

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY, 16TH SEPTEMBER, 2008**

Present: Councillors B. Burn, T. Longstaff,
Mrs. S. Mason, T. Milsom and T. Unsworth

Apologies: R. Burnip, C. Patching and Mrs. A.E. Laing

IN THE ABSENCE OF THE CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR, NOMINATIONS WERE REQUESTED FOR A CHAIR FOR THE MEETING

RESOLVED that Councillor B. Burn be elected Chair

COUNCILLOR B BURN TOOK THE CHAIR

1. **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 1st August, 2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.
2. **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE** held on 2nd September, 2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were submitted.

RESOLVED that 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 8th September, 2008 the following issues were discussed:-

- **DCLG Consultation - Local Petitions and Calls for Actions - Government Response**
- **DCLG Consultation - Communities in Control - Real People Real Power**

A copy of the consultation on Communities in Control had been circulated to Members with a request for representations to be forwarded back to the Scrutiny Support Manager who would produce a composite response.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

5. **SERVICE UNIT PERFORMANCE REPORTING**

(i) **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 of the Leisure Centres under the partnership arrangements with Leisure Connection Limited, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

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For the summer holiday period, the Council's 'schools out' programme provided a comprehensive range of swimming opportunities at Peterlee Leisure Centre, the majority of which were provided free or at a greatly reduced charge. These included, 'learn to swim' programmes, structured aquatic fun sessions comprising of water polo, snorkelling and inflatables. A total of 4,400 young people had attended the sessions.

The Council were currently working with Leisure Connection to implement proposals by the Government to offer free swimming for over 60s and under 16s which was proposed to come into effect on 1st April, 2009. The initiative was part of the Government's desire to encourage more people to exercise regularly and linked to the 2012 Olympic legacy.

As the Council move toward the new unitary arrangement sports and leisure services provided by the authority, including leisure centre management, were placed within the Community, Sport and Recreation Workstream. The workstream which included representatives from all District and County Councils, were currently establishing the level of service provision within each authority. In terms of the contractual arrangements with Leisure Connection, provision had been made within the documentation to transfer responsibilities to the new authority.

The quarterly review of performance indicators developed were shown in Appendix 1 together with the complaints summary in Appendix 2.

The Chair referred to complaints regarding cleanliness and hoped that this was going to improve as they were the main complaints that Councillors received. M Grinstead confirmed that this was a priority for the company to reduce complaints in this area.

M. Grinstead explained that it would be an interesting year for the leisure centre. It would be a challenge to make the free swimming happen as there was only one pool in the District to accommodate the expected increase in swimmers. He was currently working with the EveryDay Swim Initiative to be running some sessions at the school pool in Seaham.

In October, Sport England would be conducting a national benchmarking exercise and a full weeks survey at Peterlee and Seaham. This was totally independent and a report on the outcome would be made available. Leisure Connection were working with the Community Safety Team and they had agreed to sponsor a junior five-a-side league on a Friday evening.

The fitness suites were being refurbished and opened the following Monday. £210,000 had been spent in Peterlee and £160,000 in Seaham. The Harpers experience had been re-branded and all of the fitness managers had been re-interviewed for their jobs.

The Chair thanked the Officer for his report.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(ii) **Neighbourhood Initiatives**

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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 and Arts and Sports Development.

An Anti-Social Behaviour awareness event was being planned for the first term of the new school year. The event would target year 8 pupils from across the District involving a series of workshops which addressed various aspects of anti-social behaviour and the impacts it can have on communities.

The Community Safety Team were co-ordinating three bids for Working Neighbourhood Fund (WNF) which replaced the NRF programme in April 2008. The Bids included ASB intervention, mentoring support and youth outreach.

Operation Milkshake 7 ran in early June 2008 in the west of the District and built upon the success of the previous operations. A brief summary of results were detailed in the report.

The Criminal Damage (Deneside) and Crime (Easington Colliery) Action Plans began in April following the success of the Edenhill Plan last year which reduced criminal damage by 35% over a nine-month period. The result so far had been mixed. The Deneside Plan was working well with a 20% reduction in ASB and 32% reduction in youth related ASB however the Easington Plan has had little impact so far with small reductions in criminal damage 5% and ASB 1%, offset by a 6% rise in overall crime. A review meeting was to be held in September for Easington Colliery.

The Community Safety Board for County Durham had now been established with sub-groups to begin looking at community safety from a County perspective and LGR work stream was addressing the practical implications of integrating seven District based CDRP's into one County partnership. Exit strategies would be prepared over the Autumn to facilitate the smooth transition for the Easington CSP to end on 31st March, 2009 with the business of the partnership transferring to the new County arrangements.

The quarterly performance indicators were detailed in the report and showed that it had been an encouraging year with reductions in every area.

With regard to youth strategy, as part of the remit to establish democratic processes for youth forum representation at national and international levels, contact has been made with all of the local schools over the new youth forum intake. The Youth Forum Co-ordinator had recently left the Council and his work was being covered by other members of the team.

The Dalton Park event was held on 5th July. Marquees housed community and arts groups, sporting events took place in the car parks and parkland areas were used for certain activities and bug/family walks. In addition, the event was used as part of the launch of Durham Brass Festival celebrations. Over 4,000 people had attended.

A community awards evening was held on 5th June at Shotton Hall to celebrate the contribution of volunteers in improving the quality of life of people in the

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District. The event was attended by 180 members of the voluntary and community sector.

The Sports Team co-ordinated the highly popular 'Schools Out' activity programme over the summer school holiday period. This year's programme was the biggest and most diverse that had been delivered in the District to date. The programme aimed to provide positive activities for young people in sport, encouraging lifelong participation in health activity via pathways into existing local clubs. Details of the activities were outlined in the report.

A Member referred to the quarterly performance figures and explained that one of the figures was higher on theft of a vehicle and queried if this was a typographic error. The Head of Neighbourhood Initiatives explained that he would check the figures.

The Chair thanked the Officer for his report.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

6. **POST OFFICE LIMITED NETWORK CHANGE PROGRAMME - AREA PLAN PROPOSAL FOR TYNE AND WEAR WITH NORTHUMBERLAND AND DURHAM**

Consideration was given to the report of the Scrutiny Support Manger which advised the committee of the final decisions made by Post Office Limited in respect of their Network Change Programme Area Plan Proposal for Tyne and Wear with Northumberland and Durham and its implications for residents of the District, a copy of which had been circulated to each.

The public consultation exercise for the Tyne and Wear with Northumberland and Durham area closed on 11th August, 2008. Post Office Limited attended 37 meetings with customers and their local representatives to generate feedback and to gather an understanding of the local issues of particular concern. They received 3,530 pieces of correspondence which was acknowledged, recorded and considered alongside all other information and feedback.

Post Office Limited had determined that notwithstanding the representations made during the consultation exercise, they were progressing with the closure of the Easington Colliery, Salters Lane - Shotton Colliery and Yoden Road - Peterlee branches.

The extracts that had been taken from the Area Plan Decision Booklet for Tyne and Wear with Northumberland and Durham highlighted the view of the Post Office Limited in coming to their decision about the three offices that were to be closed, were detailed in the report.

The Scrutiny Support Manager suggested that a letter be sent to Post Office Limited explaining that the Council would welcome assurances that the Post Offices were the last ones to be closed and the remaining were sustainable for the future.

RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the report be received and Post Office Limited's decision to proceed with the closure of Post Office branches detailed in the report, be noted;
- (ii) a letter be sent to Post Office Limited seeking assurances for future provision of Post Offices.

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