

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY 24 JUNE 2008

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

Also Present: Councillor G Patterson

Apologies: Councillors P J Campbell, Mrs A E Laing
and T Longstaff

1 **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 3 June 2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

2 **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE** held on 10 June 2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were submitted.

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 16 June 2008, the following issues were discussed:-

Minutes of the Seaham Regeneration Member Panel – 26 March 2008

Minutes of the Peterlee Regeneration Member Panel – 24 January 2008

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

5 **SERVICE UNIT PERFORMANCE REPORTING – ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES**

Consideration was given to the report of the Environmental Services Operations Manager and Environmental Health and Licensing Manager which provided information on the performance of the Environmental Operations Unit and the Environmental Health and Licensing Unit for the performance outturn for the financial year 2007/8, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Appendix 1 outlined Best Value Performance Indicator and Local Performance Indicator outcomes for 2007/8. The colour system signified performance against targets where green indicated success, yellow a borderline situation and red showed where targets were not met. Appendix 2 detailed complaints received in relation to Environmental Operations Services.

The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager gave details of the recycling performance which had been adversely affected by the intervention of DEFRA and ruling out of the aerobic digester contribution. During 2006/7, the aerobic digester

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contributed 19.7% towards the overall recycling performance and the target was set at 34% anticipating similar performance.

The aerobic digester processed household waste to produce a 'compost like output' (CLO) from organic material and separated glass, metal and plastic for recycling. DEFRA had ruled that the CLO produced was not of a suitable quality to put on land and this had been land filled. The contribution for other materials separated out during 2007/8 was 3.56%. The overall BVPI outturn was provisional at 20.19% which included charitable collections for which recycling credits had been paid by Durham County Council. Figures could be confirmed once the final quarter Waste Dataflow return had been submitted.

A programme had been put in place to improve the quality of the CLO. If successful, some contribution towards the targets may be available later in the year but this was uncertain.

The Environmental Services Operations Manager gave details on refuse collection and the Clean and Green teams. The Easter revised collections did encounter some minor interruptions due to some areas in the district not presenting bins for emptying on the revised collection days. There were two new refuse collection vehicles on order which would be delivered shortly and introduced into the service.

The Clean and Green teams were working well to maintain the district's cleanliness and have all worked hard to achieve the 2007/8 set target of 13% in BVPI199. The Pride in Easington team had actioned and co-ordinated a district clean up working together with Operations, Enforcement, Residents Groups, Parish Councils and members of the public to address environmental problems throughout the district.

The grass cutting programme and flower bed preparation were delayed slightly due to all of the horticultural staff being used to deliver the green waste bins ready for the new scheme to commence in April. The warm wet weather recently experienced was causing rapid growth which had increased the cutting cycle and left large deposits of grass cuttings on some of the greens.

The Environmental Services Manager gave details on the Environmental Enforcement team, Envirocall, nuisance vehicles and litter. The 2007/8 dog report which was given to Parish Councils and Area Forums was detailed in Appendix 3.

During 2007, 816 warning letters had been sent for anti-social behaviour with only 7% reaching the third warning letter. This demonstrated the impact that early intervention could have. If alcohol was removed from a young person twice then they would now be referred on to an educational programme facilitated by the Primary Care Trust.

The Environmental Wardens were carrying out additional patrols from January and more fixed penalty notices had been given out. A recent survey had shown that 95% of people were picking up after their dogs although dog fouling was still an issue.

The Chair referred to the increase in fly tipping and queried if it was linked to special collection charges being introduced. The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager explained that special collection charges were introduced two years ago and there was no immediate rise shown in the figures which contributed to the increase. All new legislation was being explored under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act. The Council had a duty of care to inspect

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and make sure that vehicles had transfer notes and they were conducting stop and searches of vehicles in conjunction with the police.

The Environmental Services Manager explained that training had been given to the police so they were aware of the legislation available to the Council.

A Member queried if the increase could be attributable to the change in the side waste policy. The Director of Community Services explained that the amount of incidents was comparable to 2005/6 and was not a dramatic rise. The figures were always compared to the previous years and not over a number of years. Fly tipping increased in the springtime and late November/early December. There were spikes at certain times of the year.

The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager explained that the side waste policy had been very successful and more recycling had been collected. Small businesses did not have the full understanding that they need a movement permit to dispose of the waste.

The Environmental Services Manager explained that some work had been done with East Durham Business Service and they were providing information to businesses and it was hoped this educational approach would be fed in.

A Member queried if the refuse collection would be staying at weekly or going to two weekly as in other parts of the county. The Director of Community Services explained that it would be an issue for the new Council to decide but there were no plans in Easington for any changes. If he had to advise the new Council, he would point them to the House of Commons Select Report that Councils should not change collections without consultation with residents.

The Chair referred to the aerobic digester and commented that although this was out of the Council's control, what was being done proactively if DEFRA did not allow recycling from the aerobic digester to be counted in the figures.

The Director of Community Services explained that feedback from DEFRA and Waste Dataflow had been the worst case scenario for the Council and the performance would only be 20%. During the year, the green waste scheme had been extended and plastics and cardboard introduced. This was having a significant effect in relation to the overall performance. The first quarter's assessment was yet to be confirmed but it was approximately 28–29% and that was without the aerobic digester contribution. With the aerobic digester contribution, a full year could add a further 20% to those figures. Easington District recycled more materials than any other district councils in the county. With government targets, countywide performance needed to reach 35% and then 40% in the coming years. Through the Waste Disposal workstream, costed options were being looked at for the proposed improvements countywide.

The Chair referred to the risk and financial implications in the report and queried if there were potential risks because of what had happened at the aerobic digester. The Director of Community Services explained that there were financial implications and risk implications attached to the aerobic digester.

A Member referred to the government target of 40% and explained that the District Council had made great strides but how could they achieve that figure. The Director of Community Services explained that if the aerobic digester had worked well then the current years recycling targets would be nearly 50% and the 2010 target would have been achieved.

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The Chair congratulated Officers on the achievement of reaching the target for BVP1199.

A Member commented that he had received numerous complaints regarding grass left on paths and roadways and no strimming around bollards and fence posts. The Environmental Services Operations Manager explained that a value for money review had been undertaken which identified a number of areas. A number of workers suffered from vibration white finger and the Council used weed killing more than strimming but it took a long time to kill the grass. Some of the workforce could only use the vibrating equipment for one hour if they had been exposed to it previously.

The Chair referred to stray dogs and queried what happened if the dog was dangerous. The Environmental Services Manager explained that dangerous dogs still remained the responsibility of the police. A stray dog could now be taken away 24 hours a day as there was now an out of hours service for the dog to be collected and taken to the kennels at Coxhoe. The Environmental Services Operations Manager explained that the Council was working closely with Autolink because numerous complaints of litter had been received along the A19. All hot spot areas in the district had been identified.

The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager explained that Appendix 2 had been circulated as some of the information had been omitted from the report.

With regard to refuse complaints, the Environmental Services Operations Manager explained that the Council were looking at a system for missed bins. The Bartec system demonstration had been given and it gave an accurate reflection if a bin had been genuinely missed. This would save the Council a lot of money in the future.

The Chair thanked the Officers for their report.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.