

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING**  
**OF THE RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**HELD ON TUESDAY 17 FEBRUARY 2009**

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

1 **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 27 January 2009, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

2 **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE** held on 3 February 2009, 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 reported that at the meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board held on 9 February 2009 the following issue was discussed.

Draft Scrutiny Annual Report 2008/09

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

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

Consideration was given to the report of the Principal Corporate Development Officer, which gave an update on the performance of the Corporate Development Unit for the period October 2008 to January 2009, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

M Readman advised that since October 2008 the Unit had continued to undertake and deliver on a number of key projects as part of the planned workload, as well as play key roles on the Workstreams set up to consider and progress the arrangements for the new Council in line with the Local Government Review (LGR). The Assistant Chief Executive had left the Authority in October 2008 and since that time, Senior Officers within the Unit had shared responsibility for managing the service in the transitional period to the new Unitary Council. Progress against the units work programme was outlined in Appendix A to the report.

It was explained that the results of the Council's corporate performance (National and Local indicators) for the second and third quarters of 2008/09 were reported to Management team, Working Executive and Audit Committee. As the majority of the data sets were new, and had no relevant baseline information, the reports had focussed on explaining the new Indicators and their impact on the work of the Council. It was worth

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noting that the areas of Planning, Housing and Benefits continued to show improvement. Sickness levels across the Authority had also improved in the third quarter. There were some difficulties with the current performance of recycling and affordable homes, which were due to the economic downturn and were affecting Councils nationally.

The team had coordinated the Council's Direction of Travel self assessment to the Audit Commission, outlining the main achievements of the Council over the last year in terms of the Transitional Plan and performance and also its input into the arrangements for setting up the new Unitary Council. The Audit Commission had produced its draft annual audit letter and direction of travel statement which would be presented to full Council in March.

An external evaluation of the East Durham Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), by ECOTEC, to assess how well Neighbourhood Renewal Funding had been managed in line with the Government's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, had been completed and the final report was received in December 2008. The report found that 54 of the 63 Super Output Areas had improved their position in the IMD between 2004/07, 8 floor targets were improving, 3 had deteriorated and 3 were at the same level. Overall, strong progress could be seen in East Durham compared to other deprived areas across England.

The floor targets that were making the most progress were around employment/worklessness, circulatory disease mortality rate, educational attainment and satisfaction with the environment. The report positively described the range of innovative projects implemented by the Partnership and the effective way in which it had developed levels of trust and brokered solutions.

As one of the study areas in the Audit Commission's assessment of former Coalfield areas over the last 10 years, resulting in their report, "A mine of opportunities" in November 2008, Easington was highly commended in terms of its partnership involvement in creating over 7,000 jobs over the course of the last 10 years. This was deemed a significant achievement given the severity of the deprivation in existence in the area.

The Sustainable Community Strategy was now complete and would be discussed at the LSP Executive on 20 February 2009.

LGR continued to feature heavily in the work of the team. Officers were involved with the Workstreams set up to consider the arrangements in relation to Areas and Participation, Customers and Access, Democratic Services, Civil Contingencies, Equality and Cohesion, Health and Performance and Partnerships.

The Civil Contingencies Workstream covered the future delivery of the civil contingency responsibilities for the new County Durham unitary authority and, of necessity, Darlington Borough Council. LGR had allowed an opportunity for a fundamental review, by both the new County Durham and the existing Darlington unitary authorities, of how they met their civil contingency, emergency planning and business continuity management responsibilities.

The existing CCU arrangements had been re-examined, in light of national best practise and local needs, to determine the most effective means of delivery for the two unitary authorities of their civil contingency responsibilities. This had been done as part of the workstream tasks and the result was that the CCU would become part of the Assistant Chief Executive's Directorate, with Durham being the lead Authority in the partnership between Durham and Darlington.

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The Policy and Partnerships workstream were currently developing the Corporate Plan for the new Council, considering the arrangements for Integrated Service Planning and pulling together a central system for performance management.

The team had played a key role in the Areas and Participation Workstream to address the detailed issues and develop options for Elected Members in relation to the final geography, function, and governance of Area Action Partnerships, and the broad criteria and processes for area and Member budgets. This team were also managing the transition from District Local Strategic Partnerships to AAPs

The team had contributed to the work of the organisational development sub group, which had, in line with the recruitment timetable for the new Council, helped to coordinate delivery of a range of sessions on career transition, to be facilitated by Solace. In addition, Strategic and Operational Change Management workshops were to be held by CPCR with Managers across all the Durham Councils during the next two months.

With regard to organisational development the team had arranged for career transition support sessions to be provided for any member of staff wanting to hone their interview/application filling skills in preparation for the changes ahead with the recruitment to the new Council. This training was being delivered by Kirsty McEwan Associates and would run during February

A continued lead role continued to be taken within the team in support of the Countywide Local Area Agreement project team. Officers sat on the Delivery and Improvement Group, set up to performance manage the LAA and monitor the delivery plans, brokering better joint working between the partner agencies.

Work on the Authority's approach to Community Engagement continued to be developed and particular focus had been given to:

- Engaging with the Community Advisory Panel to help inform service design and engage residents on a range of key issues. The Communications Manager and the Head of Customer Services were leading this work. The latest piece of work with the Panel had involved gathering views on Affordable Housing.
- The subsequent meetings of the pilot Neighbourhood Forums had taken place, at which Officers of the Council, Durham Constabulary, Durham County Council and County Durham PCT had reported progress against the "Agenda for Action". The new Forums were the subject of an evaluation process during August and September 2008 and had been extended into 2009. The last meetings of the pilot forums were held in February and a questionnaire would be circulated to members of the public who had participated in the pilot programmes as part of a final assessment process. The results of the pilots were to be fed into the new Unitary Council to inform the development of Neighbourhood Engagement arrangements below the AAPs.

Prior to the Equalities and Diversity Officer leaving the authority in January 2009 work had progressed on Impact Needs Assessments, building up the Customer Profile and reviewing key policies and procedures.

To conclude Members were advised that whilst LGR was anticipated, it was engaging an increasing amount of the team's capacity and additional support continued to be provided to EDH. However there had been no unplanned slippage on the team's work programme during this quarter.

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The Chair thanked M Readman for her attendance at the meeting and on behalf of the Committee congratulated the Unit on the work undertaken, particularly in the lead up to LGR.

**RESOLVED** that the progress made by the Unit and the work plans for the coming months be noted.

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