

EXECUTIVE

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Consett on Monday, 6th October, 2003 at 4.30 p.m.

PRESENT:

Councillor A. Watson, Chair

Councillors W. Armstrong, Mrs. E.J. Coulson, J. Huntley, O. Johnson, D.G. Llewellyn and M.J. Malone.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An Apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor A. Taylor.

52. MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the following meeting be agreed as a correct record:-

Executive held on 1st September, 2003

53. MATTERS ARISING

Minute Number 39 – Derwentside Private Landlords Accreditation Scheme.

Councillor W. Armstrong advised that the launch of the above scheme had taken place on 1st October, 2003 and had been very informative and successful.

Minute Number 42 – Festivals Review

The Executive Director advised that he had received a response from Durham County Council to his letter requesting traffic calming measures on the A68 near the junction with Pemberton Road. Unfortunately, the County Council had responded that in their opinion permanent traffic calming measures were not thought necessary. The Chairman commented that this was an unsatisfactory response and requested that a further letter be sent pointing out that a number of events were held at Allensford, attracting large numbers of visitors and requesting that the issue of traffic calming measures, including a speed camera be revisited.

54. DERWENTSIDE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

Councillor A. Watson presented the report which sought the Executive's views on the 2nd draft of the Derwentside Community Strategy. This was part of the formal consultation process and prior to it being presented to Full Council on 24th October and to the Derwentside Partnership on 3^d November, 2003.

Option: Whether or not to approve the draft Derwentside Community Strategy.

Reason: Developing a Community Strategy for the area in collaboration with partners is a statutory requirement for local authorities under the Local Government Act 2000.

55. DERWENTSIDE NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL FUND OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME

Councillor A. Watson presented the report which advised that Government Office has confirmed Neighbourhood Renewal Fund Allocations for 2004/05 and 2005/06. He further advised that additional NRF resources of £1.5 million had been allocated over two years, the funding allocated because of the District's low performance on the rate of new businesses registering for VAT and incomes.

The funding was not ring-fenced to these activities but it was important for LSP and the Council to ensure that these issues were considered/addressed.

There was no change to the recommendations in the report regarding how decisions on the allocation of future NRF should be made.

Option: Whether or not to agree a thematic focus and revised process and timescale for the allocation NRF resources.

RESOLVED: that:-

- (1) the thematic focus for NRF allocations 2004 to 2006 be agreed as young people.
- (2) the revised process and timescale for Allocation NRF Resources as detailed in the report be agreed.

Reasons: Young people feature greatly in our Neighbourhood Renewal objectives and are regarded as a high priority throughout. In addition to local strategies, numerous national policies set out

our commitment to prevent young people being socially excluded as a result of poverty, family conflict, poor education opportunities and poor services.

56. FEES AND CHARGES

Councillor E. Coulson presented the report which invited Members to review the Authority's Fees and Charges Policy and also to consider a process for reviewing existing and potential fees and charges.

Option: Whether or not to agree to the mechanism detailed in the report by which fees and charges can be reviewed.

RESOLVED: that:-

- (1) The principles of the 'Price is Right' study as outlined in the report be adopted as the basis by which all fees and charges are levied.
- (2) All existing or potential charges are reviewed as outlined in the report. The objectives outlined in Paragraph 3.7 and the factors in Paragraph 3.10 forming the basis of the review.

Reason: The 'Price is Right' Audit Commission study was recommended as part of the Best Value Re-inspection of Leisure Services.

57. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Councillor M. Malone presented the report which invited Members to approve a Performance Management Framework. Certain elements of the Local Authority's Performance Management Framework are statutory, however, it is at the discretion of each Council to determine their own systems for integrating the statutory elements with non-statutory mechanisms to ensure that community and corporate objectives are cascaded down to the service and individual level.

Option: Whether or not to approve the approach to Performance Management Framework as outlined in the report.

RESOLVED: that:-

- (1) the approach to Performance Management advocated in the Service Planning Guidance and Performance Management Handbook be agreed;
- (2) copies of the Service Planning Guidance and Performance

- Management Handbook to be circulated to senior managers for reference and to Members on request;
- (3) Officers are instructed to commence the development of service plans for their own area in-line with the service planning guidance for Member approval.

Reason: The Council require a Service Planning framework to bridge the gap between the corporate and individual level and formalise the process whereby corporate aims and objectives are properly cascaded through to the service level.

58. ALLOCATION OF MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCES WITHIN HRA SUBSIDY: A CONSULTATION PAPER

Councillor J. Huntley presented the report which advised Members of a Consultation Paper that informs Local Authorities of the intended new approach to calculating Management and Maintenance allowances in respect of Housing Revenue Account subsidy. The overall increase could be in the region of £1.6 m. She pointed out that a further consultation document, entitled Future Housing Capital Finance Arrangements, not contained within the report, could affect Derwentside's entitlement to subsidy by a reduction of £235,000.

Option: Whether or not to comment on the proposed changes proposed in the consultation paper.

RESOLVED: that the information contained in the report be noted.

Reason: The proposed changes outlined in the report regarding the intended new approach to allocating management and maintenance allowances with HRA subsidy appear to be of significant benefit to the Council.

59. MINIMUM VOTING AND CANDIDACY AGE

Councillor E. Coulson presented the report which advised Members that the Electoral Commission had published a Consultation Paper to seek views on the subject of minimum voting and candidacy age. These issues had been considered by the Learning Scrutiny Panel and their comments were attached to the report for the Executive's consideration.

Option: Whether or not to agree that the responses of the Learning Scrutiny Panel be forwarded to the Electoral Commission.

RESOLVED: that the comments of the Learning Scrutiny Panel as attached as Appendix 1 to the report be forwarded as this Council's response to the Electoral Commission's Consultation Paper entitled "How Old is Old Enough? The Minimum Age of Voting and Candidacy in U.K. Elections".

Reason: To participate in the consultation process and to submit the comments of the Council for consideration by the Electoral Commission.

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF SECTION 94 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND STANDING ORDER NUMBER 20, COUNCILLOR D.G. LLEWELLYN DECLARED AN INTEREST IN THE FOLLOWING MATTER, LEFT THE CHAMBER AND TOOK NO PART IN THE DISCUSSION AND VOTING THEREON.

60. GARAGES ON COUNCIL ESTATES – DEMOLITION AND PLANNED MAINTENANCE/IMPROVEMENT WORKS

Councillor J. Huntley presented the report which updated Members on the action being undertaken to resolve the over supply of garages and the garage stock condition. The report also highlighted the need for extra resources from the Capital Programme in order to continue to tackle these issues.

Option: Whether or not to agree to the method of funding the work required to address the over supply of garages on Council estates.

RESOLVED: that:-

- (1) the progress made in tackling the over supply of garages and the poor condition of certain garages be noted;
- (2) the need to address the outstanding works as outlined in the report and that the funding of this is considered during the mid year review of the Capital Programme be agreed.

Reason: Resolving the issues outlined in the report will improve both control, supply and letability of garages.

COUNCILLOR LLEWELLYN RETURNED TO THE MEETING AT THIS POINT.

61. THE CYCLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS IN ENGLAND

Councillor E.J. Coulson presented the report which advised Members that the Electoral Commission had produced a Consultation Paper inviting comments from local authorities to assist in the preparation of its review of the cycle of Local Government Elections in England. This subject had been presented to the Learning Scrutiny Panel at its meeting on 11th September and the recommendations of the Panel were presented to the Executive for comments.

Option: Whether or not to agree to submit the recommendations of the Learning Scrutiny Panel to the Electoral Commission.

RESOLVED: that the comments of the Learning Scrutiny Panel be forwarded to the Electoral Commission as this Council's response to the Consultation Paper "The Cycle of Local Government Elections in England".

Reason: To participate in the consultation process and to submit the comments of the Council for consideration by the Electoral Commission.

62. DELIVERING DECENT HOMES – OPTION APPRAISAL

Councillor J. Huntley presented the report which summarised aspects of the Decent Homes Standard (DHS) affecting the Council.

Options: Whether or not to agree to the mechanisms detailed in the report to work towards achieving DHS.

RESOLVED: that:-

- (1) the guidance issued by the ODPM in respect of the requirement to undertake Option Appraisal and the timetable for undertaking the project be noted;
- (2) the progress made towards achieving the DHS in Derwentside be noted;
- (3) the appointment of HACAS Chapman Hendy via a negotiated contract to act as lead consultants in respect of Option Appraisal;
- (4) agreement to the setting up of a Steering Group as described in paragraphs 3.4 – 3.7 of the report to review the options for the future of Council homes in Derwentside, such a group to have a Council Tenant as Chair;
- (5) agreement to the release of up to £40,000 from HRA balances to supplement the £50,000 already made available through the

2003/04 budget.

- (6) Note, that regular briefings will be provided for Members and employees and agree to an initial seminar for tenants, Members and other stakeholders on Option Appraisal.

Reasons:

- (1) Responsibility for delivery of the Decent Homes target rests with individual local authorities.
- (2) The Council has made considerable progress towards achieving the DHS. There is a significant investment gap between expenditure required on decent homes components and the overall requirements of the stock.
- (3) HACAS Chapman Hendy have the capacity to provide expert guidance on option appraisal.
- (4) Whilst the guidance is not prescriptive it is good practice to build upon existing consultation mechanisms expanding them to include other key stakeholders identified in the guidance.
- (5) This is the estimated resource requirement to carry out the Option Appraisal.
- (6) To raise awareness of the key issues and processes related to Option Appraisal.

IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 100(B) (4)(b) OF THE LOCALGOVERNMENT ACT 1972: (AS AMENDED) THE CHAIR AGREED THAT THE FOLLOWING ITEM OF BUSINESS BE CONSIDERED AS AN URGENT ITEM

63. APPROVAL OF STATUES AND MONUMENTS

Councillor A. Watson presented the report which considered the use of the Council's powers under Section 42 of the Public Health Amendment Act 1890 to permit the placing of any Statue or Monument in any street and to approve a policy for using those powers.

Options:

- (1) The Council determines to approve all of the applications and accept ongoing liability.
- (2) The Council could determine not to take on responsibility or approve any applications for these structures.
- (3) The Council agree a policy of consideration of each request being judged on its merits.

RESOLVED: that:-

- (1) Agreement to policy of consideration of each request being

judged on its merits by the Director of Environmental Services in consultation with Ward Members by delegating the powers of approval in Section 42 of the Public Health Amendment Act 1890 in accordance with the Draft Policy attached to the report.

- (2) Consideration is given during the next budget setting round to review the Streets and Shelters, budget to account for these requests.

Reason: As the Community Partnerships are developing plans for their areas, some are considering the installation of Notice Boards, Local Signage and Gateway Structures of some form or another and the Council needs to have a Policy Plan to deal with such requests.

64. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED on the motion of Councillor W. Armstrong, seconded by Councillor D.G. Llewellyn, that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 7 and 8 of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

65. REGENERATION OF HILLS ESTATE, SOUTH STANLEY

Councillor J. Huntley presented the report which sought approval for the demolition of 30 properties situated in Cheviot Terrace and Cleveland Terrace, South Stanley and the landscaping of the resulting cleared site. Councillor Malone questioned the figures relating to Option 2, and Officers advised that the figures would be corrected.

Options:

- (1) No demolition.
- (2) Demolition of 30 dwellings (17-31 Cheviot Terrace and 17-31 Cleveland Terrace) and the landscaping of the resulting cleared site.

RESOLVED: that:-

- (1) Option 2 – demolition of 30 dwellings (17-31 Cheviot Terrace and 17-31 Cleveland Terrace) and the landscaping of the resulting cleared site as detailed in the report be agreed.
- (2) Compulsory Purchase Order powers to be implemented where necessary.

Reasons:

- (1) The results of a survey carried out on this subject demonstrated the strength of feeling in favour of the demolition proposals, especially from those residents remaining in the two streets in question.
- (2) The rationalisation of the Council housing will reduce the high concentration of family accommodation in this area, which in turn will provide:-
 - Reduction in the number of empty properties
 - Decrease in instances of anti-social behaviour
 - Increase demand for the estate
 - Improve visual appearance and perception of the area
 - Decrease in the level of deprivation
 - Increase in property values reflecting the market as a whole, thus bringing an increase in sustainability for the community.

66. ESTABLISHMENT LEVELS

Councillor W. Armstrong presented the report the purpose of which was to raise awareness and request approval to progress a structured reduction in elements of the establishment within the Division of Building Services.

Option: Whether or not to agree to the mechanisms outlined in the report to reduce the establishment levels.

RESOLVED: that:-

- (1) the reduction in the size of the workforce outlined in the report be agreed;
- (2) ongoing consultation with Trade Unions be agreed to consider the best method of avoiding compulsory redundancies;
- (3) the ERVR scheme as detailed in the report be agreed.

Reason: With reducing demands made upon the service, the impact is being reflected in the requirement for a parallel reduction in manning and management/supervision levels.

67. THE AVON ROAD ESTATE REGENERATION SCHEME

Councillor J. Huntley presented the report which updated and informed Members of the action taken on the Avon Road Estate.

Options:

- (1) Complete refurbishment of all remaining properties.
- (2) Demolition.
- (3) A supported housing scheme in partnership with a Housing Association.
- (4) Reduced modernisation scheme to properties with and without asbestos.
- (5) Sale of selected properties with asbestos content where extension works are required.

RESOLVED:

- (1) Options 4 and 5 as detailed in the report be approved.
Option 4 -reduced modernisation scheme to properties with and without asbestos.
Option 5 – the sale of selected properties with asbestos content where extensive works are required.
- (2) Agree that a bid of £120,000 per year be considered as part of the mid year review of the capital programme to provide sufficient resources to complete the works in three years.
- (3) Agree that £9,000 be set aside to carry out a trial “improve for sale “ on two bungalows on this site, and that any monies realised will be ploughed back into improving more on an ongoing basis.

Reasons:

- (1) The remaining asbestos is removed from the site and some improvement works are undertaken. The lower costs will enable the Council to carry out the works within a more reasonable timescale.
- (2) These would be limited to costs to the Council and any sales would provide resources for re-investment. The community is re-invented with an influx of new owners .

68. FRONTLINE REVIEW

Councillor M. Malone presented the report which aimed to improve existing resources for key elements of the authority's frontline services.

Options: Whether or not to approve the review of frontline services as detailed in the report.

RESOLVED: that:-

- (1) Cashiering service is retained with amended staffing from six to four.
- (2) Recruitment of three additional Cashiers/Customer Assistants.
- (3) Recruitment of one additional Customer Services Officer.
- (4) Additional software be purchased to allow credit card and debit card transactions to be collected more widely.
- (5) With regard to Careline/CCTV, agree the investigation of the options set out in Appendix D to the report.

Reason: To improve the quality of key frontline services to the public whilst fulfilling the Council's Best Value obligations.

69. PROACTIVE HOUSING MANAGEMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE OUTLETS

The Executive Director advised that this item had been withdrawn and would be considered at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21st October and the Executive on 3rd November, 2003.

70. BOUNDARY COMMITTEE – ELECTED REGIONAL ASSEMBLIES

Councillor A. Watson presented the report which gave an update with regard to the Council's submission to the Boundary Committee for England and a review of the actions of the Council to date.

Option: To consider issues regarding the Regional Government Review process.

RESOLVED: that:-

- (1) the actions of the Executive Director in writing the letter attached to the report be endorsed;
- (2) the information contained in the report regarding the Regional

Government Review process be noted. The need to continue the work of the joint Officers/Members Panel to co-ordinate the response be endorsed.

- (3) the Council to continue to work positively within the Durham Forum, with stakeholders and the Boundary Committee.

Reason: To work with partners to ascertain the best system of Local Government for the District and the County.

71. JOINT EMPLOYMENT – DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

The Director of Corporate Administration and Policy advised that a bid to the Council's Corporate Development Reserve for the 1/5th funding of the post of Director of Public Health had been referred by Full Council at its meeting on 15th July, 2003 to the Health Scrutiny Panel. At the meeting held on 23rd September, 2003 the Health Scrutiny Panel had recommended support of the bid.

Option: Whether or not to agree to the Joint Employment of the Director of Public Health.

RESOLVED: Agreed to the 1/5th funding arrangement for the post of Director of Public Health from the Corporate Development Reserve.

Reason: To achieve the Corporate Aim to "Improve the Health of the population and reduce inequalities" and the targets therein.

CONCLUSION OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 5.46 p.m.

Chair.