

## ITEM NO. 2

### 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 27 July 2006 at 6.00pm.

#### PRESENT

Councillor R Harrison (Chairman)

#### Councillors

P H May	L E W Brown
W Laverick	A Willis
A Turner	D L Robson
I S Smith	D Rand
G Armstrong	G A N Kerr
M J Gollan	S Barr
J J Evans	C Carr
A K Holden	G K Davidson
L Ebbatson	S A Henig
P Ellis	A Humes
C J Jukes	S C L Westrip

Officers: M Walker (Head of Regeneration), T Galloway (Director of Development Services), P Stephens (Head of Housing Services), I Broughton (Director of Community Services), I Herberson (Accountancy Manager), C Potter (Head of Legal and Democratic Services), R Templeman (Chief Executive), and K Fletcher (Democratic Services Assistant).

There were also three members of the public in attendance.

**Prior to commencement of business a one minute silence was observed following the tragic event which had occurred at the Riverside Park.**

**The Chairman introduced and welcomed Martin Walker, the newly appointed Head of Regeneration to the meeting.**

#### 41 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors D S Meek, J M Proud, D M Holding, J W Barrett, R Richardson, K Potts, M Potts and S Gollan.

#### **42 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 29 JUNE 2006**

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting held 29 June 2006, copies of which had previously been circulated to each Member, were submitted.

The Council RESOLVED:

“That the minutes of the meeting held 29 June 2006 be agreed as a correct record.”

The Chairman proceeded to sign the minutes.

#### **43 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS**

Councillors G Armstrong, C Carr, R Harrison, A K Holden, A Humes, C J Jukes, W Laverick, D Rand, D L Robson, I S Smith, A Turner, S C L Westrip and A Willis declared personal and prejudicial interests in Item No. 7 – Review of Parish Council Boundaries.

Councillor Willis also declared a personal interest in Item No. 8 – Audit Commission Housing Inspection Report.

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

The Leader of the Council stated:

The report I intended to give tonight has been superseded by events. I refer to the sad and tragic incident at the Riverside Park last Sunday of which you will all be aware.

The primary concern of all councillors, both then and now, is for the victims; for the friends and families of the bereaved; for the injured; and for the incidental witnesses of this tragedy. I know our sympathy and thoughts are with them at this time.

I would like to thank everyone who has sent messages of comfort and support. They have come from partners, members of the community, friends and strangers. They are a great help.

It is difficult to reconcile the beauty of Dreamspace and the park on the perfect summer's day that was Saturday with the events of Sunday afternoon.

Support networks have been put in place. An area of reflection had been created where people can lay wreaths, flowers and cards if they wish to.

In the fullness of time perhaps we can look at a more permanent memorial. I would like to thank once again everyone who helped in big and small ways at a time of need.

I was deeply impressed and moved by the response from District Council staff across the board; from the young people who work part time in the park, one of whom had the awful task of informing people like me in the immediate aftermath – and did it so well – to the Chief Officers. They have shown us all what teamwork is all about.

Together we will move on. We know that from other tragedies in other places at other times but that time is not yet. We will all need a time of adjustment and reflection.

August is traditionally a quiet month for routine business. No full council is planned for August and I hope we can use that space to good effect.

The Executive met on 3 July 2006 and took a number of key decisions which I am obliged to report to Council. They are as follows;

- **REGENERATION PROJECTS QUARTERLY REPORT**

- Subject to necessary health and safety measures being in place at all times, the clearance of land at Pelton Fell in line with Phase II and III of the development was agreed (and it was ensured that Bellway secure the site before and during demolition)

- **CIVIC HEART AND TOWN CENTRE SCHEME**

- Improvements to the above were approved and the Head of Regeneration was authorised to go out to tender on the scheme. He was further authorised to commission the scheme subject to Standing Orders, planning approval and the tender being within budget
- Continued engagement of the artist was agreed in order to complete the scheme
- It was agreed works to the pavement as part of the Civic Heart project be completed in 2007/08 or earlier subject to funding
- Temporary relocation of the market to the Foundry Lane Car Park was agreed while the regeneration scheme was constructed (subject again to planning approval)
- Improvements to the Culvert at Cone Terrace were deferred until future plans for this part of town are clarified

- **SHIP 1**

- A package of regeneration activities in Grange Villa (highlighted in the report at Appendix 1) will continue to be developed
- It was agreed that the provision of house improvement grants would be delivered through the Housing Improvement Agency to meet the Decent Homes Standard

- It was also agreed that environmental improvements to Front Street, incorporating traffic calming to reduce the volume of speeding traffic at targeted areas (Stone Row and Front Street) will be carried out.
- An appointment of a Community Regeneration Officer was agreed who will be responsible for co-ordinating and delivering the Grange Villa regeneration projects
- The area next to the Chapel between Stone Row and Pine Street is enhanced to provide quality open space and a play area for young children
- **DISPOSAL OF LAND IDENTIFIED AS BEING SURPLUS TO THE COUNCIL'S REQUIREMENTS**
  - The sites identified in the report were declared surplus to requirements
  - The Interim Head of Regeneration was given the authority to progress the marketing and disposal of the sites
- **LAND MATTERS**
  - 3 sites were declared surplus to requirements and are to be sold for garden purposes (land at Delaval Chester-le-Street, Ouse Crescent, Great Lumley and Middleham Close Ouston). 1 site (land at James Steel Park was not and a report is to be presented at a later date once other disposal options have been explored.

**The Chairman, on behalf of the elected Members also gave thanks and appreciation to all of the members of staff who assisted during the difficult time on Sunday.**

#### **45 REPORTS FROM PORTFOLIO HOLDERS**

- a) Finance and Leisure  
There was no report from Councillor S A Henig
- b) Environment  
There was no report from Councillor A K Holden
- c) Regeneration  
There was no report from Councillor C J Jukes
- d) Housing and Community Safety  
There was no report from Councillor I S Smith
- e) Personnel and Communications  
There was no report from Councillor S C L Westrip

## 46 QUESTIONS TO LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

There were no questions to the Leader or Executive Members.

**Prior to consideration of the following item Councillors G Armstrong, C Carr, R Harrison, A K Holden, A Humes, C J Jukes, W Laverick, D Rand, D L Robson, I S Smith, A Turner, S C L Westrip and A Willis declared personal and prejudicial interests and left the meeting.**

**Councillor G A N Kerr took the Chair.**

## 47 REVIEW OF PARISH COUNCIL BOUNDARIES

Consideration was given to a report from the Electoral Arrangements Advisory Group regarding revisions to Parish Council Boundaries.

Councillor Henig introduced the report providing Members with the background to the report and the consultation stages which had taken place.

He highlighted the proposed changes to Parishes which had received comments from the public following the consultation process.

He referred to Edmondsley, Kimblesworth and Plawsworth and Sacriston Parishes and confirmed that the Advisory Group had concluded that the current Parishes would remain as 'status quo' due to the comments received which opposed the original draft recommendations.

He also advised of the support received from Ouston Parish Council to have the area of the Brooms Park included within Ouston Parish, at the request of Ouston Residents Association.

The Council RESOLVED:

- “1 That the boundary of Waldrige Parish Council be altered to exclude the 22 properties in Westray which will be included in the Chester South Ward.
- 2 That the boundary between Little Lumley Parish and Bournmoor Parish follow the line of Lumley Burn from the District Council boundary on the east to where it passes under road A1(M) on the west.
- 3 That the boundary between Great Lumley Parish and Little Lumley Parish be the road A1(M), as at present, with the boundary of Great Lumley Parish continuing to follow the line of the road A1(M) in a north westerly direction until it meets the River Wear.
- 4 That as a result of representations received from residents of Daleside and Westhills Close raising objections to the Draft Recommendations as they affect their area, no alteration be made to the boundaries between Kimblesworth and Plawsworth Parish and Sacriston Parish.

- 5 That as a result of representations received from Ouston Parish Council, the boundary of Ouston Parish be amended to include in the Parish all of The Brooms Play Area.
- 6 That the boundary between North Lodge Parish and Pelton Parish be amended to follow the line of road A693.
- 7 That a new Parish be formed to include all of West Pelton (including the properties in Rosemount), Grange Villa and the Twizell Ward of Edmondsley Parish.
- 8 That the area of Newfield (Polling District AO) currently within the Pelton Ward of the District Council, be included within Pelton Parish.
- 9 That the boundary between Urpeth Parish and the proposed Grange Villa and West Pelton Parish follow the line of road A693.
- 10 That the boundary between Urpeth Parish and Pelton Parish be altered to continue along road A693 until the point where the former railway track (now a cycle track) crosses under the road and from there to follow the existing boundary.”

**Councillors G Armstrong, C Carr, R Harrison, A K Holden, A Humes, C J Jukes, W Laverick, D Rand, D L Robson, I S Smith, A Turner, S C L Westrip and A Willis returned to the meeting at this point.**

**Councillor Harrison returned to the Chair**

#### **48 AUDIT COMMISSION – HOUSING INSPECTION REPORT**

Consideration was given to a report from the Director of Community Services detailing the results of the recent inspection of the Housing Service by the Audit Commission.

The Director of Community Services introduced the report advising of the outcome of the Housing Inspection Report and of the need to respond to the recommendations and issues which had been identified.

He confirmed that an Action Plan would be prepared and presented to the Executive for approval.

The Council RESOLVED:

- “1 That the contents of the report be noted.
- 2 That the Director of Community Services prepare an Action Plan to respond to the issues contained within the report and present it to the Executive for approval.”

#### **49 RIGHT TO FIRST REFUSAL – 38 LYNE CLOSE, PERKINSVILLE**

Consideration was given to a report from the Director of Community Services to inform Members that the Leader of the Council has made a decision using the urgent powers procedure as set out in Part 4D of paragraph 4 of the Council's Constitution.

The Director of Community Services advised that the Housing Act 2004 provides that all houses sold under the Right to Buy provisions must first be offered back to the District Council if the property is put up for sale within 10 years of being purchased from the Council.

He confirmed that this was the first property to be presented to Council under the provisions of the Act.

Due to the time constraints of this process, the Director of Community Services highlighted the actions taken by the Leader, for use of urgent powers procedure as set out in Part 4D paragraph 4 of the Council's Constitution.

The Council RESOLVED:

- "1 That it be noted that the urgent powers procedure has been initiated by the Leader of the Council under Part 4D of the Council's Constitution.
- 2 That the actions taken by the Leader of the Council be endorsed."

#### **50 PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING RENEWAL POLICY**

Consideration was given to a report from the Director of Development Services to add an additional qualifying benefit to the Discretionary Repairs Assistance Scheme.

The Director of Development Services advised that the Discretionary Repairs Assistance (DRA) was introduced to replace the Home Repair and Renovation Grants and was primarily aimed at benefiting those from vulnerable households, however, it had become evident that not all households eligible are aware of the scheme.

He advised of the additional funding which had been awarded and recommended that the scheme be extended to those households which were in receipt of working tax credit as well as council tax benefit as this would maximise assistance to those households most at need however highlighted that this scheme would not include child tax credit.

The Leader commented on the benefits of those homes that would be eligible for the scheme and that this was an important step for the Council to take.

The Council RESOLVED:

“That the additions and changes to the Private Sector Renewal Policy be approved and applied across the whole of the Council’s district.”

## **51 RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2006/07**

Consideration was given to a report from the Risk and Financial Services Manager to approve the revised Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan for 2006/07.

The Director of Community Services advised that the current Risk Management Strategy was approved in 2004 and confirmed that since this date a series of key actions had taken place to embed the risk management process across the Council.

The Council RESOLVED:

“That the Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan for 2006/07 be approved.”

## **52 COMMON SEAL**

The Council RESOLVED:

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

Transfer in duplicate relating to 63 Conyers Avenue, South Pelaw

Section 106 Agreement in respect of Meadowfield House, West Pelton in duplicate

Transfer in duplicate relating to 6 Lilac Square, Bournmoor

Transfer in duplicate relating to 8 The Crescent, Nettlesworth



Four Part of Licence to assign in respect of Unit 8 Sacriston Industrial Estate

Dedication Agreement in duplicate and plan relating to Land, Front Street, Pelton

Transfer in duplicate relating to 11 Second Avenue, Chester-le-Street”

### **53 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

RESOLVED: “That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

### **54 STOCK TRANSFER – SHOW HOMES**

Consideration was given to a report from the Director of Community Services for the allocation of resources necessary to develop show homes as part of the stock transfer process.

The Director of Community Services introduced the report, highlighting to Members that it is a normal part of a stock transfer process to provide show homes so that tenants are able to see the standard of accommodation that can be provided if the stock transfer proceeds.

He proceeded to advise that one of the suggested addresses for the show homes had had to be re-let urgently and that the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety were aware of this. He confirmed that another property would be selected within the same area at a later date.

Councillor Evans proposed that when the show homes were opened members of the ‘design team’ for the modernisation programme also be in attendance to meet tenants and members of the public. Members agreed to this.

The Council RESOLVED:

- “1 That the contents of the report be noted.
- 2 That the provision of 5 show homes be agreed, subject to the availability of suitable properties and that delegated powers be granted to the Director of Community Services to select suitable properties for the show homes.
- 3 That it be agreed that resources be allocated from the HRS reserves in order to meet expected expenditure.

- 4 That when the show homes are opened, members of the 'design team' for the modernisation programme be in attendance to meet tenants and members of the public."

The meeting terminated at 6.41pm