

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

HELD ON MONDAY 7 JANUARY 2008

Present: Councillor D. Raine (Chair)
Councillors S. Bishop, Mrs. E.M.
Connor, Mrs. S. Forster, H. High,
A.J. Holmes, D.J. Taylor-Gooby and
C. Walker

1. **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 10 December 2007, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

**PCT - Big Conversation
(Minute No. 2 refers)**

Councillor D.J. Taylor-Gooby queried if concerns raised would be forwarded to the PCT. The Scrutiny Support Manager explained that he would forward the concerns expressed to the PCT.

RESOLVED that the concerns expressed be forwarded to the PCT.

2. **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE** held on 18 December, 2007 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. **FEEDBACK FROM SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD**

At the last meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board held on 4 January 2008 the following issue was discussed:-

Proposals To Establish A Joint Overview And Scrutiny Committee which would deliver the accountability arrangements required for the Implementation Executive. The Council's representative on the Committee would be Councillor A. Burnip, Chair of the Scrutiny Management Board.

RESOLVED that the information given be noted.

5. **SERVICE UNIT PERFORMANCE REPORTING - PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL**

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Planning and Building Control Services which provided information on the performance of the Planning and Building Control Services Unit, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

At the end of the second quarter, four service BVPI's were now demonstrating top quartile performance. Performance improvement continued to focus on

Regeneration Services Scrutiny Committee - 7 January 2008

BV109 and the current performance was detailed in the report. Performance on major applications was still trajectory to achieve this years service target. Performance on minor applications exceeded the service target and was routinely achieving top quartile performance.

With regard to other applications for October and November, the figures were up to 91.5%. Some members of staff would be working on major applications in the next few months so it was hoped that performance figures would not suffer.

Performance on plan making BVPI200b had not achieved the next stage in plan production, the preferred option document which had fallen behind schedule. This was partly due to staffing problems but also the need to deliver supporting planning documents.

The Head of Planning and Building Control Services outlined a number of staffing and structural issues within the Unit.

Substantial progress had been made in developing a new Local Development Framework for the District. A draft "Preferred Options" report would shortly be published which sets out new planning policy framework for the District. The report would be supported by a series of supporting studies designed to provide the evidence needed to support the proposed planning policies. The studies which were now a requirement of Government, had mostly been commissioned on a sub-regional basis, the exception being the Employment Land Review. The major studies were detailed in the report.

A number of further technical studies were also underway to support the production of the Local Development Framework and together with the supporting studies, had delayed progress in producing the new plan within the timescales set out in the approved Local Development Scheme. All of the studies would be completed early in the New Year when a Local Development Scheme would be published setting out new timescales.

A Member commented that they felt Members of the Development Control and Regulatory Panel should received extra training and it was more than welcome.

A Member referred to the Strategic Land Availability Assessment, together with the expansion of Peterlee and queried if the Local Government Review would have any affect on this. The Head of Planning and Building Control Services explained that if the preferred options was produced, then Easington would make the decisions. If not, then the new County Durham Council would be clear on Easington's view.

A Member queried if there would be local determination of planning applications under the new Authority. The Head of Planning and Building Control Services explained that there were no proposals at the moment although he was Chair of the Planning Officer's Society in County Durham which held regular meetings and would be putting forward their views.

A Member queried the period of time to take enforcement action on an individual who had broken planning laws. The Head of Planning and Building Control Services explained that the enforcement team worked on prioritisation and choices had to be made as there was insufficient staff to deal with all enforcement actions.

Regeneration Services Scrutiny Committee - 7 January 2008

The Chair thanked the Head of Planning and Building Control Services for his report.

RESOLVED that the information given be noted.

6. 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.

7. CUSTOMER CONTACT CENTRE (AOB)

The Scrutiny Support Manager explained that concerns had been raised previously by Members of the Committee regarding the time taken to answer calls in the Contact Centre. The Head of Customer Services had introduced a number of initiatives to alleviate the problem and was reporting to the Resources Scrutiny Committee the following day if any Member wished to attend. A report on discussions would be given to the next meeting.

RESOLVED that the information given be noted.