

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY 7 OCTOBER 2008

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

Apologies: Councillors P J Campbell and
Mrs A E Laing

- 1 **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 16 September 2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

MATTERS ARISING

Post Office Limited Network Change Programme – Area Plan Proposal for Tyne and Wear with Northumberland and Durham (Minute no 6 refers)

The Scrutiny Support Manager explained that a letter had been sent to Post Office Limited seeking assurances for future provision of the post offices in Easington District.

Councillor A Burnip had contacted him regarding the continued temporary closure of the Easington Colliery Post Office. This together with the proposed closure of Lower Seaside Lane Post Office, Easington Colliery was causing problems for residents. The Post Office had advised that the Easington Colliery Post Office was due to reopen on 21 October and the Easington Village Post Office would also be opening shortly.

Councillor R Burnip commented that he had received assurances that the Lower Seaside Lane Post Office would not close until the Easington Colliery Post Office reopened.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted and the situation be continued to be monitored.

- 2 **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE** held on 23 September 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 29 September 2008, the following issues were discussed:-

- County Durham Place Survey
- Review of 'Seizing the Future' proposals by Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust

Representatives had been invited to the Regeneration Services Scrutiny Committee to give a presentation before the end of the consultation period.

Councillor Burnip explained that he would be chairing the 'Seizing the Future' Programme which could lead to implications on what would happen to Peterlee Community Hospital.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

5 SERVICE UNIT PERFORMANCE REPORTING – ENERGY CONSERVATION REPORT

Consideration was given to the report of the Energy Manager which provided information on the progress with the District of Easington Fuel Poverty and Energy Conservation Schemes, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

The Energy Manager explained that fuel poverty occurred when a household had to pay more than 10% of their income to provide an adequate level of heating to maintain a healthy indoor environment. The government had introduced National Indicator 187 to monitor levels of fuel poverty at a local level. The indicator required local authorities to target poorly insulated properties where the occupants were in receipt of a means tested benefit in order to maximise the assistance provided. NI187 represented an unparalleled opportunity to demonstrate how local authorities could maximise the numbers of households being brought out of fuel poverty.

Easington was one of few local authorities nationally to have a whole stock energy database for all 38,000 Council and private dwellings. This placed Easington in a unique position nationally being able to identify all individual households to be targeted under NI187. A bid had been made to DEFRA to undertake NI187 best practice pilot. The British Research Establishment (BRE) were the exemplar research centre for the built environment and had approached the District of Easington to undertake a pilot to develop a national model based on Easington's database.

The Chair commented that he was concerned regarding the rising cost of fuel and the cost of energy increasing by over 40% and queried how many people were falling within the definition of fuel poverty. The Energy Manager explained that fuel poverty was once people on low incomes but with the price increases people who were never in that bracket previously were now falling into it. This was a huge problem and the Council was being proactive and had doubled its efforts to help people. Government had put £1 billion into energy conservation.

The Chair referred to the new PI and queried what this meant for the Council in its exit year. The Energy Manager explained that a meeting had been held with DEFRA and the Minister and agreed that Easington would be a pilot to produce best practice nationally. The Head of Housing was speaking to the LGR workstreams to get it embedded into the system.

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Councillor Burnip explained that at a meeting of the Scrutiny Working Group at Durham County Council, 35 area priority indicators had been discussed which included fuel poverty.

The Energy Manager explained that this was very positive and the Council was only 1 of 44 nationally to be put into the top 35 targets.

The Chair thanked the Energy Manager for his report.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

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