

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WEST AREA FORUM

HELD ON WEDNESDAY 18 FEBRUARY, 2009

Present: Representing the District of Easington

Councillor M Nicholls (Chair)
Councillors Mrs J Maslin, T Unsworth
and B Wilson

Representing the Parish Councils

Councillor B Nutter – Castle Eden Parish Council

Representing Durham County Council

Councillor R Crute

Also Present: G Wilson

Apologies: Councillors Mrs J Freak, R Taylor and D Carr

1 CHAIR'S COMMENTS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the District Councils West Area Forum and introduced himself and the Officers present.

2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 12 November 2008, were confirmed.

3 AREA ACTION PARTNERSHIPS

J Murphy, LSP Manager advised that during 2008 public consultation events were held to discuss the newly proposed Area Action Partnerships (AAP's) which would replace the East Durham Local Strategic Partnership on 1 April 2009. It was proposed that 14 AAP's would cover the whole of the county. The Easington AAP was based largely on the same geographical area as the current District of Easington. The only change was that Trimdon Foundry would be merged into the Rural East Durham AAP.

AAP's were proposed to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of partnership working, and were to be run by an Area Board and an all encompassing Area Forum. It had been decided that each AAP Board's membership would be a "thirds model" made up of;

- One third Elected Members
- One third representatives of partner organisations i.e. the County Council, the Police, the PCT, The Fire Service, a VCS umbrella organisation, a business representative and a relevant major social housing provider
- One third members of the public

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Each “third” would consist of 7 representatives, limiting the overall board size to 21 members. Boards could also co-op individuals from outside of the full membership for specific time bound tasks.

The Area Forum would meet twice a year and would be open to everyone. The purpose of this meeting would be to determine the priorities and agree an annual local plan for the area. The Area Boards would meet initially on a monthly basis to consider issues such as service delivery against the local plan and manage and monitor the budget.

Any Member of the public who had registered with the AAP Forum would be eligible to apply for a Board position possibly via open advert. The positions were not paid but expenses would be met.

With regard to the future of the existing Area Forums it was acknowledged that there would be a need for engagement below this level and there were currently a number of options being considered and further discussion with relevant parties would be undertaken.

J Murphy explained that there were 2 funding mechanisms. There was a proposal that each AAP would be allocated £250,000, £100,000 for staffing costs and £150,000 to be used to engage with the community on how they could influence spending. There would also be a Member budget that would be aligned to the priorities agreed by the Board. There was concern that as the AAP's were of varying size in terms of population the budget allocated to each AAP should reflect this.

Councillor B Nutter queried how positions would be determined, particularly the parish representative as not all Parish/Town Councils were members of the Easington or County Durham Association of Parish and Town Councils. J Murphy explained that with regard to the Parishes nothing had been agreed as yet. Public places would be available to all those that registered their interest with the AAP Forum. Anyone who had attended a previous event would be invited to the launch meeting where they could register to apply to be a Board member.

Councillor R Crute outlined that communication was key to the success of the AAP's. Membership would be limited but as long as information was disseminated then everyone would be kept up to date with progress. There was also the opportunity to co-op onto “task and finish groups”

G Wilson expressed concern that only one Parish representative would sit on the Board. J Murphy explained that the AAP's would be regularly reviewed.

Discussion ensued regarding the budgets for the AAP's particularly in relation to Member budgets and where the money would be spent.

Councillor R Crute explained that ultimately the individual Member determined where the money would be spent but the wishes of the AAP would be taken into account.

The Chair thanked J Murphy for his attendance at the meeting and informative presentation.

AGREED that the information given, be noted.

4 YOUR QUESTION TIME, YOUR SAY IN SERVICE DELIVERY, YOUR CALL

(i) 31-35 Morris Crescent, Thornley

Mr G Wilson reported that a number of years ago he was advised by the District of Easington, that car parking would be provided for properties in Morris Crescent but no work was undertaken.

The Chair advised that this issue had been raised at a previous meeting held in January 2008 when the District Council's Engineers had advised that Morris Crescent was on the list for verge hardening and the completion of the works from the list would be dependent upon resources.

AGREED that the District Councils Engineers be contacted to check progress in relation to verge hardening at this location.

(ii) Youll House

Mr G Wilson advised that during the recent cold weather he contacted Durham County Council and arranged for a delivery of grit to Youll House which never arrived.

P Penman advised that grit was in very short supply and during the recent bad weather priority was given to the Highway authority to keep the main roads gritted. The District Council did receive an allocation but this was used in an effort to keep the refuse collection service running during the bad weather.

Grit was in such short supply that it was now only being used on priority A and B roads. The limited supplies had to be diverted to priority areas.

Councillor Nutter advised that Castle Eden Parish Council had been negotiating with Durham County Council regarding the purchase of grit bins for Castle Eden. The County Council had undertaken a survey and the village had received 1 additional grit bin. This was due to the fact that the main road through the village was 40 MPH which conflicted with the criteria for providing grit bins.

Councillor R Crute advised that there had been similar problems in Blackhall and he had been asked by the Parish Council to help. Five areas where grit bins were needed were identified and Councillor Crute paid for these from his County Council budget.

Councillor Nutter explained that Castle Eden Parish Council were willing to pay for the bins.

AGREED that the information given, be noted.

The Chair explained that this was the last meeting of the West Area Forum and thanked everyone who had attended the meetings and had an input in its success. He also thanked the officers for their professionalism and support.

Councillor Nutter thanked the Chair for the manner in which he had conducted the meetings, particularly in the way everyone was allowed to speak and have their say.

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