

EXECUTIVE

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Consett on Monday, 1st December, 2003 at 4.30 p.m.

PRESENT:

Councillor M. Malone in the Chair

Councillors W. Armstrong, Mrs. E.J. Coulson, O. Johnson, D.G. Llewellyn, and A. Taylor

APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was submitted by Councillor J. Huntley.

84. MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd November, 2003 were agreed as a correct record.

85. BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT'S (BIDS)

Councillor D.G. Llewellyn presented the report which explained the Government's idea behind Business Improvement District's (BIDS) and assessed whether there could be scope to develop a BID in Derwentside.

Options:

- (1) Do not develop a BID in Derwentside.
- (2) Explore the potential of a BID in Derwentside.
- (3) Await progress on the pilot BID's across the country before determining whether to actively pursue a BID initiative locally at the same time making local trade associations aware of potential of BID's.

RESOLVED: that Option 3 be agreed – await progress on the pilot BID's across the country before determining whether to actively pursue a BID initiative locally, at the same time a summary of the BID scheme to be provided to the relevant trade organisations for information.

Reason: BIDs are in their infancy and a number of operational issues still need to be confirmed in order to properly assess the

potential opportunities a BID could bring to Derwentside.

86. WIDENING PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Councillor A. Taylor presented the report which advised how funding from the Corporate Development Reserve to support the further development of Community Partnerships in Derwentside will be allocated. There are currently 21 partnerships covering 19 wards (with some partnerships covering more than one ward) the aim is to have all 22 wards in Derwentside covered by a partnership body.

Options:

- (1) An open allocation process for partnerships: - recognised partnerships either individually or jointly could submit applications. This could result in requests greater than the value of available funding and some partnerships may miss out.
- (2) Each of the 22 wards be allocated up to £1,570 – this would mean that wards with two recognised partnerships would have the funding divided between the two, unless they can agree to work together on a joint project. However, where one partnership covers two wards it could potentially mean that more money would be available to that partnership.
- (3) Each ward be allocated an amount based on the number of people within the ward.
- (4) Each partnership be allocated up to £1,380.
- (5) Whether or not to “top slice” a sum of £5,000 from the available funding to arrange training for partnerships to build their capacity in areas such as financial management, responsibilities of Trustees and equality and fairness.

RESOLVED: that:-

- (1) the sum of £5,500 in total be top sliced from the available funding to provide training for partnerships and to administer the scheme.
- (2) Each of the 22 wards be allocated up to £1,570 this means that wards with two recognised partnerships would have the funding split between the two unless they agreed to work together on a joint project. However, where one partnership covers two wards this could potentially mean that more money would be available to that partnership and discussions would need to be held with Officers about the exact scope of projects.

Reason: The further development of Community Partnerships and wider participation in these groups is key to local people playing an active role in regeneration and decision making.

The availability of funding to partnerships, through what will be a quick and simple process, to enable them to better publicise their activities and encourage greater participation is to be welcomed and should have a significant impact on their future development.

COUNCILLOR A. WATSON ENTERED THE MEETING AT THIS POINT AND TOOK THE CHAIR.

87. PURCHASE OF NEW PERSONNEL AND PAYROLL SYSTEM

Councillor Watson presented the report which advised of the outcome of the exercise to acquire a new computerised personnel and payroll system. In response to a question from Councillor Malone, the Divisional Manager of Human Resources advised that the IT Section had been involved in initial work and would provide technical advice during the selection process.

Option:

- (1) Whether or not to support a bid to the Budget Panel for the purchase of a new Personnel and Payroll system.

RESOLVED: that support for the submission of this bid to the Budget Panel for the purchase of a new Personnel and Payroll system be agreed. The purchase of a new system, together with implementation and training costs is estimated in the region of £65,000 with an annual maintenance fee of £7,500.

Reason: If the Council were not to proceed with this proposal then the existing systems would be maintained but would not have the capacity or ability to develop to meet future Council needs. In addition, the quality of information could not be guaranteed and the work required to manipulate data would increase because of the out of date nature of the system. Payroll and Personnel management are key areas of operational need and without up-to-date systems there is concern that employment issues will not be dealt with appropriately and in accordance with statutory requirements.

88. LOCAL AUTHORITY BUSINESS GROWTH INCENTIVES

Councillor D.G. Llewellyn presented the report which advised of the Government's consultation exercise on proposed Local Authority Business Growth Incentive Scheme (LABGI) that will allow local authorities to retain some of the revenue from the business rates. The report also requested

whether the Council should respond to the consultation after considering the opportunities this could bring for local economic development priorities in Derwentside.

Options:

- (1) The Council to monitor progress of the scheme and make no formal response as part of the consultation exercise.
- (2) The Council make a contribution to the consultation exercise by welcoming a scheme that would have the greatest benefit for Derwentside.

RESOLVED: that the Council make a formal response to the Government by welcoming a scheme that would have the greatest benefit to Derwentside. A scheme that included a high scale, i.e. high proportion of additional business rate retainers; a scheme with a 50/50 split of the additional revenue with the County Council and a scheme based on the Local Authority Baseline Model.

Reason: This would provide the Council with the best opportunity to benefit from the LABGI scheme.

89. RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME SMALL PROJECTS FUND

Councillor A. Taylor presented the report which provided details of the East and West Durham Rural Development Programme's (RDP) Small Projects Fund (SPF) and requested that the Council provide a contribution to the core costs of the fund in 2003/04 of £1,000. Councillor O. Johnson advised that he strongly supported the recommendation to provide a contribution to the fund.

Options:

- (1) Do not make a contribution to the fund.
- (2) Contribute to the fund as in previous years.

RESOLVED: that a contribution of £1,000 to support the fund in 2003/2004 be agreed.

Reason: A number of community groups have benefited from the fund over recent years. Although last year there was no take up, there was a project in the pipeline that could be of benefit to Derwentside.

90. STATEMENT OF AUDIT AND STANDARD

The Director of Finance gave a verbal report and advised of changes to the way in which the Audit Commission reports the final accounts. The new system advises that if there are no issues raised then no report will be produced. The Audit Commission has advised that no issues have been raised with Derwentside and therefore no report will be issued for 2003.

RESOLVED: that the information regarding the new system be noted.

91. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: on the motion of Councillor W. Armstrong, seconded by Councillor A. Taylor, 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 7, and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of the Act (as amended) (as indicated).

92. CONSETT MARKETS

Not for publication by virtue of Paragraph 7 and 9.

Councillor D.G. Llewellyn presented the report which asked Members to consider the future operation of Consett Markets. This report was in response to a request from the Executive who at a previous meeting held on 2nd June, 2003 had resolved that the Officers undertake a review of the future operations of markets in Consett.

Options:

- (1) Seek to negotiate continuation of existing arrangements.
- (2) Put the General Market and Flea Market operations out to tender as separate packages.
- (3) Put the General Market and Flea Market operations in Consett out to tender as combined packages.

RESOLVED: that the General Market and Flea Market operations in Consett be put out to tender as separate packages.

Reasons: This ensures existing operations will be competing within their existing spheres of operations and potential for improving the licence terms by which the markets will be ultimately let.

93. REGENERATION OF EASTFIELDS AND WESTFIELDS FLATS

Not for publication by virtue of Paragraph 7.

Councillor A. Watson presented the report which advised on options for the regeneration of Eastfields and Westfields Estates in central Stanley.

Options:

- (1) Demolition of flats and redevelopment, in partnership with DAMHA to provide 11 aged person's bungalows.
- (2) No demolition.

RESOLVED: that:-

- (1) The demolition of 27 single person flats within the Eastfields/Westfields Estate situated on the Louisa Estate, Central Stanley be agreed.
- (2) The development of the resulting site, in partnership with Durham Aged Mineworkers Homes Association, to provide 11 aged person bungalows be agreed.
- (3) Delegated authority to the relevant Directors to conclude negotiations be agreed.
- (4) The implementation of Compulsory Purchase Order if a settlement cannot be negotiated, be agreed.

Reason: This will remove unpopular single person flats, which do not meet current housing demand for this location. At the same time this option offers the opportunity to provide much needed modern older persons' accommodation, situated close to amenities in central Stanley.

94. DERWENTSIDE TRAINING – INTERIM REVIEW

Not for publication by virtue of Paragraphs 7, 8 and 9.

The Director of Development and Asset Management advised that the report provided an update on progress made by Derwentside Training in seeking to expand and diversify its training activities. The report recommended that Derwentside Training continues with this work and that a further report be submitted before the end of the current financial year to allow a longer-term decision to be made on the future of the operation. A "rundown" contract from County Durham Learning and Skills Council has been secured and lasts until mid January, 2004.

In response to Councillor Malone's enquiries regarding lifelong learning and I.T. training for residents in sheltered courts, the Director of Development and Asset Management advised that Derwentside Training's main strength had been working with unemployed and disaffected young people. Most opportunities currently being pursued related to contracts and funding in this area of activity. He further confirmed that all Council I.T. training was currently provided by an employee of the I.C.T. Department. However, opportunities in community training were being explored and relevant officers would be asked to take account of the possibilities of providing training in areas such as sheltered courts and other community facilities to meet local needs.

Options:

- (1) To determine the long-term future of Derwentside Training at this point.
- (2) Continue with current work and review progress in identifying additional contracting opportunities before the end of the current financial year with a view to then determining the longer-term future of Derwentside Training.

RESOLVED: that:-

- (1) Derwentside Training continue with current work and review progress in identifying additional contracting opportunities before the end of the current financial year with a view to then determining the longer-term future of Derwentside Training.
- (2) Existing interim arrangements for Derwentside Training continue for the remainder of the current financial year.
- (3) A further review of progress in identifying, investigating, assessing, planning and resourcing other training opportunities/contracts be conducted before the end of the current financial year with a view to then determining the longer-term future of Derwentside Training.
- (4) The Director of Asset Management be authorised to agree any further interim arrangements/contracts to deliver this option.

Reasons:

- (1) All future options regarding the future of Derwentside Training are kept open.
- (2) Existing contracts held by Derwentside Training make this option financially viable.
- (3) There are opportunities to extend/develop additional training operations, to meet local needs.

95. REVIEW OF REVENUES AND BENEFITS ESTABLISHMENT

Not for publication by virtue of Paragraph 1.

Councillor A. Watson presented the report which requested that Members consider a restructure of the Revenues and Benefits establishment in light of recent changes and the current and future demands of the service.

The Divisional Head of Revenues and Benefits pointed out that Paragraph 13.2 should read Senior Revenues Officer.

Discussion took place on the changes and new working methods undertaken by the Revenues and Benefits Team and Members wished to record their appreciation for the way in which the Team had successfully worked through all of the changes.

Options: Whether or not to agree to the proposals for changes to the Revenues and Benefits Establishment as detailed in the report.

RESOLVED: that:-

- (1) with the exception of the proposal for the grading of officers detailed at paragraph 11.1 in the report, the proposals detailed in the report be agreed. A further report detailing these posts (i.e. Officers processing amendments or chasing debt.) be submitted to a future meeting;
- (2) the ER/VR application for the Senior Revenues Officer be accepted.

Reason: A formal adoption of existing practices together with the introduction of an establishment which is relevant to the current service demands and acknowledges the areas which are working successfully will enable the division to move forward to meet new challenges ahead.

96. CONSETT SPORTS PROVISION

Not for publication by virtue of Paragraphs 1, 8 and 9.

Councillor A. Watson presented the report which advised Members of the progress to date in relation to Consett sports provision. The report sought guidance on draft terms of agreement for a partnership between Derwentside College and the District Council, in addition, resources relating to the establishment of a Project Manager for the scheme.

In response to Councillor Malone's question regarding the Project Manager post, the Divisional Head of Leisure advised that it was proposed as a joint post funded equally by partners. Questions were also raised on the opportunity for inviting additional partners to join the scheme, the Head of Legal Services advised that it was normal practice for any existing partnership to be dissolved and then a new partnership drawn up to accommodate new partners.

Option: Whether or not to agree to the draft Memorandum of Agreement and whether to agree to a joint appointment of a Project Manager for the scheme.

RESOLVED: that:-

- (1) Provided that in Paragraph 1.1 the word "site" is replaced with "facility", the draft Memorandum of Agreement between Derwentside District Council and Derwentside College be agreed for continued development with a view to bringing a final version to a future meeting of the Executive.
- (2) The joint appointment of a Project Manager and the necessary financial arrangements (£25k) in order to resource this be agreed subject to the satisfactory completion of a project and business plan for the development.

Reason: In order to move the project forward it is imperative that an agreement be developed between Derwentside College and the Council in order that future working practices are provided with a framework.

CONCLUSION OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 5.25 p.m.

Chair.