

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Ordinary Meeting of the County Council held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Wednesday 9 January 2013 at 10.00 a.m.**

Present:

Councillor L Marshall in the Chair

Councillors J Alvey, B Alderson, J Armstrong, B Arthur, J Bailey, A Bainbridge, D Barnett, A Bell, E Bell, J Bell, R Bell, J Blakey, G Bleasdale, D Bowman, D Boyes, P Brookes, D Brown, J Brown, B Brunskill, D Burn, C Carr, P Charlton (Vice-Chairman), J Chaplow, J Cordon, R Crooks, R Crute, K Davidson, J Docherty, N Foster, P Gittins, B Graham, J Gray, B Harrison, N Harrison, S Henig, M Hodgson, G Holland, K Holroyd, A Hopgood, L Hovvells, S Hugill, J Hunter, E Huntington, S Iveson, P Jopling, A Laing, J Lethbridge, R Liddle, D Maddison, D Marshall, N Martin, P May, J Moran, D Morgan, B Myers, D Myers, A Napier, A Naylor, M Nicholls, J Nicholson, L O'Donnell, B Ord, R Ord, M Plews, C Potts, G Richardson, C Robson, A Shield, J Shiell, J Shuttleworth, M Simmons, D J Southwell, W Stelling, B Stephens, P Stradling, P Taylor, T Taylor, O Temple, K Thompson, L Thomson, R Todd, E Tomlinson, J Turnbull, Andy Turner, C Vasey, M Wilkes, J Wilkinson, M Williams, A Willis, M Wood, A Wright, R Yorke, B Young and R Young

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B Avery, B Bainbridge, A Barker, M Campbell, A Cox, M Dixon, D Farry, D Freeman, D Hancock, G Huntington, O Johnson, J Lee, C Magee, C Marshall, J Maslin, E Mavin, E Murphy, M Potts, J Robinson, S Robinson, J Rowlandson, A Savory, D Stoker, G Tennant, Allen Turner, C Walker, B Wilson, J Wilson, C Woods and S Zair

Prior to the formal start of the meeting the Chairman reported the tragic news of the death of Lesley Caile, a highly respected Team Manager in Children and Adults Services. Lesley was held in great respect and affection by those who knew and worked with her and Members stood in silence as a mark of respect to Lesley.

1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2012 were confirmed by the Council as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2 Declarations of interest

Councillor Hopgood declared an interest in Item No. 8 following advice received from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services on the Local Council Tax Support Scheme and withdrew from the meeting during discussion of this item.

3 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman reminded the Council that a Special Olympic Service of Thanksgiving was taking place at Durham Cathedral on 19 January, commencing at 11.00 a.m. All Members were welcome to attend.

4 Leader's Report

The Leader of the Council informed the Council that his report would focus on the recently announced Local Government Finance Settlement.

The Local Government Finance Settlement was announced on 19 December 2012, which gave very little time to set the Council budget for 2013/14, which legally had to be set by February 2013. While this very short timescale was not helpful, the Council had been carrying out public consultations while awaiting announcement of the Settlement.

Since 2012, the County Council had achieved budget reductions of more than £90m and this amount was more than the combined budgets of all former District Councils. By 2017 the County Council's disposable budget will have been cut by 40%. These were unprecedented levels of cuts, with SPARSE, the Rural Services Network, saying they were totally unfair and would crucify rural areas.

The spending cuts were not being implemented fairly, and a map produced by Newcastle City Council was shown to illustrate this. Since 2010, areas in the North, Midlands and Inner London had experienced cuts of up to £200 per head of population, whereas other more affluent areas of the Country had experienced cuts of only £50 per head of population. Also, damping arrangements which were in place would result in Durham losing £9m a year to protect southern councils.

The Leader informed Council that he was to be part of a delegation from ANEC which was to meet with the Local Government Minister at DCLG to discuss the Local Government Finance Settlement.

Throughout the budget process the County Council had been consulting with residents. In November 2012 consultation took place at the councils 14 Area Action Partnerships, as well as through the Citizens' Panel and targeted questionnaires. 1,500 people had responded and the results revealed there was a high level of public satisfaction with how the authority had managed the budget process so far.

5 Questions from the Public

There were no questions from the public to receive.

6 Petitions

No petitions had been submitted for debate.

7 Report from the Cabinet

The Council noted a report on issues considered by Cabinet on 12 and 19 December 2012.

Councillor B Ord welcomed the Street Lighting report in general and in particular the reduction of the existing Street Light consumption of 90W to 30W when replaced by the LED energy efficient lights, a reduction of 66%, plus further savings through dimming, which would result in lower carbon omissions and a significant reduction in costs. He had previously called for underground boring for the electric cables to reduce costs and disturbance to the local environment and, having received complaints, sought a guarantee that light columns would be higher than existing ones to reduce dark areas between the columns. He also asked that public consultation take place prior to installation and that main pedestrian routes had adequate lighting. He sought confirmation that entire streets would be replaced with the new LED lights and that there would not be a mix of old with new which was not effective.

Councillor B Young, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Strategic Environment, thanked Councillor Ord for his support for the project which would produce significant financial savings and reductions in carbon emissions.

Councillor Young confirmed that Highway Services already used an underground boring/drilling system for new underground electrical infrastructure where possible to minimise costs and disruption. However, this technique was not relevant to the Street Lighting Energy Reduction Project. LED lights would be retrofitted to the existing columns and electrical infrastructure and there would be no new underground electrical infrastructure.

The Street Lighting Energy Reduction Project did not involve the installation of new columns. LED lights would be retrofitted to the existing columns and electrical infrastructure. However, all new LED lights would be designed to ensure appropriate uniformity of light between columns in accordance with current British Standards where possible. This would be achieved by varying the light output and dispersion of light.

Councillor Young confirmed that public consultation would take place on the new street lighting policy, which would facilitate this project. This would include presentations at AAPs. Local Members would be provided with the locations of street lights proposed to be removed following a full risk assessment and consulted throughout the process. Main pedestrian routes would continue to be lit as appropriate in accordance with the Council's Street Lighting Policy and current British Standards.

Councillor B Ord asked a supplemental question regarding the squaring off and filling of potholes and the recently announced offer of funding from the Government. Councillor B Young, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Strategic Environment replied that he understood the offer of funding of £2.8m covered a two year period and was entirely restricted to Capital Projects, which needed to be submitted to the Secretary of State for approval. It was intended to use this funding for areas which

were already prioritised. He added that there was currently a £200m shortfall in funding to upgrade roads and footpaths in the County.

8 Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2013/14

The Council considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which sought approval for a Local Council Tax Support Scheme that protected all council tax benefit claimants from 1 April 2013, as agreed by Cabinet at their meeting held on 19 December 2012.

Moved by Councillor Napier, **Seconded** by Councillor Henig and

Resolved:

That the recommendations contained in the report be approved.

9 Local Code of Corporate Governance

The Council considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources that sought approval of the inclusion of the updated Code of Corporate Governance in the revised Council Constitution.

Moved by Councillor Henig, **Seconded** by Councillor Napier and

Resolved:

That the recommendation contained in the report be approved.

10 Delegations of the Corporate Director of Resources - Local Government Pension Scheme Ill Health Retirement Decision Making

The Council considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services that sought approval of an amendment to the Constitution to include a delegation to cover decisions made under the Local Government Pension Scheme in relation to ill health retirement under the Local Government Pension Scheme.

Moved by Councillor Henig, **Seconded** by Councillor Napier and

Resolved:

That the recommendation contained in the report be approved.

11 Delegations of the Corporate Director of Resources - Revenues & Benefits Issues

The Council considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services that sought approval of amendments to the Constitution to provide greater clarity over a number of issues relating to the Revenues and Benefits Service and factor in changes under the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and Local Government Finance Act 2012.

Moved by Councillor Henig, **Seconded** by Councillor Napier and

Resolved:

That the recommendation contained in the report be approved.

12 Request for Reduction of Council Size - Edmondsley Parish Council

The Council considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services regarding a request from Edmondsley Parish Council to reduce the number of Parish Councillors on the Parish Council from 11 to 7.

Moved by Councillor Henig, **Seconded** by Councillor Davidson and

Resolved:

That the recommendation contained in the report be approved.

13 Evaluation of Community Governance

The Council considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services that provided details of the evaluation of the Community Governance Review for the unparished areas of Durham and Crook, together with recommendations arising from the evaluation.

Moved by Councillor Henig, **Seconded** by Councillor Napier and

Resolved:

That the recommendations contained in the report be approved.

14 Review of the Council's Statement of Gambling Policy

The Council considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhood Services which sought approval of the adoption of the revised Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Principles.

Moved by Councillor B Young, **Seconded** by Councillor Stephens and

Resolved:

That the recommendations contained in the report be approved.

15 Motions on Notice

There were no Motions for consideration.

16 Questions from Members

There were no questions from Members.