

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE REGENERATION SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON MONDAY 14 JULY 2008

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

Also Present: Councillor R Todd – Executive Member for Housing

1 **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 23 June 2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

2 **MATTERS ARISING**

Public Question and Answer Session
(Minute No 3 refers)

The Scrutiny Support Manager explained that the Engineering Unit had visited the yellow brick road and surrounding area and a number of remedial works had been reported. With regard to the planning query, a meeting had been held and Mr and Mrs Jones had attended. The Chair of the Seaham Regeneration Member Panel and Officers from Regeneration Unit would be meeting Mr and Mrs Jones and local residents. Mr and Mrs Jones had been appraised of the action taken to date.

Councillor Walker explained that Mr and Mrs Jones had attended the Seaham Neighbourhood Forum and they had been delighted at the Council's response.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

3 **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE** held on 1 July 2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were submitted.

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 **FEEDBACK FROM SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD**

At the last meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board held on 7 July 2008, the following issue was discussed:-

County Durham Overview and Scrutiny Member Network

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

6 SERVICE UNIT PERFORMANCE REPORTING – ASSET AND PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Asset and Property Management which provided Members with performance information in relation to the Asset and Property Management section, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

The Head of Asset and Property Management explained that the Council's property portfolio comprised 339 property assets managed in an operational estate and a non-operational estate.

Although a formal restructure of the unit was agreed in September 2007, there had been very little interest in the jobs advertised and the posts were having to be filled by agency staff to meet the shortfall. The lack of full time experienced professional staff was having a significant impact in terms of achieving the full aspirations of the current service plan and as such, work was being prioritised to meet the key requirements of the transitional plan including capital receipts/warden services review, BVPI156/transfer of community assets and facilitating regeneration objectives together with ensuring the buildings were safe and complied with statutory requirements.

The unit was divided into specialist work areas. Valuation services, acquisitions and disposals, property management and facilities management.

Performance indicators had been developed and were included in Appendix 1 which formed part of the unit's service plan for 2008/9. The suite of indicators reflect the priorities and objectives of the newly restructured unit.

A Member referred to the assets that had to be sold to raise finance for the Peterlee master plan and queried if this would be a problem with the credit crunch. The Head of Asset and Property Management explained that the only site the Council was marketing at present was Thornlaw South. It was difficult to give an answer if the credit crunch would have an impact.

A Member referred to the boys club site in Peterlee and explained that he would like the land to go to social housing and what was the procedure. The Head of Asset and Property Management explained that the site was not factored into the category 6 programme. There was also a competitive market within RSLs. The land needed to be put to the market and RSLs would need to bid competitively for it.

The Executive Member for Housing queried how the proposal for the North East Industrial Estate was moving along. The Head of Asset and Property Management explained that although he was not the Officer with direct responsibility this was moving very slowly. He would speak to the lead officer and update Members.

A Member referred to travellers using Council land and raised concerns that this piece of land could be taken over by them. The Head of Asset and Property Management explained that the Council did not have any traveller sites and they worked with Durham County Council's liaison service. The Council had a policy and the procedure had to be followed.

A Member queried if there was any progress on the new supermarket in Peterlee. The Head of Asset and Property Management explained that the only outstanding issue was the need to provide some playing fields in a different area. Durham County Council was working with Peterlee Town Council on this.

The Chair thanked the Officer for his report.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

7 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.

8 MOMENTUM: PATHWAYS TO HEALTHCARE (AOB)

Councillor Taylor-Gooby circulated a report regarding the public meeting organised by the Momentum: Pathways to Healthcare concerning the new healthcare system for Hartlepool, Stockton and parts of Easington and Sedgefield that was held in Peterlee Leisure Centre on Wednesday 9 July 2008.

He explained that the meeting had a knowledgeable and able panel of senior NHS employees who were able to answer questions. Although the meeting was not well attended, those who were present asked many pertinent questions and there was a good debate. Some straight answers from the NHS were also received.

Carol Langrick who works for North Tees and Hartlepool Foundation Trust chaired the meeting and answered points put to her very clearly. He suggested that she be invited to a future meeting if required.

The main points were as follows:-

- The NHS anticipated that the number of long stay patients in acute hospitals would decline. Operations which used to take a long time could now be done more quickly;
- Equipment was now more expensive and sophisticated and required a high level of expertise from consultants;
- Many minor operations and treatment for long term conditions could now be delivered and health centres or polyclinics nearer to where the patient lived;
- As a result of the above points, there would be fewer acute hospitals in future with more sophisticated equipment. Valuable consultants would need to be concentrated in them;
- The two most suitable sites for the proposed new acute hospital were near each other. One at Wolviston south of the A689 and the other at Wynyard north of it. There were problems of access or other technical problems with other available sites;
- Lord Darzi had promised that no existing hospitals would close till adequate facilities were provided in the community for the range of operations and treatments which could be performed there;

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- The Acute Trust seemed sincere in its commitment to provide services in Peterlee, but it was the responsibility of the Primary Care Trust to provide the accommodation for such services;
- There were many questions about what services would be provided in Peterlee and the surrounding area. Unfortunately there was no representative of the County Durham PCT present who was able to answer these points. The PCT was represented by PALS officers who deal with patients queries and problems;
- It was common knowledge that the old Easington PCT which had subsequently been merged into the County Durham PCT carried out a feasibility study for a new health centre and found that the existing hospital buildings were not adequate. They had looked at new sites and one was identified next to Denehouse School for a new centre to serve Peterlee and the surrounding area. The PCT was not represented and unable to explain what had happened to the feasibility study;
- A member of the public commented on the parking problems at the existing Peterlee hospital and the congestion caused at O'Neill Drive;
- Carol Langrick explained that there were studies and plans in place to look at transport arrangements for the proposed new hospital. She admitted that the NHS did not have funding available to subsidise public transport.

Councillor Taylor-Gooby explained that he had read an article in the Northern Echo that there was to be a meeting held on Monday 14 July in Gully House, Wingate under the headline "Deprived Area to get Health Centre". No District Council Members had been made aware of the meeting.

The Scrutiny Support Manager explained that the County Durham Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee was currently being held and an item on the agenda was PCT's consultation exercise. David Gallagher of the County Durham PCT was attending that meeting. Durham County Council were the statutory consultees and had been engaged in formal consultation process. F Jassett, the Head of Overview and Scrutiny at Durham County Council will be attending the next meeting to report on the formal consultation process. The key issues from the public meeting held the previous week was what the Co Durham PCT were going to do to provide locally based service which would support the development of a new Hospital as part of the Momentum project. He suggested that a letter be forwarded to David Gallagher raising concerns and invite him to attend a future meeting.

The Chair thanked Councillor Taylor-Gooby for his report.

RESOLVED that a letter be sent to David Gallagher, Co Durham PCT raising the Councils concerns and inviting him to a future meeting.