

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
REGENERATION SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON MONDAY, 15TH SEPTEMBER, 2008**

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

Apologies: Councillor D.J. Taylor-Gooby

1. **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 31st July, 2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed, subject to the following amendment.

Councillor Holmes had commented that it was his fear that the beds in the new hospital would be made available for private customers and would therefore become a 'pay-as-you-come' hospital.

2. **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE** held on 2nd September, 2008, 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 8th September, 2008, the following issues were discussed:-

- **DCLG Consultation - Local Petitions and Calls for Action - Government Response**
- **DCLG Consultation - Communities in Control - Real People, Real Power**

A copy of the consultation on Communities in Control had been circulated to Members with a request for representations to be forwarded back to the Scrutiny Support Manager who would produce a composite response.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

5. **SERVICE UNIT PERFORMANCE REPORTING**

- (i) **Regeneration and Partnerships**

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Regeneration and Partnerships which provided information on the performance of the Regeneration and Partnerships Unit, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

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Details of performance from 1st November, 2007 to 1st September, 2008 was outlined in Appendix 1 to the report. Progress, achievements and non-achievements were also fully detailed.

Members were advised that the service continued to manage and facilitate large infrastructure investment and development projects including the East Durham Link Road, Hawthorn Business Park, Seaham St. John's Square, Seaham/Murton Colliery Sites, The Great Initiative and the North Dock feasibility studies.

The Regeneration Projects Manager explained that the road link was complete and work would be beginning the following month to link it to the industrial estates although the fencing would stay in place until it was completed. The next part of the link road would create the Murton bypass which would link to the A1 and open up employment opportunities. A bid for further funding of £12 million would be made to complete the road.

Planning permission had been approved for St. John's Square for Durham County Council's new building. Objections had been received for the compulsory purchase of the Magistrates Court and the stopping up order and a public inquiry may be held but this would not delay the first phase of the development.

With regard to the North Dock, funding had been secured for a 77 berth marina and a building for twelve businesses to help run it. The application to dredge the dock had been refused as contaminants had been found in the spoil and the cost would increase for its disposal but the scheme should still be viable and would go out to tender in October and be on site in January 2009.

In October 2007, the Easington/Horden Pathfinder Sub-Team co-located alongside other partner bodies and stakeholders into the Healthworks Project in Easington Colliery. Since the official opening, Healthworks had become established as a community facility with 35 services being co-delivered by public and community voluntary groups.

The North Peterlee Pathfinder had moved into new headquarters at East Durham Trust in Edenhill. The pathfinder felt its location with the community and voluntary agencies had a benefit to services and managers of the target area. The pathfinder had contributed to counteract the negativity of ASB by supporting initiatives such as Midnight Football.

A report on the future of the Local Neighbourhood Management activities would be prepared for Management Team this month. The report would look at the future of activities in light of the cessation of the core funding of this activity and potential impact of the Local Government Review.

A Member referred to the objections on St. John's Square and queried if the reasons were known. The Regeneration Projects Manager explained that the objections were regarding the rights across the site and the value of the land. The objector had been advised that this could be more appropriate to be dealt with by a land tribunal.

The Chair thanked the Officer for his report.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

6. EAST DURHAM BUSINESS SERVICE

Consideration was given to the report of the Manager of East Durham Business Service (EDBS) which provided information on the performance of the Business Service, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

EDBS had made good progress in the financial year to continue the range of programmes and initiatives to assist in developing the local economy. However, a number of its grants to business packages had not been implemented since they were dependent upon securing Area Based Fund resources, the process of which had not yet been finalised.

A key area of work for the Economic Development Team had been the development of employability initiatives through the Disadvantaged Areas Fund (DAF) and the development of an employability and skills strategy for the District. The work of the LSP's Employability Strategy and Commissioning Group had been co-ordinated by the team and had led the development of the Employability and Skills Strategy which provided a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to employability activity.

In terms of capital project activity, the team had secured Council resources to commission consultants to produce a comprehensive master plan for the industrial areas of Peterlee (North-West, South-West and Horden Sea View). The master plan would focus on key vacant sites and premises to determine their re-use potential and devise a costed market driven delivery plan to bring them back into use to meet market needs and to improve the competitiveness of the area.

The Apprenticeships programme, to match young people with companies had placed 25 young people with local businesses to date. A wage subsidy that helped employers meet the cost of taking on an apprentice continued to be successful and a total of 15 wage subsidies had been awarded. Due to the resignation in July of the Recruitment Consultant, apprenticeship activity had slowed until the posts could be filled.

Eden Farm Foods based on the North East Industrial Estate continued their generous support for local community bases learning through their funding of the community grant scheme delivered by the Lifelong Learning Co-ordinator. The Lifelong Learning Co-ordinator resigned in August and it was hoped his replacement would take up the role in October.

In terms of business growth, 20 companies were advised with five expanding/relocating into the area. The Retail Advisor continued to assist local retailers improve their premises through grant support and specialist advice to improve their business overall. Seven retail grants had been awarded to date and 47 local retailers advised.

Take up of the units at Novus Business Centre had been increasing with the occupancy rate standing at 73%. Details of the tenants currently within the Novus Business Centre were outlined in the report.

A Member referred to Sea View Industrial Estate in Horden and explained that the majority of the buildings were in disrepair and had deteriorated and queried who was responsible for their upkeep. The Principal Economic Development Manager explained that the District Council owned part of the site and some of the units had been

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purchased by the companies who occupied them. The Council could take action in getting the companies to improve the areas around their units.

The Chair referred to the apprenticeships and queried if the post of the Co-ordinator was to be filled. The Principal Economic Development Officer explained that the post had never been mainstreamed and was only funded until the end of March 2009, therefore the post would not be attractive. The Tourism Officer had agreed to cover part of the post in the interim.

The Chair thanked the Officer for his report.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

JC/PH com/regenscrutiny/080901
17 September 2008