

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE DISTRICT COUNCIL OF EASINGTON
HELD ON THURSDAY 6 APRIL, 2006

Present: Councillor C Walker (Chair)

Councillors D Armstrong, B Bates, E Bell,
S Bishop, B Burn, P J Campbell, A Collinson,
R Crute, R Davison, Mrs J Freak, J Goodwin,
J Haggan, H High, A J Holmes, Mrs E Huntington,
S Huntington, T Longstaff, Mrs J Maslin,
Mrs S Mason, D Myers, A Napier, Mrs A Naylor,
Mrs M Nugent, G Patterson, W R Peardon,
G Pinkney, B Quinn, C Reynolds, F Shaw,
Mrs B A Sloan, D J Taylor-Gooby, R Taylor,
R J Todd and P G Ward

1. **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE DISTRICT COUNCIL OF EASINGTON** held on 9 March, 2006, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

2. **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE** held on 1 February, 2006, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were submitted.

RESOLVED that the decision taken, be noted.

3. **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY TO DISCUSS THE COUNCIL'S BUDGETS** on 7 March 2006, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were submitted.

RESOLVED that the information contained within the Minutes, be noted.

4. **ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER 2004/05**

Janet Johnson, Chief Executive, introduced Sarah Diggle, Relationship Manager and Paul Heppell, Audit Manager, from the Audit Commission, who were in attendance to discuss the District of Easington's Annual Audit and Inspection Letter for 2004/05.

S Diggle commenced by explaining that overall the Audit Letter conveyed a positive message for the District Council. Good progress was now being made on performance. A major issue for last year and this year was the Arms Length Management Organisation and the Audit Commission appreciated that an action plan was in place to aim to achieve at least two-star status.

At this point Paul Heppell, Audit Manager took Members through the Audit Letter in detail. In relation to the accounts, he advised that nationally the timetable to complete accounts had been moved forward to 30 June each year. Council Officers had put in place arrangements to ensure that the 2005/6 accounts were produced within the statutory deadline and this had placed Easington in a good position for 2006/07. No material errors had

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been identified and an unqualified opinion on the Council's accounts was given on 31 October 2005.

The Council's financial standing was good and this was reflected in the levels of reserves. The Council had successfully achieved a turnaround in its financial position from a few years ago. The Audit Commission appreciated that whilst the levels of reserves were high there were significant risks which may impact on the Council's future finances. Once these risks had been quantified there may be scope for the Council to re-evaluate its levels.

For the first time, the Letter incorporated a formal assessment of the Council's Direction of Travel and Use of Resources. The Letter set out in detail the Council's progress in relation to its key priorities together with the use of resources judgement. The Use of Resources judgement was based on five themes, each of which was scored between 1 (the lowest) and 4 (the highest). Overall Easington had achieved a score of three which meant that the Council was judged to be working at above minimum standards and performing well in a number of areas covered by the Review.

Of the five themes, the value for money theme was perhaps the most challenging for the Council as evidence was difficult to obtain. The Council had adequate arrangements for providing value for money but needed to develop a corporate approach to assessing and improving this.

To conclude, he stated that future action required the Council to continue to focus on service improvement particularly where services were performing poorly compared to other Councils. It needed to develop and implement an action plan to improve its use of resources, continue to improve its approach to engagement with local communities and to diversity, and implement and embed proposed actions to strengthen data quality arrangements over its performance management information.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** that the information given, be noted.

5. **COUNTY DURHAM LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT**

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Chief Executive which sought approval to sign up to the Local Area Agreement for County Durham developed during 2005/06, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

J Brindle, Assistant Chief Executive, reported that Local Area Agreements (LAAs) were three year negotiated contracts between Central and Local Government. They provided an interface between national and local priorities and were based on a series of three year outcomes and targets. They incorporated the 'stretch' targets previously included in Local Public Service Agreements and these were particularly demanding, attracting a performance reward grant if they were met.

The Agreement contained a series of outcomes within four blocks; Children and Young People, Health and Older People, Stronger, Safer Communities and Economic Development. These outcomes had been agreed by partners and were based on an understanding of the issues facing people in different parts of County Durham.

Details of governance arrangements were still under development, however the Council and its partners were represented in all parts of the model. Discussion would continue on the governance arrangements with a view to ensuring they represented added value for Easington people.

Performance Management arrangements were also still under development and the LAA would need to be monitored at a countywide level. However, there was also the need for ownership of specific targets at a local level and it was expected that the LSP would make links to the LAA in the development of its performance management framework.

The LAA was linked to how the Government would pay funding streams in the future and during 2005/6 the development of the LAA caused some uncertainty about the continued funding path of projects already funded externally, where the funding streams were due to be paid through the LAA. The LAA Board took a decision that for 2006/07 all funding streams would be passported to the relevant agencies or partnerships, and discussions on future arrangements would continue during the coming year.

RESOLVED that the Local Area Agreement be agreed and Officers be authorised to engage in the further development of the Agreement in terms of governance, funding and performance.

6 ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT - IMPROVING OUR POLITICAL GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Chief Executive which set out proposals for improvements to the Council's political governance arrangements, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

During 2004/05 and 2005/06 the Council had invested in a programme of development activities which aimed to build on its leadership strengths following a period of political and managerial change.

A key driver of discussions had been the desire to respond to challenges facing local government in the future.

The Council was clear that to move ahead it needed to have the skills capacity and structures to fulfil its role as community leader.

The report set out the recommendations for improvements to the key political leadership functions of Executive and Scrutiny.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Executive Portfolios be reconfigured as set out in Section 4.2 in the report;
- (b) the Executive role of Scrutiny Liaison be removed to facilitate greater challenge by Scrutiny;
- (c) an Audit Committee be established, independent of the Executive and Scrutiny Functions, consisting of ten Members and politically balanced;
- (d) the Terms of Reference for the Audit Committee as set out in Appendix 1 be agreed, including the need for monthly meetings;

- (e) the Audit Scrutiny Committee be disestablished;
- (f) further options around the Scrutiny function be developed with a target date of September 2006. The options to be discussed by the Political Management Working Group.

7. LDF:STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Member for Environment and Transport on the LDF:Statement of Community Involvement, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

The report advised Members of the outcome of the independent examination of the Submission Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) by the Planning Inspectorate and recommended that the document as amended by the Planning Inspector be adopted as Council Policy to govern consultation arrangements for the preparation of the Easington District Local Development Framework.

Formal consultation on the SCI ended on 9 December, 2005. Thirteen responses had been received and forwarded to the Inspector, details of which were set out in Appendix 1 to the report. The majority of representations supported the content of the SCI and wished to be included in further consultation exercises.

The Inspector had determined that the SCI was basically sound, subject to a number of recommended changes as detailed in the report.

RESOLVED that the SCI be amended in accordance with the Inspector's report and be adopted as Council Policy.

8 TO SEAL DOCUMENTS

RESOLVED that the action taken in affixing the Common Seal to the following documents, be endorsed:-

- 19109 Transfer of Part of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and Debbie Louise Rothesay (2) relating to 29 Hart Crescent, Blackhall Rocks
- 19110 Transfer of Part of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and Alyson Suzanne Gardner and Dereck Smith (2) relating to 59 Chapel Hill Road, Peterlee
- 19111 Transfer of Part of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and Alison Hardy (2) relating to 88 Bruce Glasier Terrace, Shotton Colliery
- 19112 Lease made between Thomas Albert Willis and Elaine Willis (1) and EDC (2) relating to 14 Queen Alexander Road, Dawdon, Seaham in duplicate
- 19113 Transfer of Part of registered title(s) made between EDC (1) and Debbie Lister and Colin Lister (2) relating to 32 A J Cook Terrace, Shotton Colliery

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- 19114 Transfer of Part of registered title(s) made between EDC (1) and Adam Richardson and Nicola Richardson (2) relating To 90 Heathway, Seaham
- 19115 Transfer of Part of registered title(s) made between EDC (1) and Carole Atkinson (2) relating To 35 Gloucester Terrace, Haswell Plough
- 19116 Transfer of Part of registered title(s) made between EDC (1) and Jill Elizabeth Burn (2) relating to 22 Station Estate South, Murton
- 19117 Transfer of Part of registered title(s) made between EDC (1) and Judith Evans (2) relating to 14 Milton Grove, Shotton Colliery
- 19118 Transfer of Part of registered title(s) made between EDC (1) and Paul Westmoreland (2) relating to 31 North Crescent, Easington
- 19119 Transfer of Part of registered title(s) made between EDC (1) and Tracie Mercer (2) relating to 59 Newholme Estate, Station Town, Wingate
- 19120 Transfer of part of registered title(s) made between EDC (1) and Jeanette Ward (2) relating to 70 Hessewelle Crescent, Haswell Plough
- 19121 Transfer of part of registered title(s) made between EDC (1) and Kathleen Stephenson (2) relating to 34 Crawford Avenue, Peterlee
- 19122 Transfer of part of registered title(s) made between EDC (1) and John Featonby (2) relating to Land adjacent to 8 East Street, Thornley
- 19123 Transfer of part of registered title(s) made between EDC (1) and Lee Lawson and Neil Henry Healer (2) relating to 11/12 Kings Road, Wingate
- 19124 Transfer of Part of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and Jacqueline Leathers and John Parkin (2) relating to 15 Hazel Crescent, Easington Colliery
- 19125 Transfer of Part of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and Thomas McDonald and Kim McDonald (2) relating to 9 Sledmere Close, Peterlee
- 19126 Transfer of Part of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and John William Donkin and Wendy Rebecca Donkin (2) relating to 46 Brandlings Way, Peterlee
- 19127 Transfer of Part of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and Michael Downing (2) relating to 7 Rydal Crescent, Peterlee
- 19128 Lease made between EDC (1) and Harry Sanderson (2) relating to residential flat situate and known as 73 Thorntree Gill, Peterlee
- 19129 Transfer of Part of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and

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- Judith Ann Ward (2) relating to No. 10 Webb Square, Horden
- 19130 Transfer of Part of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and Paul John Wright and Wendy Vera Wright (2) relating to No. 44 Kingston Avenue, Seaham
- 19131 Transfer of Whole of Registered Title(s) made between EDC (1) and Jane Margaret Marshall (2) relating to No. 22 Bolam Street, Easington Colliery
- 19132 Lease made between EDC (1) and Westlea and Milldale Residents Association (2) relating to 7 and 7A West Grove, Seaham (in duplicate)
- 19133 Memorandum of Variation made between EDC (1) and Beazer Homes Limited (2) relating to 27 and 86 Daphne Crescent, Seaham.
- 19134 Deed of Variation made between EDC (1) and Messrs P Lincoln and L Waugh (2) relating to Land at Margaret Terrace, Deaf Hill, Trimdon.
- 19135 Lease made between EDC (1) and Lisa Robinson (2) relating to premises known as 108 Yoden Road, Peterlee (in duplicate)
- 19136 Cancellation of entries relating to a registered charge relating to 15 Ashbrooke Estate, Shotton Colliery
- 19137 Transfer of part of registered title(s) made between EDC (1) and Paul Jones and Debra Marie Jones (2) relating to 73 Johnson Estate, Wheatley Hill
- 19138 Transfer of part of registered title(s) made between EDC (1) and Alan Weir and Jill Weir (2) relating to 12 Hawthorn Square, Seaham
- 19139 Transfer of part of registered title(s) made between EDC (1) and Denise Wilson and Roland McQuoid (2) relating to 6 Tyne Street, Seaham
- 19140 Deed of Dedication made between EDC (1) and Millennium Commission (2) relating to Land at Crimdon (in triplicate)

JE/CS/COM/DIST/060401
13 April 2006