

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
HELD ON TUESDAY, 19TH FEBRUARY, 2008**

Present: Councillor A. Burnip (Chair)  
Councillors Mrs M Baird, A. Collinson,  
J Haggan, D Maddison, Mrs. J. Maitland,  
R Taylor and Mrs V M Williams

Apology: Councillor M Nicholls

1. **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 29th January, 2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

2. **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE** held on 5th February, 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**

The Chair advised that there were no issues discussed at the Scrutiny Management Board meeting held on 11 February, 2008 which fell within the remit of this Committee.

**RESOLVED** that the information given, be noted.

5. **SERVICE UNIT PERFORMANCE REPORTING – CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT UNIT**

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Chief Executive which detailed the performance and achievements of the Corporate Development Unit for the period November 2007 to January 2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

M Readman, Principal Corporate Development Officer advised that since October 2007 the Unit had continued to undertake and deliver on a number of key projects as part of the planned workload. Progress against the units work programme was outlined in Appendix A to the report.

It was explained that the team had analysed the new National Indicator Set which would replace BVPIs from April 2008. In discussion with Management Team, a proposal was being developed for the implementation of the new indicators.

The team had coordinated the Council's input into two countywide Audit Commission inspections on Sickness Absence management and Access to Services. Feedback on the results of these inspections would be provided in due course.

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Quarterly Performance reporting continued to Management Team, Executive and the Audit Committee. The latest report, which reflected the results from the third quarter, showed a positive picture of improvement since the outturn results from 2006/2007. The Council was on track to achieve a larger than ever number of BVPI's in top quartile at year end. Particularly notable were achievements in Planning, Benefits, Recycling and Street Cleanliness.

Work had progressed well with the Performance Improvement Teams set up for 2007/2008. The areas of Planning, Tenants in rent arrears, housing re-let times, public buildings and DDA compliance and recycling had all shown improvement. Two of the indicators, Tenants in arrears with notices seeking possession and composting recycling, were now in top quartile position.

Following the Best Value Review of Support Services, the agreed actions and review of services had been implemented. The Value for Money review of Horticultural Services was almost complete, with work focussing on cost analysis, benchmarking, soft market testing with East Durham Homes (EDH) and a customer satisfaction survey, using APSE.

The team had coordinated the development of the Transitional Plan which set out the Council's key priorities, based on the Corporate Plan, for the transitional year 2008/2009 leading up to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

Work on the revised Community Strategy had continued to progress, with an initial draft document being completed.

At a sub regional and regional level, LGR had begun to feature heavily. The Assistant Chief Executive was co-leading the countywide Areas and Participation workstream, and other team members were involved in the Customers and Access, Equality and Cohesion and Policy and Partnerships workstreams.

The Political Management Working Group had been supported in exploring the potential impact of LGR for this Council during the transitional year.

The team continued to take a lead role in supporting the Countywide Local Area Agreement project team. Work was reaching completion on the next Local Area Agreement, which would begin in April 2008. The Assistant Chief Executive continued to lead the Governance workstream. The team also supported the County Durham Partnership in terms of risk management.

The Equality and Diversity Officer had worked with the North East Centre of Excellence on the harmonisation of tendering documents across the region, to ensure they properly reflected the Council's Equality and Diversity duties.

Following the departure of the District Vision Coordinator and with the consideration of the issues around LGR, discussions were taking place in relation to the continuation of the District Vision support programme.

A review of the Authority's approach to Community Engagement was being implemented. Particular focus had been given to:

- Developing the Community Advisory Panel. The Communications Manager and the Head of Customer Services were leading this work. During January, questionnaires were sent out to seek more members for the Panel with a view to reaching a total of 1,000

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- Involvement in Service Design continued, with work on Waste policy and Dog Control Orders influencing the policy papers which had come through the Council.
- Work to pilot the new Neighbourhood Forums approach was being led by the Heads of Democratic Services and Neighbourhood Initiatives with input from the Community trust.
- Work with the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder on piloting “performance through residents’ eyes” had progressed, local residents had worked on agreeing a set of priority indicators and these were being communicated on a regular basis. Further feedback would demonstrate how worthwhile this exercise had been.

The Equality and Diversity Officer had been involved in a number of initiatives details of which were outlined in the report.

With regard to organisational development the team had analysed feedback from appraisals conducted in the autumn and used this information alongside needs related to LGR to begin shaping the corporate training programme for 2008/2009.

To conclude, Members were advised that there had been no unplanned slippage on the teams work programme.

The Chair queried the timetable in relation to the Community Advisory Panel questionnaire. M Readman advised that it was a short timetable but it was hoped that 1,000 members for the panel would be reached.

Councillor Mrs J Maitland queried how the new Neighbourhood Forums would fit into the new Unitary Authority. M Readman advised that it was hoped the pilot would be viewed as an example of best practice by the new authority and rolled out across the rest of the County. It was also a way of improving how the Authority currently engaged with its residents.

**RESOLVED** that the information given, be noted.

### 6. **CENTRALISATION OF DEPOTS TO HACKWORTH ROAD**

O. Sherratt, Director of Community Services, and D. Clarke, Asset and Property Manager, were in attendance to provide an update in relation to the completion of the centralisation of depots to Hackworth Road, Peterlee.

O. Sherratt began by outlining the purpose of the project, and explained that the Council had taken the opportunity to transfer activities from Shotton, Horden, Wheatley Hill and Deneside to Hackworth Road. The centralisation to Hackworth Road would allow for the disposal of obsolete stock and result in efficiency savings.

It was explained that an area of land adjacent to the depot had been purchased to allow for expansion. This additional space was used to increase the car park which allowed the separation of private and operational vehicles.

Details of the layout of Hackworth Road before and after the works were outlined to Members.

There were also a number of non-cost benefits which had resulted from the centralisation, which included: -

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- Health and Safety – clear road markings for private and operational vehicles had improved traffic management
- Team working – improved facilities for employees had enhanced team working
- Waste Segregation/Storage – improved
- Improved Security - satellite depots had very little security and by consolidating on one site security had improved.
- Improved resident satisfaction – particularly residents living in the vicinity of Shotton depot
- Local Government Re-organisation – depot now in a good position for LGR. Durham County Council already storing school buses at the depot.

Capital expenditure on the project which included a new office block, the conversion of the joiners workshop, purchase of additional land and site improvement works amounted to £1.179M, however, this was off-set by income which would be generated from the eventual sale of Deneside, Horden, Shotton and Wheatley Hill depots which amounted to £1.201M, although this would take time to realise.

Annual efficiency savings in relation to the satellite depots amounted to;

- Shotton - £11,300
- Horden - £14,000
- Deneside - £14,000
- Wheatley Hill - £9,000

D. Clarke, outlined to Members the current situation with regard to each of the satellite depots including any rental income that was being generated.

In summary, O. Sherratt advised that the project had been completed on time and within budget. Immediate benefits had been realised through efficiency savings and had also positioned the depot well for LGR and capital receipts would be realised in the future.

Councillor Mrs V Williams referred to the site at Horden which was in a deplorable state and explained that she had been advised that the site had been sold. Councillor Williams queried if this site was let to EDH as they already had a unit in the same location.

D Clarke advised that he could not comment on whether EDH had two units on the same site but as far as he was aware the site was in a good state of repair and rental income was being received, however the situation could be investigated.

Councillor A Collinson queried if there had been any break-ins since the centralisation and introduction of increased security at Hackworth Road.

O Sherratt gave details of a recent incident at the depot, which had involved a van approaching the gatehouse there was also a break in approximately 6 months ago. Security at the depot was very important and this was recognised by Durham County Council who were storing school buses at the site. It was explained that during office hours the Council was responsible for security and on an evening it was a contractor.

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Councillor A Collinson asked if the Council provided a maintenance service for the school buses stored by at the depot by Durham County Council. O Sherratt explained that this was something that could be looked at in the future.

The Chair asked if there was further room for expansion at the depot. O Sherratt advised that there was very little scope for further expansion as the depot was land locked.

Councillor Mrs J Maitland asked what the take up had been to recycle Christmas cards. O Sherratt advised that overall recycling was improving and he would provide the figure requested to Councillor Maitland following the meeting.

**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(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. WORKSHOP - EFFECTIVE FINANCIAL AND BUDGET SCRUTINY (AOB)**

The Chair advised that Councillors Mrs. M. Baird and Mrs. V.M. Williams had attended a workshop on effective financial and budget scrutiny, details of which were circulated to each Member.

**RESOLVED** that the information given, be noted.

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20 February, 2008