth anti-social behaviour and wounding was up by 117%. He queried if there was a male/female differential and if there was a youth culture carrying knives and guns.

The Head of Neighbourhood Initiatives explained that there was not a large number of gun and knife crimes and 99% of the reason for the increase was the adoption of the national recording standards. There were low level incidents around alcohol related problems which escalated into minor assaults.

The committee commended and congratulated the efforts of the Pride in Easington team in the regional and national awards.

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

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(ii) **Leisure Centre Partnership Arrangements**

Consideration was given to the report of the Senior Cultural Development Officer which provided Members with a position statement on the operation at the leisure centres under the partnership arrangements with Leisure Connection Limited, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Following the success of the free swimming initiatives at Peterlee Leisure Centre and working in partnership with Everyday Swim Project, a splash fun zone activity programme had been produced. The activity programme was distributed to all schools in the district and provided a range of free reduced activities for young people ranging from aqua fit, snorkelling and water polo.

As a result of funding received from the Council's Capital Works Programme, a range of essential works were in the process of being completed at both centres. Leisure Connection had confirmed that they intended to invest in the region of £200,000 in replacement of gym equipment at Peterlee and Seaham.

The nine monthly review of the performance indicators developed with Leisure Connections were detailed in Appendix 1 together with a complaints summary shown at Appendix 2.

The Chair referred to the £200,000 capital works and noted the value and significant and substantial investment in improving the leisure centres. He referred to the complaints and explained that it was a small number of complaints for the number of people visiting the centres.

The Chair referred to Appendix 1 and the progress with the performance indicators and queried some of the actual visits. The Senior Cultural Development Officer explained that the figures shown were a nine monthly update against the annual target and were showing a current snapshot how the indicator was performing. He further explained that he would be discussing progress against this indicator with Leisure Connection and

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that the most up to date figure against the actual target would be presented a the next meeting.

The Chair thanked the Senior Cultural Development Officer for his report.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

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