

## **THE DISTRICT COUNCIL OF CHESTER-LE-STREET**

Minutes of the proceedings at the meeting of the District Council of Chester-le-Street held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Chester-le-Street on Thursday 23 February 2006 at 6.00pm

### PRESENT:

Councillor A Turner (Chairman)

### Councillors:

A Willis	R Harrison
GAN Kerr	SCL Westrip
JW Barrett	W Laverick
LEW Brown	GK Davidson
A Humes	R Richardson
K Potts	C Jukes
AK Holden	G Armstrong
JM Proud	M Potts
SA Henig	S Barr
L Ebbatson	P Ellis
M Gollan	D Holding
IS Smith	

Officers: R Templeman (Chief Executive), C Potter (Legal and Democratic Services Manager), A Swinney (Head of Organisational Development), L Chambers (Director of Resources), I Forster (Assistant Chief Executive), P Stephens (Head of Housing Services), R Humphrey (Property Services Manager), G Clark (ICT Manager), I Galloway (Director of Development Services), M Keenleyside (Environmental Services Strategic Co-ordinator), J Allon ( Operations Manager - Street Care and Refuse Collection), S Craig (Operations Manager - Ground Care) and C Turnbull (Democratic Services Officer).

Also in attendance were 2 members of the public.

### **147 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors JJ Evans, D Stoker, PH May, S Gollan, C Carr, DS Meek, D Robson, and TH Harland

### **148 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 26 JANUARY 2006**

The minutes of the proceedings at the meeting of the District Council held on 26 January 2006 copies of which had previously been circulated to Members were submitted.

The Council RESOLVED:

“That the minutes be taken as read and approved.”

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

#### **149 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Councillor L Ebbatson, the Leader of the Council, advised she would be declaring a personal and prejudicial interest in an item in the report from Councillor Westrip, Portfolio Holder for Personnel and Communications.

Councillors A Turner, SCL Westrip, AK Holden, C Jukes, G Armstrong, JW Barrett, A Humes, IS Smith, A Willis and W Laverick advised they would be declaring a personal interests as Parish Councillors in item no. 8 on the agenda relating to a review of Parish Council boundaries.

#### **150 REPORT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

Councillor L Ebbatson reported that the key decision taken by the Executive was the agreed Development Framework Principles for the ‘Heart of Pelton Fell’.

Referring to the draft Local Area Agreement, there is the opportunity to ask questions on the outcomes thus far and the document goes to the Minister in Draft on 28 February. There is a brief synopsis appended to this report and full copies are available.

Discussions continue around governance arrangement and funding streams. There have been good discussions at our LSP. The key issues for us as a Council are around the serious involvement of the Community and Voluntary Sector and support for them, if the LAA is to work. Social enterprises are not included as yet in the Economic Development block. Baseline data is **not** robust enough as yet to use Super Output Areas rather than NRF Districts (not wards) for the stretch targets.

The outcomes are not radical but the way in which we do things could be and should be. The Chief Executive and Assistant Chief Executive have both been heavily involved in the process and I would like to bring them into the debate.

On a different tack – turning to the Members Update, you will find reference there to a proposed Fair Trade Celebration in the town in March. This neatly brings together local people, Councillors and council officers involved with local businesses, arts activities, equalities issues and our overarching vision for a full and just society.

I do hope you’ll participate.

## **Current governance arrangements**

Currently there is an Interim LAA Board chaired by Sue Johnson, CE of the Fire and Rescue Service with representatives from eight local authorities, seven Local Strategic Partnerships, the Fire and Rescue Service, the Police, the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), County Durham Strategic Partnership, Health Services, and the business sector.

Discussions continue around the role and function of the Board, the County Durham Strategic Partnership, Durham County Council as the accountable body, scrutiny (VCS), and the support mechanisms.

Discussions continue about funding streams. The stretch targets given below (they are marked with \*\*) will be eligible for pump-priming moneys. Success or otherwise in achieving the stretch targets will determine how much or how little of the £12 million reward grant from central government is accessed. The reward grant does not automatically follow the pump-primed areas.

## **LAA Outcomes**

The overarching objectives are:-

- Narrowing the deprivation gap
- Improving access to services
- Supporting sustainable service improvements
- Improving public satisfaction with the local area and increasing the number of people who feel able to influence public services.

These objectives will be achieved via the following outcomes assigned to four service/delivery blocks.

### **1 Children and Young People**

- Tackle obesity in children\*\*
- Increase the number of children and young people able to access programmes to promote emotional well-being
- All young people manifesting acute mental health difficulties will be assessed within five working days
- All young people with non-acute mental health difficulties will be assessed within fifteen working days

Homelessness and failing tenancies have been identified as a risk for young people therefore we will

- Reduce the number of 16-19 year old homeless and improve housing advice to this group \*\*
- Reduce the number of repeat homelessness cases involving children and young people
- Increase the number of schools achieving anti-bullying status
- Reduce the number of 0-16 year olds seriously injured in road accidents

We will

- Reduce the gap in achievement of children from the Traveller community at Level 2 KS1 when compared with their peers
- Increase the % of children and young people and their parents satisfied with the quality of play, leisure and recreational activities

We will

- Increase the number of children and young people who feel they are treated with respect
- Increase the number of agencies and organisations achieving Investing in Children status
- Increase the number of young volunteers
- Involve children and young people in commissioning of services that affect them by the Children's Services Authority
- Increase the % of children who are the victims of crime who participate in restorative justice

We will

- Reduce the proportion of 16-18 year olds not in employment, education or training
- Increase the % of 19 year olds achieving at least NVQ2 level qualifications \*\*
- Reduce the gap between vulnerable people in these groups and their peers
- And in Sure Start areas, increase the provision and take up by low income families of high quality, accessible, affordable and sustainable child care.

## 2 Economic Development and Enterprise

We will

- Support employers to successfully tackle worklessness \*\*
- Increase entrepreneurial activity measured by increased self-employment rates and more VAT registrations \*\*
- Increase the number of competitive businesses that raise the gross value added to the County
- Raise the % of the population with the skills to meet current and future business needs \*\*
- Provide a supply of business space that meets current and future needs
- Meet the economic needs of the most disadvantaged areas (NRF areas)

### 3 Healthier Communities and Older People

We will

- Improve the health of the population by increasing life expectancy and substantially reducing premature mortality rates \*\*
- Improve health in disadvantaged neighbourhoods with the focus on heart disease, stroke and related diseases
- Improve the quality of life and economic well-being for vulnerable people through improved access to services, leisure, social activities, and lifelong learning together with income and resources sufficient to maintain a good quality of life \*\*
- Improve opportunities for vulnerable groups to play a full and active part in their community through employment and/or voluntary opportunities. (This includes increasing the proportion of people with mental health problems who are referred to Welfare to Work).
- Provide greater independence, choice and control for vulnerable adults. (This includes increasing the % of users receiving intensive home care as a proportion of those receiving intensive home and residential care)

### 4 Safer and Stronger Communities

We will

- Reduce crime, the harm caused by illegal drugs, and reassure the public by reducing the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour \*\*
- Ensure a strong sense of community exists in a cleaner, greener more attractive environment (This refers mainly to litter, graffiti, fly-tipping etc)
- Ensure the community are engaged in shaping and improving more accessible services and are represented on decision-making bodies
- Improve the quality of life in the most disadvantaged areas through the seamless delivery of services which is responsive to local needs, including the most vulnerable
- Ensure that housing of a decent standard is affordable, accessible and meets the needs of the community
- Ensure that people have access to an integrated transport system to enable them to access jobs, leisure, and services.

## 151 REPORTS FROM PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

### (a) Finance

Councillor SA Henig reported that the budget process was nearing completion. The Overview and Scrutiny Panels have looked at their respective areas and made recommendations that the Executive took into consideration at a meeting earlier that day. The Council Tax will be set at a Special Meeting of the Council on 2 March 2006.

### (b) Environment

Councillor AK Holden reported that:

There is an important date in our diary this year and it will mark the beginning of the end of this Council's status as a poor authority. That date is February 27<sup>th</sup>, the first of three dates this year which will begin the first of three inspections removing us from that status!

This inspection is for our Environmental Services.

- We have made a great deal of progress and we can boast that:
- We have improvements in service delivery.
- We have cheaper, better and sustainable quality within our family group.
- We have top quartile performance in keeping streets clean, recycling facilities and meeting national targets by improving our recycling rates.
- We have improved our service delivery, improved customer focus and engaged customers in developing customer standards.
- We are leading the neighbourhood management pilot, we have grasped e-government to help improve our performance, and improved Customer satisfaction rates in several areas of service delivery, complaints are reducing and the most compliments the Council receives relate to the service.

The amount of hard work that has been undertaken by the Environmental Services Manager and his team together with the Corporate Improvement Team to prepare us for the inspection cannot be underestimated and we thank you for all your hard work to provide the inspectors with the evidence they need to make what I am sure will be a fair and balanced judgement.

A positive result is crucial for the Council.

We all need to play our part, as a good result for Environmental Services and in May for the housing inspection will stand us in good stead for a Comprehensive Performance Assessment inspection before the end of 2006. The inspection will not only give us the opportunity to demonstrate how good we feel this service is but how improvements to the Council have positively impacted on it.

That does not mean to say that there is not scope for improvement and we must use the inspection as a tool to learn, improve and deliver. Deliver an even better service, a service that we can all be proud of.

(c) Regeneration

Councillor C Jukes

Reported on some significant developments since the January Council Meeting.

We have been successful as a Council in bidding for the Single Housing Investment Programme second round for private sector renewal (SHIP2).

Members will be aware that these funds are to be targeted at more deprived areas and to improve the quality of life by delivering a range of housing, and other social, economic and environmental improvements.

With Ministerial support SHIP2 funding could bring in approximately £2.4m over the next 2 financial years. Work will start in April this year on a £1.3m redevelopment of the Mechanics Institute.

The refurbishment will be focusing on meeting the business and learning needs of the local community.

The project will take some 9 months to complete and a refurbished Mechanics Institute will become operational in early 2007.

The regeneration team with support from IT have been developing a comprehensive approach to producing a gazetteer of Council assets throughout the District.

Developing a fit for purpose GIS system is something that many Council's are trying to develop and I think it demonstrates our determination to travel in a positive direction that we are producing a highly specialised piece of work which will benefit the ability of services delivery.

In conclusion Chair this year in terms of regeneration and IT is very much a year of getting on with work in progress, of project management, and of not letting projects slip.

There is much work to do. But in the first couple of months of this calendar year we have made some significant moves towards establishing an asset base, attracting external funding and wider regeneration for our citizens.

(d) Housing and Community Safety

There was no report from Councillor IS Smith.

**Prior to presentation of the following report, Councillor L Ebbatson left the meeting.**

(e) Personnel and Communications

Councillor SCL Westrip reported progress on the following –

Member development – continue with MMP, positive feedback - some confusion anyone that's missed session 1 we are in negotiation to persuade UNN(CRP) to provide a free session.

Some Members have raised concerns regarding level of training just over 12½ days in 18 months. Six weeks notice can be problematic for Members attendance and availability of “trainers” refer this to MDSG.

Members Charter meeting this month with Head of Organisation and Development and Member training co-ordinator. We are in a strong position to be assessed in April/May and will be linked potentially to IIP.

Member support meeting planned for the end of March. Next wave of MSA to start in April.

Home Working Update

Project/Pilot has started in the last two weeks  
Three employees two Councillors  
Interim review mid May  
Pilot end mid August  
Report back to CMT September Council in October  
This process will form the policy  
More detailed plan if Members want it

OD Programme

Has had a very positive start, the staff commitment I am told is impressive and I look forward to reporting progress along with my colleagues on the execution in the coming months.

The Head of Organisational Development advised that the results of the employee survey were pleasing. There had been a 33% response to the survey. The previous survey highlighted 42 areas of concern whereas the recent one highlighted only 23 areas.



## Ensuring a patient-led NHS – public consultation

Our views are being sought on proposals to change the management and administrative structures of Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs) in County Durham and Tees Valley and Northumberland and Tyne and Wear.

The proposals are as follows:

- Merge the two existing Strategic Health Authorities which currently cover County Durham and Tees Valley and Northumberland and Tyne and Wear to form one health authority for NE England.
- Alter the boundaries of the region's existing primary care trusts to form:
- **Either** four PCTs (1) North Tyne and Northumberland; (2) South of Tyne and Sunderland; (3) County Durham and Darlington; (4) Teesside.
- **Or** twelve PCTs (1) County Durham; (2) Northumberland; (3) Gateshead; (4) Newcastle; (5) North Tyneside; (6) South Tyneside; (7) Sunderland; (8) Hartlepool; (9) Stockton-on-Tees; (10) Middlesbrough; (11) Redcar and Cleveland; (12) Darlington.
- Closing date for views is 22 March 2006. Views are sought to feed into a response which will come to Executive for approval on 6 March 2006.

**Councillor Ebbatson returned to the meeting.**

### **152 QUESTIONS TO LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBERS**

(a) Councillor M Gollan requested clarification of Local Area Agreement targets when the Chief Executive advised that the targets are countywide targets. The Leader advised she shared Councillor Gollan's concerns over the targets.

(b) Councillor W Laverick submitted the following question: -

'Can anyone explain how a Council, continually pleading poverty, failed to spend and subsequently had to repay to developers a sum in excess of £50,000 which was supposed to be spent on artwork in the town centre. Officers and Members were aware of this issue which was discussed on several occasions over the three year period but without appropriate action being taken.'

Councillor Ebbatson advised that appropriate action was taken as soon as the matter was brought to the attention of Officers. The Chief Executive put in place a monitoring system by the Director of Resources. She confirmed that no other agreements were in a similar situation. The agreement referred to was time limited and tightly specified as to how funding could be spent. It proved impossible to expedite the matter within the restricted limits. The Overview and Scrutiny Panels have an important part in the monitoring process.

#### **153 REPORT OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE HELD 12 JANUARY 2006**

The report of the proceedings at the Audit Committee held 12 January 2006 copies of which had previously been circulated to each Member, were submitted.

The Council RESOLVED:

“That the minutes be accepted.”

#### **154 PARISH BOUNDARIES REVIEW – DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS**

Consideration was given to a report from the Democratic Services Officer to which was appended draft recommendations from the Electoral Arrangements Working Group following a review of Parish Council boundaries.

Councillor SA Henig, Chairman of the Working Group, thanked everyone who attended meetings of the Working Group.

The Council RESOLVED:

“That the recommendations of the Electoral Arrangements Working Group be agreed as the draft recommendations on Parish Council boundaries for consultation with stakeholders.”

#### **155 REVISED COUNTY DURHAM E-GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP CONSTITUTION**

Consideration was given to a report from the ICT Manager seeking approval to the revised County Durham E-Government Partnership Constitution.

The Council RESOLVED:

- “1. That the revised constitution for County Durham E-Government Partnership, as appended to the report, be approved on condition that efforts be made to work towards a model for apportioning the funding of future projects.
2. That it be noted that Councillor C Jukes is the primary nominated member of the Joint Committee with Councillor SCL Westrip as the nominated substitute.”

## **156 DEVELOPING SERVICE STANDARDS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES**

Consideration was given to a report from the Environmental Services Manager seeking approval to service standards for Environmental Services that are set to drive up customer satisfaction linked to quality of life issues and to ensure the Council retains a positive trend against environmental BVPI's.

The Leader stated she was pleased to see the report and how the Environmental Services Team has involved the community in establishing the standards. She added that the standards were challenging and the Environmental Services staff will work hard to achieve the targets.

Councillor S Barr requested that as the scheme progresses, consideration be given to developing standards for roadside verges and areas between villages.

The Council RESOLVED:

“That the services standards for Environmental Services as detailed in the report, be agreed.”

## **157 INFORMATION BOOKLET**

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

Minutes of the Executive held 6 February 2006

Report of the Licensing Committee held 1 February 2006

Report of the Planning Committee held 13 February 2006

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held 7 February 2006

Report of the Strong Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel held 30 January 2006

Report of the Green Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel held 8 February 2006

Report of the Strong Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel held 9 February 2006

Report of the Safe and Healthy Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel held 16 February 2006

Information Bulletin – Human Resources Team

Monthly Planning Applications

The Council RESOLVED:

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

#### **158 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 10 Sevenacres, Great Lumley  
Deed of Release in duplicate and plan relating to land at Avondale Terrace, Chester-le-Street  
JCT Agreement in duplicate in respect of children’s playground and ball wall at Grange Villa  
Transfer in duplicate relating to land north of The Brooms, Ouston.”

#### **159 MOVING FORWARD – PROPOSED STRUCTURAL CHANGES WITHIN THE COUNCIL**

Consideration was given to a report from the Chief Executive which proposed certain changes to both structure and responsibilities within the Council to reflect the development of Corporate Policies.

Councillor S Barr suggested that the description for the Regeneration Manager post be strengthened in terms of community aspect.

Councillor GK Davidson said he welcomed the report. He advised that although the Council’s planning service was operating very well at present, the strategy would help for the future.

The Leader saw the report as a step towards excellence and success and the continuing development of One Team and the Golden Thread.

The Council RESOLVED:

- “1. That the structural changes as outlined in the report and appendices, together with the new responsibilities and reporting lines, be approved. **(All Members voted in support of the resolution)**.
2. That the proposed financial and personnel implications in the report and confidential appendices, be approved, subject to detailed costs associated with 4 below. **(Councillors W Laverick and A Willis abstained from voting, the remaining Members voted in support of the resolution)**.
3. That the financial consequences as outlined in the report together with the personnel recommendations relating to individual members of staff as detailed in the report and confidential appendices relating to Head of Service posts, be approved. **(Councillors LEW Brown, W Laverick and A Willis abstained from voting, the remaining Members voted in support of the resolution)**.

4. That responsibility for implementing the proposals, appointment process and subsequent appointment of staff be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Head of Organisational Development and Director of Development Services. **(All Members voted in support of the resolution).**”

#### **160 CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman of the Council advised of the following: -

- Special Council Meeting to held Thursday 2 March 2006
- Chairman’s Charity Dinner Dance – Friday 3 March 2006
- Fair Trade Day on 17 March 2006
- Issue of concessionary bus passes – Members urged to attend the issue sessions in their Wards

The meeting terminated at 7.10pm