

THE DISTRICT COUNCIL OF CHESTER-LE-STREET

Minutes of the proceedings at the Annual Meeting of the District Council of Chester-le-Street held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Chester-le-Street on Thursday 25 May 2006 at 6.00pm

PRESENT:

Councillors:

W Laverick	LEW Brown
G Armstrong	D Robson
A Turner	TH Harland
JJ Evans	GAN Kerr
R Richardson	P Ellis
C Carr	PH May
SCL Westrip	A Willis
K Potts	S Barr
IS Smith	AK Holden
M Potts	M Gollan
GK Davidson	L Ebbatson
SA Henig	D Holding
JM Proud	C Jukes

Officers: R Templeman (Chief Executive), C Potter (Legal and Democratic Services Manager), L Chambers (Director of Resources), A Swinney (Head of Organisational Development), I Forster (Assistant Chief Executive), I Broughton (Director of Community Services), T Galloway (Director of Development Services), R Humphrey (Property Services Manager), P Stephens (Head of Housing Services) and C Turnbull (Democratic Services Officer)

Also in attendance: Sarah Diggle and Catherine Tyrell (Audit Commission), and 42 members of the public

Councillor A Turner said that my gap year is nearly over and Margaret and I have enjoyed it immensely. This year has taught us that we never know what to expect.

A few weeks after becoming Chairman I was asked to open the Sacriston Carnival – no problems. However, part of the duties involved judging the fancy dress competition for 3 different age groups. For the last ten years I have been going to the local Junior School as a helper so I anticipated knowing the majority of the children or their brothers/sisters/parents and to have to pick 3 winners was something I was not looking forward to. So called friends said this was my decision and mine alone. At the carnival I heard

announced 25 minutes to the fancy dress competition in the hall, then 20, 15, 10, 5 so I made my way to the hall. I was greeted by a very embarrassed organiser who explained that only 3 children had turned up for the competition. I am sure you can imagine my relief when I also discovered they were each from different year groups. Someone up there was looking after me and I hope future Chairs are just as lucky and by the way there are raffle tickets for sale by Councillor Robson and myself in the next few weeks.

Before I became Chairman my second home was South Moor Golf Club but I don't know now if it is the Riverside, Beamish Museum, Auckland Castle or Durham Cathedral as we have spent so much time at each of these places. We have visited quite a number of churches and have had services with Sheiks, Hindus and Muslims as well as the normal religious services and it was at one of the many services that the funniest event of our year occurred.

Durham & Chester-le-Street Alzheimer's Society were holding their first ever service at St Mary & St Cuthbert's Church and asked if I would light the first candle. Services are normally held at Durham. On the day we were met by the Vicar and the Chairman of the Society, both of whom we have met before. They explained that the Church candle would be alight and using the splinter I would transfer a light to the unlit Alzheimer's candle. They also said the lighting of the candle would be early on in the service and that the service would be quite moving which it really was. Later in the service the congregation would be invited to come forward and light one of the little tea candles. The congregation was made up of helpers and friends, relatives of Alzheimer's sufferers.

At the start of the service the Vicar welcomed everyone and immediately asked me to light the Alzheimer's candle. On stepping forward I lit the splinter and moved towards the Alzheimer's candle only to find that there was no wick to light. Whoever had snuffed it out had snapped the wick. I noticed this at the same time as the Vicar who reassured me it would be ok to light. You don't argue with the Vicar in his Church but it was impossible to light the candle. The Vicar and the Alzheimer's Chairman immediately produced their

car keys and proceeded to carve out the candle, then asked me to light it. The same thing happened again because there was still no wick showing. As the Chairman of the Alzheimer's rushed to attend to his candle for the second time he caused a draft as he walked past which blew out the Church candle so we had no candles lit at all. They proceeded to gorge out the Alzheimer's candle but were making no progress at all. I suggested that we attach one of the tea lights to the top of the Alzheimer's Candle. After lighting the Church candle it was then easy to light the Alzheimer's Candle and the service proceeded. As we were trying to light the candles I could hear Margaret saying will you stop messing around, as if I would. At the end of the service we had a cup of tea with the congregation who were asking what had happened, as all they could see was my back and the elbows of the Vicar and the Chairman going backwards and forwards and candle grease all over the place. It felt like a scene that Morecombe & Wise would be proud of. Whenever we see the Vicar or the Chairman of the Alzheimer's we still have a good laugh about it.

We have had many cups of tea, glasses of wine, chicken legs etc. etc. more than I care to mention and like other Chairman I have found that the waistband of my trousers has shrunk. Hopefully things should return to normal this year.

Last year Councillor Kerr and I spoke many times about getting involved with the schools. This involvement has started but still needs more attention. This year has given me lots of hope for the future and I would like to explain why by telling you of two occasions. Some Members would have been present at each occasion.

The first was the presentation of the Silk Banners at the Riverside, Chester-le-Street to commemorate the Test Match series. A number of schools had produced banners and were at the Riverside to receive awards. As each group was presented all the others watched on with respect and applauded each award. There were two senior awards, one for SODA (Society for

Disabled Artists) and one for the Alzheimer's Society. These were also treated with respect.

The second presentation was a result of the Children's Christmas Card Competition where there were over 500 entries. Choosing the winners was very difficult but 20 pupils were asked to attend a presentation evening. Within 48 hours of the invitations going out there were 19 positive responses and 1 apology. A response rate that many an organisation would love to achieve so I think the future looks good.

We have attended many other events and are amazed at the number of different volunteers who freely give up their time to help others, some of whom will be receiving awards later tonight. At a number of events people have gone out of their way to praise the work of Chester-le-Street District Council for their involvement with the community, not the type of people who would normally write in. They also sang the praise of the staff and I would like, through you Roy, to pass on their thanks to all our staff.

I have only had one complaint raised to me and that turned out to belong to Durham County Council.

We have met some absolutely lovely people and quite often feel humble in their presence. Recently we met a 90 plus woman, who at that time we didn't realise suffered from Alzheimer's. She asked did I know Lumley Thicks as that was where she originated from and had then moved to Bournmoor. She apparently spent a lot of her time at the Church and asked did I know the Church. Not only did I know the Church but I also made her aware that I used to play badminton in the Church Hall which she correctly told me was now pulled down. We also talked about the Lambton Lion Park, which I am sure a lot of people in here will remember. Then suddenly this 90 year old lady said she was pleased to have met us and when she went home after lunch she would tell her mother about us. She immediately picked up her newspaper to read. She was obviously finished talking to us.

I am sorry that my Vice-Chair is not able to attend this evening due to hospital admission, but I hope that Ralph and his wife Jean enjoy their year as much as Margaret and I have enjoyed ours.

People and staff are very important and our staff here are to be congratulated on their commitment to the Council. I would like to thank Colin Turnbull and his team for all of their help and assistance and also to Sue and Kathryn for their help. Margaret has a lot of sympathy with Sue as she knows how difficult it is to get me organised. Obviously I would like to thank Margaret for being by my side over the year and my friends for all their support. I would like to thank Linda for her encouragement and to thank all the Members for allowing me the privilege to be Chairman for a year. A year that I certainly won't forget.

Many thanks.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

Councillor Turner invited nominations for the appointment of Chairman of the Council when it was moved by Councillor L Ebbatson and seconded by Councillor D Robson, that Councillor R Harrison be appointed Chairman of the Council for the ensuing year. There being no further nominations,

The Council RESOLVED:

“That Councillor R Harrison be appointed Chairman of the Council for the ensuing year.”

The Chief Executive advised that as the newly elected Chairman of the Council, Councillor R Harrison, is unable to act as Chairman at the present time, Councillor A Turner has offered to continue to act as Chairman of the Council until Councillor Harrison is able to take up the duties.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman of the Council invited nominations for the appointment of Vice Chairman of the Council, when it was moved by Councillor L Ebbatson and seconded by Councillor SA Henig, that Councillor A Humes be appointed Vice Chairman of the Council for the ensuing year. There being no further nominations,

The Council RESOLVED:

“That Councillor A Humes be appointed Vice Chairman of the Council for the ensuing year.”

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors R Harrison, A Humes, JW Barrett, D Stoker and S Gollan

4. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 20 APRIL 2006

The minutes of the proceedings at the meeting of the District Council held 20 April 2006 copies of which had previously been circulated to each Member, were submitted.

The Council RESOLVED:

“That subject to Councillor R Harrison’s name being added to the list of Members in attendance at the meeting, the minutes be approved.”

The Chairman duly signed the minutes as being a true and correct record

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

There were no declarations of interest from Members

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6. APPOINTMENT OF LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND MAXIMUM SIZE OF EXECUTIVE

The Chairman of the Council invites nominations for the appointment of Leader of the Council when it was moved by Councillor SA Henig and seconded by Councillor C Jukes, that Councillor L Ebbatson be so appointed. There being no further nominations

The Council RESOLVED:

- “1. That Councillor L Ebbatson be appointed Leader of the Council.
2. That the maximum number of Members to serve on the Executive be agreed at 10.”

7. APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

The Leader of the Council advised that this had been a successful year and we have all learned in the process. Local people must now see local changes.

She advised the Executive remains unchanged and requested the Council to note the following appointments:

Councillor Simon Henig – Deputy Leader responsible for Finance and Leisure.

Simon’s key achievement of the past year has been the introduction of an open, transparent, challenging budget process.

His challenge for the current year will be to define a forward plan for Leisure Services which links into the Community Strategy.

Councillor Isabel Smith – responsible for Housing and Community Safety

Isabel's key achievement has been taking an inclusive approach to reconfiguring the Housing Service and overseeing the Housing Inspection and developing a Capital Programme which respects the views of tenants and other stakeholders.

Her major challenge ahead is a successful stock transfer which clearly links into the Community Strategy.

Councillor Alan Holden – responsible for the Environment

Alan's key achievement has been a successful Environmental Services Inspection.

His challenge this year will be the roll out of effective Neighbourhood Management with links to the objectives of the Community Strategy.

Councillor Chris Jukes – responsible for Regeneration and Economic Development

Chris' key achievement has been the successful regeneration initiatives across the District. They are on track and delivering in Pelton Fell, the Town Centre and Pelton.

His challenge will be to complete and roll out a comprehensive Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy which links to the Community Strategy.

Councillor Simon Westrip – responsible for People and Performance and Communication

Last but not least, Simon's role has seen him working more within the organisation and his key achievement has been Member and staff

development, work around the Members Charter, Organisational Development and Action Learning Sets.

Simon's major challenge in the next year will be to ensure communication is effective and that the essential contribution of the Council to public well being is accurately reflected in the opinions of residents.

8. ORDINARY MEETINGS OF COUNCIL

The Council RESOLVED:

"That during the ensuing year meetings of the Council be held on the last Thursday of each month with the exception of August when no meeting shall be held and December when the meeting be held on Thursday 21 December 2006."

9. APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES, DISAPPLICATION OF POLITICAL BALANCE RULES, ANNUAL REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE, ALLOCATION OF SEATS AND APPOINTMENTS AND NOMINATIONS TO BODIES

Consideration was given to a report from the Legal and Democratic Services Manager on the appointment of Committees, disapplication of political balance rules, annual review of political balance, allocation of seats to political groups.

The Council RESOLVED:

"1. That the Council re-establish all of the Committees which existed during the last year with their respective sizes and terms of reference remaining unchanged from that which last applied except that the Licensing Committee's terms of reference shall exclude functions relating to the Licensing Act 2003.

2. That a Licensing Statutory Committee be established with fifteen Members and with terms of reference as set out on page 14 of the report.

3. That the Council notes the review of the political balance of bodies to which section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 applies in the report.

4. That the Council agrees under section 17(1) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 to disapply the rules on political balance so as to enable the status quo regarding the distribution of seats to continue.

5. That the Council reappoints the same elected Members to serve on those Committees which they last served on during the last year except that Councillor A Turner shall be appointed to serve on the Safe and Healthy Overview and Scrutiny Panel and that Councillor R Harrison shall not be reappointed to the Green Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

6. That the Council confirms the reappointments of those Independent Representatives and the Parish Representatives on the Standards Committee who last served on that Committee during the last year.

7. That the Council appoints those elected Members appointed to serve on the Licensing Committee to serve on the Licensing Statutory Committee.

8. That the Council appoints Members to represent the Council on outside bodies as follows: -

Association of North East Councils	Leader of the Council
Association of Public Service Excellence	Councillor TH Harland
Age Concern	Councillor A Turner
Chester-le-Street Amateur Swimming Club	Councillor JW Barrett

Chester-le-Street and City of Durham Enterprise Agency	Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Councillor MJ Gollan
Chester-le-Street Community Association	Councillor CJ Jukes Councillor R Richardson
Chester-le-Street District Youth and Community Committee	Councillor MJ Gollan
Chester-le-Street and District Scout Executive Committee	Councillor DM Holding
Chester-le-Street and Durham Victim Support Group	Leader of the Council
Chester-le-Street Learning District Executive Committee	Councillor A Humes
Chester-le-Street Unit of Sea Cadet Corps Committee	Councillor R Harrison
Chester-le-Street Youth Centre Management Committee	Councillor A Humes
Citizens Advice Bureau Management Committee	Councillor GAN Kerr
Coalfields Communities Campaign	Portfolio Holder for Regeneration
County Durham e-Government Partnership	Portfolio Holder for Regeneration
County Health Scrutiny Sub Committee	Councillor G Armstrong Councillor R Harrison
Crime Prevention Panel	Councillor DM Holding
Durham County Association of Local Authorities	Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council
Durham County Waste Partnership	Portfolio Holder for Environment
Durham County Valuation Tribunal	Councillor JJ Evans
Durham Rural Community Council	Councillor K Potts

Great North Forest	Councillor A Humes Councillor DS Meek
Groundwork West Durham	Councillor GK Davidson
Keep Britain Tidy Group Regional Committee	Councillor C Carr
Local Agenda 21	Councillor C Carr
Local Police/Public Consultative Committee	Portfolio Holder for Housing & Community Safety and Chair of Safe & Healthy Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Local Government Association General Assembly	Leader of the Council
Local Arts Forum	Councillor GK Davidson
North East Assembly	Leader of the Council
North Eastern Regional Employer's Organisation	Portfolio Holder for Personnel and Communications
Northern Consortium of Housing Authorities	Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety
Northern Regional Executive Committee For National Housing and Town Planning Council	Councillor GK Davidson
Northern Regional Home and Leisure Safety Council	Councillor SCL Westrip
Pelton Community Association	Councillor IS Smith Councillor M Potts
Roseberry Grange Golf Course Committee	Councillor K Potts
Sacriston Development Group	Councillor DL Robson
Town Twinning Association	Councillor DM Holding Councillor A Willis
Chester-le-Street Pelaw Infant School	Councillor CJ Jukes
Chester-le-Street Cestria Junior and Infant School	Councillor P Ellis

Chester-le-Street Newker Primary School	Councillor GK Davidson
Chester-le-Street Bullion Lane Junior And Infant School	Councillor SA Henig
Pelton Roseberry Junior and Infant School	Councillor S Barr
Chester-le-Street Park View Joint Shared Use Scheme	Leader of the Council Councillor P Ellis Councillor S Gollan Councillor LEW Brown
Chester-le-Street Park View Community Association Committee	Councillor RW Hall Councillor GAN Kerr Councillor LEW Brown”

10. COUNCIL’S CONSTITUTION

Consideration was given to a report from the Legal and Democratic Services Manager to review the Council’s Constitution as part of the Council’s commitment to continuous improvement and to ensure that such constitutional arrangements are and continue to be ‘fit for purpose’.

The Council RESOLVED:

“That the Constitution of the Council be approved as amended:

- (1) By the changes set out in the appendices to the report (other than the change to Part 3D in Appendix 1 relating to the Licensing Committee and other than the changes to notice of questions) and
- (2) By the resolutions made in respect to the report on the appointment of Committees, disapplication of political balance rules, annual review of political balance, allocation of seats, and appointments and nominations to other bodies.
- (3) By changing the notice of questions requirements so that notice has to be received by 9am on the last working day before the day of the meeting itself.”

11. ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER AND PROGRESS ASSESSMENT REPORT

Consideration was given to a report from the Assistant Chief Executive relating to the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter and the Progress Assessment Report issued by the Audit Commission on the performance of the Council.

The Assistant Chief Executive introduced the report and advised that the reports from the Audit Commission indicate really good progress over the past 2 years and a significant step forward. He warned that there was no scope for complacency.

Sarah Diggle, Audit Commission Relationship Manager, reported very good progress by the Council. Environmental Services Inspection had produced a good result and the outcome of the Housing Inspection was awaited. She commented that local residents should see improvements over the next year. Although good progress had been made, she warned that the Council should not take its foot off the accelerator.

Catherine Tyrell, Audit Manager, advised of a weakness in the area of 'Value for Money' which the Council must address.

The Council RESOLVED:

- “1. That the reports from the Audit Commission be received and acknowledged.

2. That the progress achievement be celebrated.

3. That the key messages and recommendations be built into the Council's Improvement Programme.

4. That the help and support of the Audit Commission in the Council's progress to date be acknowledged and thanks be accorded."

12. CORPORATE PLAN 2006/2009

Consideration was given to a report from the Assistant Chief Executive advising of the progress on the production of the Corporate Plan for 2006/2009 and seeking the agreement of Members to the content.

The Leader of the Council thanked Sarah Diggle and Catherine Tyrell from the Audit Commission for their assistance during the past year which has made the Corporate Plan a stronger and more robust document.

The Council RESOLVED:

- “1. That the progress made on production of the Plan be acknowledged.
2. That the content of the Plan so far produced and detailed of the appendix to the report be agreed and supported.
3. That delegated authority be granted to the Assistant Chief Executive to make any required final changes to the plan and its presentation.”

13. FUTURE OF COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS

Consideration was given to a report from the Assistant Chief Executive setting out the proposals for consideration and discussion on the consultation document entitled 'CPA – district council framework from 2006', with a view to formulating the Council's response.

Councillor S Henig commented that County and Unitary Authorities receive an annual CPA inspection where as Chester-le-Street was assessed 3 years ago and it was a sense of frustration that the Council was still classed as being a poor Council.

The Council RESOLVED:

- “1. That the contents of the Briefing Paper appended to the report be noted.
2. That the Council’s response to the consultation as detailed in Annexe 3 of the appendix be agreed.”

14. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

Consideration was given to a report from the Assistant Chief Executive seeking approval to the Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy.

The COUNCIL RESOLVED:

“That the Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy as detailed in the appendices to the report, be agreed.”

Sarah Diggle and Catherine Tyrell left the meeting at 7.02pm

15. STATEMENT OF GENERAL POLICY HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK

Consideration was given to a report from the Health and Safety Manager seeking approval to the Statement of General Policy Health and Safety at Work as detailed on the appendix to the report.

The Council RESOLVED:

“That the Statement be approved.”

16. LARGE SCALE VOLUNTARY TRANSFER – ESTABLISHMENT OF SHADOW BOARD

Consideration was given to a report from the Director of Community Services seeking approval to the establishment of a Shadow Housing Association Board to help facilitate the housing stock transfer process.

The Council RESOLVED:

- “1. That the contents of the report and attached pack be noted.

2. That a Shadow Housing Association Board be establish with 15 members.

3. That delegated authority be granted to the Executive to consider Expressions of Interest from Councillors and to make the final determination of who should be put forward to serve on the Shadow Board for the next 12 months.

4. That delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive to devise a selection process for the appointment of Tenant Board members and Independent Board members following consultations with the LSVT Steering Group and the Community Housing Task Force.”

17. INFORMATION BOOKLET

The Information Booklet containing items on the following subjects was submitted: -

Minutes of the Executive held 8 May 2006

Report of the Licensing Committee held 3 May 2006

Report of the Planning Committee held 8 May 2006

Report of the Green Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel held 10 May 2006

Report of the Safe and Healthy Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel held 18 May 2006

Report of the Strong Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel held 11 May 2006

Information Bulletin – Human Resources Team

Monthly Planning delegated decisions

The Council RESOLVED:

“That the contents of the Information Booklet be noted.”

18. COMMON SEAL

The Council RESOLVED:

“That the action of the Officer in affixing the Common Seal of the Council to the following documents be confirmed: -

Transfer in duplicate relating to 12 Ruskin Avenue, Pelton Fell

Transfer in duplicate relating to 7 Front Street, Sacriston

Transfer in duplicate relating to 8 Wordsworth Avenue, Pelton Fell

Deed of Rectification in duplicate relating to 25 Kings Lane, Pelton

Lease in duplicate relating to 70 Brecon Place, Perkinsville

Duplicate Agreement between Npower and Chester-le-Street District Council

Temporary Road Closure Order in respect of Sacriston Carnival”

19. CIVIC AWARDS

The Chairman of the Council presented the following Civic Awards:

Young Achiever Award Winners

Laura Grieveson

Jack Nicholson

Special Long Service Award Winners

Eden Maughan

Jennie Tarn

Civic Award Winner

Irene Gray

20. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Council RESOLVED:

“That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the Public and Press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.”

21. REVIEW OF ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S TEAMS

Consideration was given to a report from the Assistant Chief Executive seeking approval to proposals to review Teams under his direction.

The Council RESOLVED:

“That the proposals and recommendations detailed in Appendices 2 and 3 to the report be agreed.”

The meeting terminated at 7.36pm

