

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY 6 DECEMBER 2005

Present: Councillor R Burnip (Chair)
Councillors P J Campbell, J Haggan,
B Joyce, C Patching and W R Peardon

Also Present: Councillor D Myers – Executive Member for
e-government and Scrutiny Liaison
Councillor G Patterson – Executive Member
for Environment and Transport

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs S Mason and T Longstaff.

2. **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 15 November 2005, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

3. **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE** held on 22 November 2005, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were submitted.

COUNCILLOR R BURNIP DECLARED A PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTEREST IN ITEM NO. 11 - LISTED BUILDING CONSENT FOR THE PROPOSED DEMOLITION OF EASINGTON COLLIERY SCHOOL

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. **THE DARZI REPORT**

The Chair welcomed Dr Roger Bolas and Tim Wright from Easington PCT and explained that they had been invited to the meeting to update Members on progress made since the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee meeting that was held on 13 September 2005.

Dr Bolas explained that the Darzi Report was now out to public consultation and tried to make the best use of resources for long term sustainability of specialist services. A lot of work had been carried out around transport issues and the effect that the Darzi recommendations would have on transport for the people of Easington District. He explained that he was attending a meeting that afternoon whereby work that had been carried out on transport issues/solutions would be discussed. He felt that in broad terms, the numbers of patients that would be affected would be very small for Easington.

In Stockton, there had been a lot of difficulties especially around maternity services but most of the services would be moved closer to the people of

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Easington. Trauma services that had been reviewed as part of the Darzi proposals would mean that transportation to these services by way of the A19 would not be too problematic. The PCT had invested heavily in paramedic services and clinically it made a lot of sense to have the hospital close to the A19.

In respect of local health services, the Easington PCT Business Plan was centred around providing more services locally that would in turn reduce the need for patients travelling outside the District of Easington. The development of the Urgent Care Centres at Peterlee and Seaham should reduce the need for travel to health services outside the District. There had been a reduction of patients attending Hartlepool A&E of just over 1/3 from the Easington area. The Urgent Care Centre in Seaham was opened in October and an alternative location that was better situated was currently being investigated. The opening hours for the Urgent Care Centre in Seaham was 8.00 am to 6.00 pm Monday to Friday and Saturday mornings. It was expected that the number of patients from the North of the District attending Sunderland A&E would also reduce as people began to use the Urgent Care Centre in Seaham. The PCT were currently trying to publicise the opening of the Seaham Urgent Care Centre.

Dr Bolas explained that there were a number of schemes already in place which aimed to address existing problems of access to health services within the District such as Community Care, the Social Car Scheme and the Hospital Travel Cost Scheme. He added that he was aware that Durham County Council was experiencing some difficulties regarding subsidised transport and looking carefully at how they allocated funds. Transport issues for visitors were also just as important as patients.

The Social Car Scheme was provided by the Social Resource Centre and funded jointly by Neighbourhood Renewal Funding and the PCT. The scheme began in July 2005 for the whole of the District and provided door-to-door transport for disabled or aged persons. The scheme had a membership fee of £1 per year and required booking 24 hours in advance. The charge for this service was 50p per mile. There had been a good uptake for local journeys but had not been used for hospital journeys as people had felt this was quite an expensive method of transport.

Easington PCT offered an out of hours transport service as part of the Urgent Care Centre provision. There had only been 30 occasions when this had been used in the last 6-8 months.

The Hospital Travel Cost Scheme was not well known and had been relaunched recently. People could apply for the full cost of travel, usually by public transport, although if a consultant felt that a patient required other methods of transport then a request could be submitted. Visitors could claim through the Social Fund but he explained that he was not quite sure how this scheme operated and it was something he needed to address.

Dr Bolas explained that although the village of Ludworth was not in Easington District, Easington PCT were responsible for that area. He was currently looking at a pilot scheme relating to taxi vouchers whereby the journey could be linked to the voucher, although this needed to be facilitated without running the risk of abuse. He added that the pilot was currently being looked at but needed to be investigated thoroughly.

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Members raised concerns regarding whether transportation solutions would be implemented prior to the proposed PCT configuration. Dr Bolas indicated that he could not give a guarantee that this would happen but explained that in implementing any proposals agreed arising from the Darzi Review, it was envisaged that this would be carried out on a phased approach. As such, it was hoped that any associated transport solutions would be introduced on a similar basis.

A Member referred to the Urgent Care Centre in Seaham and explained that he had not seen any publicity and local Councillors were not aware of the current situation. Dr Bolas explained that he would rectify this situation and publicity would be carried out.

A Member referred to Dr Bolas' previous commitment that transport solutions would be implemented for January 2006 and asked if this was still the case. Dr Bolas explained that by January 2006 he should know the outcome of the Darzi consultation and what changes were going to be made. He explained that he would make sure transport solutions were in place before any changes were made.

Dr Bolas explained that every public meeting he had attended relating to the Darzi proposals, the majority of questions had centred around transport and access to health services and this should show through in the public consultation. A consultation was to commence on 14 December for proposals for the reconfiguration of the PCT.

A Member commented that Easington PCT had been a success and had a good working relationship with other organisations and it was hoped that this would not be destroyed. Dr Bolas explained that nationally, PCT's had been weaker than had hoped and had not moved the modernisation agenda as far forward or as fast as the Secretary of State would have liked.

Dr Bolas explained that as previously reported, the increase in resources allocated to Easington PCT for the period 2006/2008 would be ring fenced to Easington would remain, although this could not be guaranteed after March 2008.

The Chair thanked Dr Bolas and Mr White for their attendance.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

6. **PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS**

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport had been invited to the meeting to update Members on progress and partnership working within his remit.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport explained that the initial meeting of the Local Development Framework had been held and he had been very disappointed at the number of Members that had attended. He added that this was a huge area of work for the District and Members should be totally focused. He circulated a structure of the District of Easington Local Development Framework and explained that CASS Associates had been employed to produce an Open Space Strategy. It was explained that once the Local Development Framework was in place, the Council could only build a specified number of new build houses.

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The Executive Member for Environment and Transport explained that the District Council had formed a partnership with the University of Newcastle to establish a Geothermal Research Education and Training Institute which would be called 'The Great Institute'. The project would be based around Geothermal Energy Applications. The aim of the project was to create economic activity based on utilising local geological resources as an energy source to assist to achieve greater economic activity. Dalton Park had been identified as a possible location for the Institute.

It was explained that Durham County Council would be the driver for the Regional Spatial Strategy and Easington would be allocated 200 new build houses in one year. Newcastle had been identified as a central point for employment and should have houses to suit the worker's needs in those areas. If houses were demolished in the District, the District Council could rebuild the number of houses that had been demolished and this would not be taken out of the 200 new build allocation.

A Member referred to the Seaham Colliery site and explained that permission had been granted to build 420 units on that site. He queried whether the new Local Development Framework would affect this. The Executive Member for Environment and Transport explained that he was not sure of the position and would investigate this further and report back to the Member concerned.

A Member commented that houses needed to be provided near transport and the railway lines should be reopened for public transport. The Executive Member for Environment and Transport explained that he was attending a meeting the following week in Newcastle on transport. He explained that the infrastructure was there and felt that there was no reason why the railway line could not be reopened.

The Chair thanked the Executive Member for Environment and Transport for his report.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted

7. **ADDITIONAL URGENT ITEM OF BUSINESS**

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

8. **THE DARZI REVIEW OF ACUTE HEALTH SERVICES NORTH AND SOUTH OF THE TEES (AOB)**

The Scrutiny Support Manager explained that the Committee had been given a brief by the Leader of the Council to investigate the implications of the Darzi Review on Transport in the District. A report had been drafted of the Committee's recommendations which needed to be submitted to Executive as part of the conclusions on investigations. Timescales did not allow for the report to be discussed at a meeting before the end of the consultation period and it was therefore suggested that the content of the report be delegated to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee and the Scrutiny Support Manager. The report would be considered at the appropriate

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meetings and a further report be given to Members of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee on 4 January 2006.

RESOLVED that the completion of the report be delegated to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee and the Scrutiny Support Manager and report back to the Committee on 4 January 2006.

JC/KA/COM/PART/051201
20 December 2005