

## FORWARD PLAN

In accordance with Regulations 13 and 14 of The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2000, As Amended, details of matters likely to be the subject of key decisions to be made by the City Council in the following 4 month period, commencing on Friday, 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2006 are set out hereunder. Anyone wishing to make representations to the City Council Cabinet or to the Decision maker about the matter in respect of which the decision is to be made may do so by writing to the Chief Executive, 17 Claypath, Durham City, DH1 1RH by no later than Friday, 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2006.

Topic	Decision Maker	Target Date for Decision to be made	Consultees (if any)	Contacts	Background Documents
Review of Debt Management Strategy	*Cabinet	January, 2007	CAB, Welfare Rights	Head of Financial Services Tel: 0191 3018622	Existing Debt Management Strategy, Financial Services Business Plan.
Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site Management Plan ( Reporting back of Consultation progress and amendments to Plan)	*Cabinet	December 2006	Numerous Consultees	Head of Cultural Services Tel: 0191 3018800	Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site Management Plan
2020 Visioning Project (Reporting on Consultation, amendments and seeking endorsement of Masterplan)	*Cabinet	December 2006	Numerous Consultees	Head of Cultural Services Tel 0191 3018800	Visioning Project
Affordable Housing: Implementation Policy	*Cabinet	December 2006	Registered Social Landlords Regional Housing Board	Head of Planning Services Tel: 0191 3018701	Adopted Local Plan Audit Commission Reports Best Value Inspections
Improvement of Parks and Open Spaces. (Considering the need for investment in parks to achieve Green Flag Status)	*Cabinet	December 2006	Numerous Consultees	Head of Environment & Leisure Tel: 0191 3018684	Green Flag Award Criteria

\***Cabinet Members:** Councillors Bell, Dickie, Holland, Jackson, Rae, Reynolds, Southwell, Thomson, van Zwanenberg, and Woods

**Publication Date:** Friday, 17<sup>th</sup> November, 2006

**Effective Date:** Friday, 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2006.

Councillor F. Reynolds  
Leader of the Council  
Forward Plan No. 55

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**18 December 2006**  
**DECISIONS TAKEN BY PORTFOLIO MEMBERS**

No.	Portfolio Member	Nature of Decision	Date
1	Councillors Reynolds, Smith and Jackson	Application to retrospective grant of Licence to occupy land to the tenant of 44 Burnigill, Meadowfield for an erection of fencing surrounding land because of anti-social behaviour. Recommendation to formalise the existing arrangement by way of granting an Annual Garden Licence	October 06
2	Councillor Woods	Application received for authorisation of temporary closure of roads on Monday, 6 November between the hours of 4.00 p.m. and 10.00 p.m. for the purpose of a Firework Display Recommend that an order be made in accordance with the provisions of Section 21 of the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 authorising the temporary closure.	23.10.06
3	Councillor Woods	Application received for authorisation of temporary closure of roads on Sunday, 19 November between the hours of 2.30 p.m. and 6.30 p.m. for the purpose of switching on the Christmas Lights Recommend that an order be made in accordance with the provisions of Section 21 of the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 authorising the temporary closure.	23.10.06
4	Councillor Woods	Application received for authorisation of temporary closure of roads on Saturday, 2 December between the hours of 10.00 a.m. and 5.30 p.m. and Sunday, 3 December between the hours of 10.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. for the purpose of the Christmas Festival Recommend that an order be made in accordance with the provisions of Section 21 of the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 authorising the temporary closure.	23.10.06
5	Councillor Woods	Adoption of Open Space at Lowes Barn, The Downs, Nevilles Cross Durham at the estimated annual maintenance cost of £1,920.00 Recommend that the adoption is agreed.	5.11.06
6	Councillor Reynolds	Application for authorisation of Sponsorship of Durham City Retail Awards on 29 November 2005 Recommend authorisation of sponsorship of Retail Award of £2,000 from the Durham Development Initiatives Fund.	6.11.06
7	Councillor Woods	Application has been received from Mr Bankhead enquiring if the Council would consider allowing a catering trailer to be located on Millennium Place between the hours of 7.00 p.m. and 3.00 a.m. Recommend refusal of application.	12.11.06
8	Councillor Reynolds	Application received from Mr Johnson of 18 Dene Drive, Carrville enquiring whether the Council would consider granting rights of pedestrian access over land adjoining his property. The use would be for access for maintenance to the side of the property and to allow access to the rear garden of the	10.11.06

		<p>applicant's property without having to go through the property. This application was subsequent to the Council's Building &amp; Land Surveyor noticing that Mr Johnson had, in fact, encroached on to a narrow strip of Council land after the construction of a garage joined to his property.</p> <p>Recommend that subject to conditions the applicant purchase the freehold of the application site.</p>	
9	Councillor Reynolds	<p>Application received from Mrs King of M&amp;M Chemists Ltd enquiring as to whether Council would consider selling to her land to the rear of the M&amp;M Chemists at 4 Sawmill Lane, Brandon for use as parking associated with the Chemists i.e. vehicles used to deliver prescriptions to the public. The applicant has already encroached on the Council owned land.</p> <p>Recommend that a site inspection be arranged with Ward Councillors and the Leader of the Council together with appropriate Officers of the Council.</p>	10.11.06
10	Councillor Reynolds	<p>Application received from Mr &amp; Mrs Wood of 19 Littleburn Lane, Langley Moor enquiring whether the Council would consider selling to them land to the rear of their property initially for use in the construction of a Conservatory and for garden use. The Conservatory was no longer going ahead so the application is for land to be used as garden only.</p> <p>Recommend that the application be refused.</p>	10.11.06
11	Councillor Rae	<p>Application received for a Durham City Enterprise Grant of £1,000 divided as follows:- Susan McGhee t/a Venus Floral Design - £500 Donna Tunny/Trudy Cranley t/a The Kicking Cuddy - £500</p> <p>Recommend approval of payment of grant to applicants.</p>	20.11.06
12	Councillor Southwell	<p>Application for financial assistance from the Wildfowl and Wetlands Centre, Washington towards running costs.</p> <p>Recommend donation of £150 from the general donations budget for the financial year 2006/07.</p>	18.11.06
13	Councillor Holland	<p>Application received for a Durham City Enterprise Grant of £500 from Stewart Campbell t/a 33 Internet Ltd</p> <p>Recommend approval of grant.</p>	22.11.06
14	Councillor Holland	<p>Application received for a Durham City Enterprise Grant of £500 from Martin Punshon t/a Pole2Pole</p> <p>Recommend approval of grant.</p>	22.11.06
15	Councillor Holland	<p>Applications received for a Durham City Enterprise Grant of £2,500 as follows:- Andrea Townsley t/a Clever Cloggs Day Nurseries Ltd - £500 Stuart Young t/a North View Private Hire - £500 Ray Lartey t/a Mobility Direct - £500 Judith Rhea Steel t/a Kindermusik with Rhea - £500 Vick Bates t/a Hair 4 U - £500</p> <p>Recommend approval of grants to Stuart Young, Ray Lartey, Judith Rhea Steel and Vick Bates of £500 each.</p>	

		Andrea Townsley's business not classed as a small business therefore application refused.	
16	Councillor Reynolds	Application to lease land adjacent to 23 Fair View West Rainton from Mr Wood of 23 Fair View for use as additional parking. Recommended that the application be refused.	27.11.06
17	Councillor Reynolds	Application to purchase land adjacent to Holden Building Supplies off Front Street South Quarrington Hill received from Mr Holden of 2 Church Street Quarrington Hill. The land is adjacent to his business and would be used for additional storage in connection with the business. Recommended that the application be refused.	27.11.06
18	Councillor Thomson	Application for extension of Contract between Homelessness Action Partnership (HAP) and National Children's Homes (NCH) until 30 June 2007 for an additional fee of £17,500 Recommend approval to extension of Contract under existing terms and conditions of original contract dated 26 May 2005 between the Council of the City of Durham and NCH Children Services.	15.11.06
19	Councillor Rae	Application for a Durham City Enterprise Grant of £1,000 as follows:- Claire Moyse t/a Claire's Cleaning services - £500 Nigel Peter Varty t/a Varty Handyman Services - £500 Recommend approval of grant.	30.11.06
20	Councillor Woods	Application received to allow free coach parking in the City Centre for the Christmas Festival to commence at 4.00 p.m. on 1 December 2006 to promote the City as a shopping destination during the Christmas Festival Weekend Recommend approval.	30.11.06
21	Councillor Holland	Application for Durham City Enterprise Grant of £2,500 as follows:- Steven Bagnall t/a S Bagnall Roofing & Plastics - £500 Alan Burberry t/a Origems - £500 Doug Garner t/a DWG Services - £500 Jamie Dury t/a JD Sports Therapy - £500 Fiona Mawson t/a Anam Cara - £500 Recommend approval of <b>only 2</b> of the applications as follows:- Steven Bagnall t/a S Bagnall Roofing & Plastics - £500 Doug Garner t/a DWG Services - £500.	30.11.06
22	Councillor Reynolds	Application receive from Mrs King of M & M Chemists Ltd enquiring whether the Council would consider selling to her land at the rear of M & M Chemists at 4 Sawmill Lane, Brandon for use as parking of vehicles associated with the delivery of prescriptions to the public Recommend that subject to certain conditions and restrictions an approximate area of 78 square metres of land be offered for sale to applicant.	1.12.06
23	Councillor Reynolds	Application received from Miss G Dando of 22 Woodside, Shadforth enquiring whether the Council	1.12.06

		would consider selling her a strip of land adjacent to her property for use as vehicular hardstanding, garage and garden Recommend approval of application.	
24	Councillor Reynolds	Application received from Mr Turnbull of 15 Fir Avenue, Brandon enquiring whether the Council would consider selling to him land to the rear of his property for garden use only. Mr Turnbull is willing to lease the land if purchase is not permitted. Recommend that the application be refused.	1.12.06
25	Councillor Reynolds	Application received from Terri Waters of 22 Ridding Road, Esh Winning enquiring whether the Council would grant vehicular access over Council owned land at the property to gain access to the curtilage of the property for off-street parking. Recommend that the application be approved.	1.12.06

## REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

### REVIEW OF SCRUTINY OF COUNCIL GARAGES

#### 1. Background

The topic of Council Garages was considered by the Community Services Scrutiny Panel in 2005, following concerns that some garages were being used inappropriately.

The Panel's report and recommendations were approved and adopted by Cabinet in October 2005, and the Policy on Council Garages was approved in September 2006. The topic as a whole was due for review in November 2006.

#### 2. Actions

The Council's Housing Manager was in attendance at the Meeting on 8 November 2006 to update the Panel with developments since the adoption of the recommendations in the report, and provide a summary of work undertaken since the July Meeting of the Panel, where the Policy and Tenancy Agreement were agreed.

#### 3. Outcomes

The new Policy and Tenancy Agreement were approved by Cabinet in September 2006. All new tenants since 1 October 2006 have signed this Agreement.

Additionally, one of the recommendations in the report of October 2005 was that all existing tenants sign the new Agreement. The Rents Section is currently reviewing garage tenants' rent accounts so that any action which could lead to termination of the tenancy can be taken before the new Agreements are issued by Housing to tenants for signature. The new Agreement will be sent to existing tenants during December 2006, and it is anticipated the process of having them all signed will be a fairly long one. It is hoped all garage tenants will have signed the new Tenancy Agreement by the beginning of the next financial year. Also, as requested by Members, tenants are being asked to report any inappropriate used of garages of which they are aware.

Housing Officers are continuing to try to let empty garages, and the future of those garages where there is no demand is being considered. For example, three garages had recently been demolished in Esh Winning due to anti-social behaviour issues.

A programme of regular inspections had been recommended by the Panel. Unfortunately, this had not been possible to implement due to limitation of resources. Although understanding the nature of this problem, Members continue to express concern about this.

#### 4. Recommendations

In view of issues noted in the report, and progress made so far, the Community Services Scrutiny Panel recommend the following:-

- (i) That the Review Report be accepted.
- (ii) That thanks be expressed to staff who have worked towards achieving the Recommendations contained in the Scrutiny of Council Garages Report, as

approved and adopted by Cabinet in October 2005. The writing of a Policy and administration of the New Tenants' Agreement were particularly commendable.

- (iii) The need for resources to be made available for the development of inspection routines was re-emphasised, and twice yearly inspection was recommended, Members having expressed concern that due to resource implications it had not been possible for a system of regular garage inspection to be established.
- (iv) That the topic of Council Garages be reviewed again in January 2008.

Community Services Scrutiny Panel  
December 2006

## DRAFT REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

### REVIEW OF SCRUTINY OF COUNCIL HOUSE REPAIRS

#### 1. Background

Following the original Scrutiny as part of the Building Services Best Value Improvement Plan in July 2003, this topic had been reviewed by the Panel on a number of occasions. The last review had been carried out in March 2006, and at that time, a number of further recommendations had been made. It was agreed that progress on these recommendations be reviewed in October/November 2006.

#### 2. Actions

The Head of Property Services, Head of Community Services and Operations Manager attended the Panel's meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2006, together with the Portfolio Holder for Housing. Members were advised as to progress made towards the recommendations contained in their last report.

#### 3. Outcomes

##### Staff Training/ Telephone System

Ongoing staff training, in conjunction with Property Services, was being given to CityInfo staff. There were now 21 full time trained repairs staff, together with 4 FTE part time staff, giving a total of 25. A new booklet giving tenants property details to assist them in reporting repairs was currently being prepared. Further training for staff would take place as this was introduced to tenants.

Three vacancies had now been filled, and a further 2 were being recruited. The Head of Community Services was confident that peak period demand could now be met.

##### Re-let Times

Information was circulated showing the 56% decrease in the repairs backlog. The Operations Manager explained how the figures had been achieved, and while the Head of Property Services acknowledged that these figures could be described as a 'snapshot' of the time they were produced, he confirmed that the necessary staff were available to bring about this reduction in the backlog.

The voids tracking system was working well, with Property Services having now taken responsibility for what were previously 'grey' areas. The process was becoming much more efficient, with properties being returned to Housing more rapidly. Details of void turnaround times for the last four years, together with information for the current year to date were circulated to Members. It was noted that the target for this year had already been achieved.

##### Computer Management System

A report had been submitted to Council in August 2006 regarding the procurement of new computer system.

#### 4. Recommendations



- (i) That the Head of Property Services, Head of Community Services and their staff be formally thanked for their efforts in bringing about the improvements noted.
- (ii) That the topic of Council House Repairs be reviewed in early 2008, following the introduction of the new computer system, and the opportunity for staff to become accustomed to its use.

Community Services Scrutiny Panel  
December 2006

**Report of Economic Scrutiny Panel**

**REVIEW OF SCRUTINY TOPIC – INCENTIVES TO SMALL BUSINESS**

**1. Background**

An Economic Analysis was carried out by the Durham University Business School which was completed in January 2005, this was reported to the panel in June 2005 and subsequently reported to Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.

As 12 months has now elapsed since the initial report the Economic Scrutiny Panel requested that a review be carried out.

**2. Option Analysis:**

The Economic & Community Development Manager informed the panel that they were currently two business grant support schemes one which solely related to SRB6 areas and the other for all other areas. The grants mainly dealt with business start up for sole traders. The budget for the grants was £23, 000 this was made up of £15,000 from SRB and £8,000 from the City Council funds. The budget for all other areas was £25, 000 made up totally from City Council funds.

The maximum grant which could be received was £500.00 plus the applicant would receive advice on financial planning, e.g., the setting out of a business plan. The aftercare service was an opportunity to build a relationship with the applicant.

In the last 12 months 60 applications had been received, 25 applications from SRB6 areas and 35 from areas other than SRB6. 28 applications had been approved; 3 had been declined and 29 were currently in the system awaiting a decision or more information.

**3. Results:**

That 90% of all applications received were granted and of those 90% of applications a further 90% were surviving eighteen months or more.  
The Panel agreed that they were content with the progress that had been made.

**4. Recommendation**

- That a further review take place in 12 months.

**Report of The Environment Scrutiny Panel**

**REVIEW OF SCRUTINY TOPIC: BIODIVERSITY**

The Panel was tasked with reviewing the Scrutiny Topic of Biodiversity.

**1. Background**

The topic had originally been looked at last year, reported to Scrutiny Committee 05 September 2005. The report was subsequently submitted to Cabinet 24 October 2005 and approved.

**2. Aims**

The purpose of this report is to bring Members up-to-speed as regards the progress made since the initial scrutiny of the topic.

**3. Actions**

At the meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Panel, 19 September 2006, the Council's Sustainable Development Manager was in attendance and gave a run down of the work undertaken in the last year relating to Sustainable Development, of which Biodiversity issues are one strand.

**4. Outcomes**

The main points to note were:

- The Council had completed a "Parks Audit" based on Green Flag Criteria.
- The maintenance of "Biodiversity Areas" – now called Wildlife Meadows has been refined and improved e.g. contracts are in place with local farmers as regards annual "hay cropping".
- Some sites will have Yellow Rattle introduced as this species of plant can help to increase the biodiversity value of an area over time.
- Interpretation Panels for the Wildlife Meadows will be produced in consultation with local Residents.
- "Learning Lunches" have been held regarding the subject of the "Natural Environment and its association with Quality of Life". It was noted that these could be repeated if further interest was received.
- As part of the planning process, the Council's Sustainable Development Manager reviews applications as regards energy efficiency, transport impact etc.
- The Council has formed a "Green Space Steering Group" and has allocated a budget to this group. Tenders were invited to conduct an "Open Space Needs Assessment" and the North East Community Forest (NECF) was appointed. Consultation with user groups will take place, an audit of

provision/quality/value, analysis of under or over provision and review of opportunities for providing new open spaces. Knowledge gained by NECF will be valuable in the future in helping when considering development opportunities as this Assessment will consider all open spaces, not just the sites previously labelled as “biodiversity” areas.

- The establishment of the “Friends of Witton Dene” as a pilot scheme has been well received. It is hoped that a site management plan can be drawn up for Witton Dene and that similar Friends Groups can be set up for other sites across the District.
- Amongst other awards, the City of Durham achieved a special award from Northumbria in Bloom for best biodiversity project. The Council's large scale ambition and long term goals in this area were considered important factors in securing this award.
- Funding has been awarded from SITA for access improvements to Ponderosa, Holiday Park and Flass Vale.
- Heritage Lottery Fund bids have been applied for Wharton and Bowburn Parks
- Formation of a programme of Friends Groups Establishment – Management Plans – Costs, building up relationships and public confidence is felt to be essential in this regard. Formal site management plans are good evidence and by producing these, it could only help to strengthen any case regarding the obtaining external funding.

## **5. Recommendations**

1. That the work of the Council's Sustainable Development Manager and other Officers be continued and built upon and that the subject of Sustainable Development to be considered an important factor in decision making.
2. That Biodiversity sites now be referred to as “Wildlife Meadows”.
3. That the topic of Biodiversity (to be read Sustainable Development) be reviewed in 12 months time.

**Interim Report of The Environment Scrutiny Panel**

**SCRUTINY OF UNAUTHORISED PARKING ON COUNCIL OWNED LAND**

The Panel was tasked with reviewing the Council's approach to tackling the problem of Unauthorised Parking on Council Owned Land. The topic was scheduled for a "mini-review" in September / October 2006, specifically to look at the procedure for allocations being developed for the provision of additional parking spaces across the District.

**1. Background**

The subject was allocated from the Scrutiny Committee to the Environment Panel, the initial proposal for the topic coming from the Chairman of the Environment Scrutiny Panel. The reason for the suggestion being there was an apparent lack of formal policy or procedure when allocating priority to the provision of additional parking.

**2. Aims**

It was hoped that the relevant Officers could report back to the Panel regarding any progress made in setting up a structured methodology for allocating a "weight" to each proposed scheme for additional parking, to ensure that schemes were allocated in a fair and consistent manner, balancing needs of Residents and available funds.

**3. Actions**

At a meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Panel held 17 October 2006, representatives from Property Services were in attendance to update Members regarding progress relating to the allocation of schemes. Whilst 38 individual schemes had been identified, to ensure that there was match funding from Durham County Council in appropriate cases, a meeting with Officers from Durham County Council would take place to discuss the list of schemes further.

Also it was wondered by Members whether the £50,000 budget from the Housing Revenue Account could be transferred to another account so that scheme in "non-Council house" areas could benefit from the funds. If this was not possible, Members still wished the funds to be utilised to ensure the continued allocation of this fund.

**4. Outcomes**

Due to staff sickness, whilst progress had been made some further work was required in this regard. Accordingly, Members felt that it was perhaps unfair to judge the new procedures until further developments had been made.

**5. Recommendations**

1. That Members questions regarding to the £50,000 budget (outlined above at point 3) be addressed.
2. That a budget of £50,000 be allocated again for the next financial year.
3. The Panel agreed that the subject should be reviewed further in six months time.