

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING

OF THE EXECUTIVE

HELD ON TUESDAY 27 FEBRUARY 2007

Present: Councillor A Napier (Chair)
Councillors R Crute, Mrs J Freak,
Mrs E Huntington, D Myers,
Mrs A Naylor, F Shaw and
R J Todd

Apology: Councillor P Ward and G Patterson

1 **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 6 February 2007, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

2 **REVIEW OF CHARGES FOR RECOVERY COSTS IN RESPECT OF COUNCIL TAX AND NATIONAL NON DOMESTIC RATES**

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Member for Resources which sought approval to increase the charge to Ratepayers and Council Taxpayers of obtaining a Liability Order and Committal Summons from the Magistrates Court for the recovery of Non Domestic Rates and Council Tax, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

The basis of the review was to ensure that Ratepayers who refused to pay rates and Council Taxpayers who refused to pay Council Tax met the cost of recovery. The charges were not meant to be penal but were representative of the cost of recovery up to the stage of obtaining a Liability Order for non payment.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) approval be granted to increase the charge for obtaining a Liability Order and Committal Summons in respect of Non Domestic Rates and Council Tax to £45.00 per case for a Liability Order and £80.00 per case for a Committal Summons with effect from 1 April 2007;
- (ii) both charges be reviewed annually.

3 **DRAFT PROCEDURE FOR RESPONSE TO UNAUTHORISED ENCAMPMENTS**

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Member for Liveability which sought approval of a new procedure for responding to unauthorised encampments in the district, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Members were advised that the Government defined unauthorised encampments as "encampments of caravans and/or other vehicles on land without the landowner or occupier's consent and constituting trespass". Gypsies and travellers were one group frequently associated with unauthorised encampments.

The shortage of authorised sites, both nationally and locally meant that unauthorised encampments occurred regularly in the district. The County Council's Travellers Liaison Service reported seven encampments in the District during 2005/2006 and ten in the first half of 2006/2007.

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There was currently no procedure for responding to unauthorised encampments. Whilst there was often liaison between the District Council, the County Council Travellers Liaison Service and the Police, decisions related to directions to leave were typically made as a reactive response to complaints received. A procedure was therefore required so that the response could be better coordinated, the needs of both the travelling and settled community were considered, decision making was clearer and more consistent and all parties were better informed.

The draft procedures were attached at Appendix 1 to the report. The procedures would help to ensure improved communication, particularly between the Police, District Council and Travellers Liaison Service, allowing each encampment to be treated on a case by case basis that respected any welfare issues that were presented.

For encampments on public land the procedures included a list of sites where the encampments would not normally be permitted, details of which were outlined in the report. This was to safeguard the interests of both the travelling and the settled community. If an encampment arrived on a site which was not acceptable, then subject to a welfare assessment confirming that it would not have a deleterious impact, a direction to leave would be issued.

If the encampment was not on a site listed then in most circumstances the encampment would be allowed for a temporary period of time, usually less than two weeks. However, the Travelling community would be expected to adhere to a set of rules, detailed of which were outlined in the report.

A code for Travellers on land owned by the District of Easington was detailed in the report. Breach of the code of conduct would normally result in a direction to leave. The procedures also included advice to landowners where the encampments arrived on private land.

RESOLVED that the new procedures for responding to unauthorised encampments in the district be adopted.

4 EASINGTON COUNCIL OF VOLUNTARY SERVICES

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Member for Social Inclusion and Culture which sought approval to transfer the 2006/2007 and future funding identified for Easington Council of Voluntary Services to East Durham Community Development Trust, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

RESOLVED that the £30,000 grant for 2006/2007 previously approved for Easington Council of Voluntary Services be transferred to East Durham Community Development Trust.

5 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the disclosure of exempt information, as defined in Paragraph 4, Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

6 GULLY CLEANSING OPERATIONS IN EASINGTON DISTRICT

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Member for Liveability which gave details of a proposal from Durham County Council to significantly reduce the frequency of gully cleansing in the district, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) approval be granted to continue the existing District Council gully cleansing services at twice a year if the income from Durham County Council for this work remained largely unchanged
- (ii) in the event of Durham County Council implementing service and budgetary reductions to one and a quarter cleanses a year then the service be transferred back to Durham County Council.

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