

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

HELD ON TUESDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2008

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

Apologies: Councillor R. Burnip

1. **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 20 October 2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed subject to the following amendment.

Item 5 - Service Unit Performance Reporting - Revenues and Benefits - insert the word "service implications" between "the" and "local" in the final paragraph.

2. **MATTERS ARISING**

- (i) **Post Office Limited Network Change Programme - Area Plan Proposal for Tyne and Wear with Northumberland and Durham (Minute No. 1 refers)**

Concern had been expressed regarding the contract for the Post Office Card Account. The Government had halted the tender process and the Post Offices would retain the business.

Members commented that this was excellent news along with the thirty Post Offices that had been withdrawn for closure. It was suggested that a letter be sent to the Post Offices welcoming the Government's change on the Post Office Card Account.

RESOLVED that a letter be sent to the Post Office welcoming the change on the Post Office Card Account.

- (ii) **Service Unit Performance Reporting - Revenues and Benefits (Minute No. 5 refers)**

It was reported that Members had not yet received the information relating to targets no. 17 and 18 of Appendix 3.

RESOLVED that the information on targets no. 17 and 18 of Appendix 3 be requested.

3. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE** held on 4 November 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 Chair reported that at the last meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board held on 10 November 2008, the following issue was discussed:

DCLG Consultation – “Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power”

The Scrutiny Management Board had considered and approved a response to the abovementioned consultation paper.

RESOLVED that the information given be noted.

6. SERVICE UNIT PERFORMANCE REPORTING - ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES PERFORMANCE REPORT

Consideration was given to the report of the Environmental Services Manager and the Environmental Health and Licensing Manager which provided information on the performance of the Environmental Operations Unit and the Environmental Health and Licensing Unit on the performance outturn for the first six months of 2008/9, 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 Operation Services.

The Environmental Operations Manager explained that the Christmas collections had now been agreed with the workforce and all collections would be back to normal by 6 January 2009. It was anticipated that there would be a large quantity of re-cycling and it had been agreed that the refuse staff would help out Greencycle if required.

The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager explained that re-cycling performance had been adversely affected by the intervention of DEFRA in ruling out the aerobic digester contribution. Despite this, the Council was on track to hit the target of achieving composting recycling rates of 30% in 2008/9. Nationally, there were problems with re-cycling with plants closing down around the world and demand for re-cycling materials had reduced dramatically. The Council were in discussions on a daily basis with Greencycle and common practice was for companies to lease a depot to store material until there was a change in the market.

There had been a number of complaints that Greencycle were working late into the evening. This had been investigated and for the last week, they had been finishing their rounds by 5.00pm.

The aerobic digester was still being subject to testing and Premier Waste had been asked to investigate the smells that residents around the District were experiencing.

A Member commented that at the Central Area Forum when the aerobic digester was discussed, the Managing Director of Premier Waste had invited her to sit on a panel of people. It was suggested that if the community were made aware of this, then they may get some volunteers. The Environmental Health and

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Licensing Manager explained that he would investigate this further and let her know if the community had been contacted.

With regard to the Clean and Green Teams, the four area teams were working well to maintain the District's cleanliness and have all worked hard to achieve the first quarter target as identified in Appendix 1. A number of initiatives had taken place across the District and these were detailed in the report.

The Tree Squad were currently experiencing a backlog due to the volumes of work being passed through to them. To overcome this problem, three staff had been transferred from Sedgefield Council to help reduce the backlog. It was envisaged that they would spend approximately four weeks with the Authority.

A Member queried how much of the litter fines were recovered. The Environmental Services Manager explained that the payment rate was approximately 85%. There was a discounted period of ten to fourteen days and then there was up to six months before action was taken against the non-payers.

The Environmental Services Manager gave details on the Environmental Enforcement Team which included anti-social behaviour, mediation services, North Peterlee Pathfinder project, bonfire campaign, nuisance vehicles, dog control, litter and fly tipping.

During 2006/7, the Council achieved grade 1 rating for efforts to tackle fly tipping. This was the highest score and an improvement score from four in 2005/6. Currently, the Council was running on a grade 2.

A Member referred to the Pathfinder in North Peterlee and explained that what they had done was fantastic and the difference in the area could be seen. She suggested that a letter from the Committee be sent, congratulating what had been achieved in that area.

A Member queried how many dogs were being chipped. The Environmental Services Manager explained that monthly events were held and the previous weekend they had been held in Peterlee. The Council promoted responsible dog ownership and distributed a responsible dog ownership pack.

A Member referred to the number of Asda trolleys he had seen around Peterlee, particularly in bus stops and queried if anything could be done about them. The Environmental Services Operations Manager explained that the Council collected trolleys and charged Asda £20 per trolley to take them back. The funding was then used on litterbins throughout the District. Last month they had collected 24 trolleys.

A Member queried how the trolleys in the Dene were removed. The Environmental Services Operations Manager explained that it depended on their location. A risk assessment would be carried out and if possible, they would be recovered.

The Chair referred to the item in the report where it was explained that there were no LGR implications. Members were concerned about the way that this was written. They were aware that there were workstreams and forward planning was continuing but he queried what the potential implications for LGR were on the service in terms of continuity and service level.

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The Environmental Services Operations Manager explained that Officers from the District Council were working hard to maintain the standards that the residents currently enjoyed and best practices should prevail. A consistent level of service could be given until the end of March but after that, there were no guarantees.

The Chair thanked the Officers for their report.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the information given be noted.
- (ii) a letter be sent to Post Office Ltd welcoming the Governments change on the Post Office Account Card.
- (iii) a letter be sent to the North Peterlee Pathfinder congratulating them on the work that had been carried out in the area.

JC/CB/COM/CSSC/081102
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