

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY 6 JANUARY 2009

Present: Councillor C Patching (Chair)
Councillors B Burn, T Longstaff,
D Milsom and T Unsworth

Apologies: Councillors R Burnip, Mrs S Mason and Mrs A E Laing

1 **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 9 December 2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed subject to Councillor T Longstaff being added to the Members present.

2 **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE** held on 16 December 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 **SERVICE UNIT PERFORMANCE REPORTING**

(i) **Marketing and Communications**

Consideration was given to the report of the Communications and Marketing Manager which updated Members on the performance of the Communications and Marketing and the Design and Technical Units, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

The Council's Communications Unit continued to publicise locally, plans for unitary governance to increase the understanding of staff, residents and other stakeholders about the transition process and the impact of organisational change. In the run up to vesting day, responsibility for communicating the change was passed to the LGR Communications Workstream.

Other work being undertaken for LGR involved developing and managing a range of milestone projects on internal and external communications, re-branding of the new Council, developing a new residents magazine and preparing the marketing plans for unitary service divisions and planning the day one launch. In addition to a busy schedule of work for the Council, the Design and Technical Unit had been at the forefront of graphic design requirements for the transition stage of the LGR change process. They had provided professional design support for the LGR public consultation events and key creative input to the development of a revised corporate logo for the new unitary Council.

The September issue of Infopoint included a survey seeking reader's reviews on a new unitary Council magazine. Response was low with only 47 readers providing their views but almost everyone who responded thought a Council newsletter was important and their preferences were

detailed in the report. The results of the survey were being pooled with those from other Council areas to inform the current discussion on the new unitary residents newsletter to replace countywide.

From April 2009, District of Easington will merge with the other 7 Councils across County Durham to form the new unitary Council. To mark the occasion the Communications Unit was taking a lead role in arranging a range of events and activities to acknowledge the work of the Council over the past 35 years. Sarah Stoner, Nostalgic Journalist at the Sunderland Echo had been commissioned to look back over the past 34 years identifying people, special events and occasions that had shaped the foundation, governance and ongoing development of the district.

A Member referred to the kiosks located in some of the villages and queried what would happen to them. The Communications and Marketing Manager explained that he understood that the kiosks would remain and there would be consideration as to how far they could be extended across the county.

The Chair commented that it was important that employees were kept informed during these uncertain times and applauded him for his efforts in doing this.

The Chair thanked the Officer 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 the 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.

As an initiative to provide more activities for young people within the district, the Council's Positive Futures Team were working in partnership with the police and Groundwork to provide a 10 week 'SLAM' sessions at Peterlee Leisure Centre. The sessions which would take place on a Saturday evening commencing in January were aimed at under 16s and would provide dance mats and voodoo boards which were the latest craze for young people.

The Council were currently working with Leisure Connection to implement proposals by the government to offer free swimming for over 60s and under 18s which would take effect from 1 April 2009. As a result of additional funding received from Durham and Darlington Primary Care Trust, free swimming would be provided for those aged 18 or under as opposed to the governments recommendation for under 16s. A countywide steering group of all Councils were currently co-ordinating this initiative.

As a result of participating in the free swimming scheme, the government had allocated an additional sum of £28,000 which could be spent at Peterlee Leisure Centre on pool improvements. New equipment would be purchased and slides provided in the small pool.

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As the Council moved towards the new unitary arrangements all the legal and contractual documentation with the Leisure Connection would transfer to the new authority. All financial budgets both relating to revenue and capital had been carried forward into next year and would merge into the new authority's overall budgets and ring fenced for its current use.

A six month review of performance indicators developed with the Leisure Connections was shown at Appendix 1 together with a complaints summary shown in Appendix 2.

The Senior Cultural Development Officer explained that they were working with the everyday swim pilot to open the pool at Seaham Comprehensive School to provide swimming lessons for young people.

M Grinstead explained that there was also another initiative called 'STRIKE' which was a marshal arts choreographed activity for young children. This would commence in February at both leisure centres.

With regard to the free swimming, Easington should be commended in putting the application forward. He had seen over the last 3 months a big downturn in the footfall especially in swimming and at weekends in the Leisure Centre. They were trying to do what they could to make the swimming experience better.

He referred to the swimming lessons at Seaham pool and the take up was not huge at the moment but they were carrying out a 20,000 leaflet drop in the next couple of weeks. Bookings would be taken from Seaham Leisure Centre. 550 children were learning to swim at Peterlee Leisure Centre pool. If the Seaham Comprehensive pool was successful then the pool at Deneside may also be used for swimming lessons.

M Grinstead referred to the Quest inspection and explained that the assessor had passed away and this had delayed the final report. The main complaints at the Leisure Centres were around cleanliness and it was very difficult to keep on top of it but this was something that they were particularly looking at and continued to work on.

The Chair referred to the existing contracts and hoped that the new authority may enhance service provision. He referred to some of the key performance indicators that were not on target and queried if it was because of the current economic climate. M Grinstead explained that the main area that they were slipping was working with older people and was still waiting to hear from the PCT. Some of the slippage was due to the downturn in the economy and the last 3 months of the financial year had been one of the quietest.

A Member queried how far advertising was carried out as he had not seen anything in the west of the district. M Grinstead explained that a lot of advertising was direct marketing targeted in areas where it was known where people came from. 85% of users of the Leisure Centre at Peterlee came from SR8 and from SR7 at Seaham Leisure Centre.

The Senior Cultural Development Officer explained that the Annual Report for the Leisure Centres would be considered at District Council on 5 March 2009.

The Chair thanked the Officer for his report.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

5 ANY ADDITIONAL URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

In accordance with the Local Government Act, 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, Section 100B(4)(b) the Chair, following consultation with the Proper Officer, agreed that following item of business, not shown on the Agenda, be considered as a matter of urgency.

6 RECYCLING (AOB)

The Scrutiny Support Manager explained that there had been issues in the press regarding Greencycle and the reduction in the market for the demand for recycled paper. Recycled Paper had dropped from £60 per tonne to £10 per tonne. Greencycle had decided to stockpile in the hope that the market upturned but there had been some concerns raised regarding the standard and quality of paper that was being stored. Greencycle had indicated that they were looking to renegotiate existing contracts with local authorities and the Council needed to know the potential financial implications. There was also an uncertainty as to what service was going to be provided in the new authority.

The Chair suggested that the Director of Community Services be contacted for an update on the current situation.

The Communications and Marketing Manager explained that there had been a televised report which encouraged people to keep recycling. He understood that the stockpile had now been sold and he was aware that the Director of Community Services was in discussion with Greencycle. In March, all Councils would be running a final newsletter and one of the key areas was waste management.

RESOLVED that the Director of Community Services be contacted for an update on the recycling issues.