

EXECUTIVE

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Consett on Monday, 5th January, 2004 at 4.30 p.m.

PRESENT:

Councillor A. Watson, Chair

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

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology or absence was submitted by Councillor W. Armstrong.

97. MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 1st December, 2003 were agreed as a correct record.

98. GARDENING SERVICE

Councillor J. Huntley presented the report which reviewed the pilot gardening service for vulnerable tenants and in accordance with the Best Value of Landlord Services' Improvement Plan, the extension of the service to all qualifying tenants.

Options:

- (a) Whether or not to agree to extend the current pilot gardening service to qualifying tenants.
- (b) Whether or not to levy a charge for the gardening service.

The Executive Director advised that the Scrutiny Board had considered this report and had requested that the Executive consider the levy of a charge or a registration fee of approximately £10 for the gardening service. Councillor Huntley pointed out that the service was intended to help some of the most vulnerable people in our area and £10 was a substantial amount to some people on a limited budget. She was not in favour of charging for this service at this point however, there would be a further opportunity to review the scheme in September when the options for charging could be debated.

Councillor Watson envisaged that the scheme would prove extremely popular and was concerned that costs of providing the service could escalate beyond the provision in the budget. Councillor Johnson pointed out that this was also an issue of property management and the cost of the scheme should be balanced against improvements to the appearance and the impact on the environment of Council estates. Councillor Taylor commented that in her opinion this was a worthwhile service and a lot of people would be willing to pay £10 for the scheme. She also raised concerns regarding the budget bid and queried whether this would be sufficient to sustain the service.

In response to Councillor Llewellyn's queries whether charging for the system would create additional administrative problems the Director of Finance advised that only minor additional administration costs such as printing and postage were envisaged.

Councillor Malone raised concerns regarding the number of gardens to be completed each day, the specification of work to be carried out at each visit. In response, the Director of Housing and Capital Works advised that the specification had been drawn up based on gardens requiring no major work or preparation and the report would help work towards the Corporate Aims of:-

- (1) create an attractive, sustainable community.

Concerns were also raised regarding the level of consultation carried out regarding the service and Officers advised that further consultation with tenants regarding possible future charges would take place during Autumn/Winter 2004.

Following the discussion it was

RESOLVED: that:-

- (1) the gardening service be expanded to include all areas within Derwentside and qualifying tenants who have expressed an interest;
- (2) the service be provided initially free of charge to qualifying tenants and funded through the HRA;
- (3) the service be promoted and used as an estate management tool by being offered to tenants who cannot maintain their gardens;
- (4) provided resources are available the service be expanded to include disabled tenants under 60 years of age who meet the same qualifying criteria of having no one available who can reasonably be expected to help them;
- (5) the progress and standard of service is continually reviewed with particular regard to capacity and turn-round times. Subsequently, a system of not accepting new applications onto the service may

- have to be enforced in order to maintain the service at a satisfactory level. A waiting list system could then be operated and new applicants added to the service should a vacancy occur;
- (6) a further review of the service be carried out in the Autumn/Winter 2004, including consultation with tenants to ascertain the future funding and possible charging for the service and assessing in greater detail the capacity/demand for the service.

Reasons:

- (1) The problem of overgrown and ill maintained gardens has an extremely negative impact on the appearance of the Council's housing estates.
- (2) An untidy garden can prove extremely stressful and disturbing to someone who cannot maintain it and has no available help.
- (3) The provision of a gardening service will be viewed as a service improvement from the tenant's point of view and also can be used as a management tool in Estate Management.
- (4) The possibility of a charge for the gardening service be discussed following the consultation exercise due to take place in Autumn 2004.

99. LOW DEMAND PROPERTIES – MOORSIDE

Councillor Huntley presented the report which sought approval for a pilot scheme to carry out the conversion of four two bedroom properties into two four bedroom properties within the Moorside Estate.

Options:

- (a) Conversion of four two bedroom properties into two four bedroom properties by the Council (as detailed in Section 3).
- (b) Conversion of four two bedroom properties into two four bedroom properties by a Housing Association.
- (c) Sale of empty two bedroom properties on the open market for owner occupation.
- (d) Continue to try to re-let the two bedroom properties.
- (e) Demolition.
- (f) Combination of Options A and B.

RESOLVED: that:-

- (1) Option F be agreed – a balanced approach where the Council invest in an initial pilot project involving four properties. A bid to the Housing Corporation be developed to take forward the approach into the other areas. The costs of £60,000 for Option F being met from the Regeneration Capital Budget as part of the

being met from the Regeneration Capital Budget as part of the Regeneration of the Moorside Estate.

Reasons:

- (1) To demonstrate to the community that Derwentside Council is willing to invest in the remaining properties within the Moorside Estate.
- (2) To help the local Primary School to retain children of the larger families, who would otherwise have to look to other areas to accommodate their children.
- (3) To give a balance to that section of the estate where there is a high number of two bedroom terraced properties.
- (4) To help resolve the vacant property and re-letting problems identified on the estate.

100. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: on the motion of Councillor M.J. Mabne, 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 item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 7, 8, and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of the Act (as amended).

101. REDEVELOPMENT OF STANLEY BUS STATION

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

Councillor D.G. Llewellyn presented the report which sought approval for the redevelopment of Stanley Bus station, in particular to:-

- advertise the current Stanley Bus Station for sale on the open market;
- progress negotiations to acquire properties required to create a new access between the proposed new Bus Station and Front Street;
- agree funding arrangements associated with Single Programme grant towards the new Bus Station development.

A major part of the redevelopment of Stanley Town Centre is the provision of a new Bus Station and the existing Car Park at Mary Street has been identified as the most appropriate site. Both the Steering Group and various public consultation exercises have highlighted the need to enhance access and egress from the new Bus Station into Front Street by providing a comfortable and pleasant environment. This would also act as a catalyst on the overall regeneration of the Town Centre.

Option:

Whether or not to agree to the proposals for the redevelopment of Stanley Bus Station.

RESOLVED: that:-

- (1) authority be granted to advertise surplus land within the current Stanley Bus Station site on the open market;
- (2) continue negotiations for the acquisition of relevant properties on Stanley Front Street whilst also working to have prepared a draft Compulsory Purchase Order for the acquisition of all or some of these properties as appropriate, with a more detailed report on this matter to be considered at a future meeting of the Executive;
- (3) agree to accept liabilities relating to the non standard conditions likely to be attached to Single Programme funding, subject to such liability being shared on an equal basis by Durham County Council.

Reasons:

- (1) This will allow all options for development of the current Bus Station site, and their relative merits, to be considered at a future meeting.
- (2) This will allow all acquisition of relevant Front Street properties to proceed as quickly as possible, whilst allowing more detailed consideration to be given to this issue at a future meeting.
- (3) This will allow for a grant offer to be accepted as soon as possible whilst also mitigating a major risk by requiring shared liability with the other main partner.

**102. REDEVELOPMENT OF STANLEY BUS STATION
ADDENDUM**

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

Councillor D. G. Llewellyn presented the report which sought approval for the procurement of a new Bus Station at Stanley by means of the Durham County Council Strategic Alliance.

Options:

- (a) To enter into an agreement with the Strategic Alliance Partner to construct the Bus Station and appoint Durham County Council to manage the contract on behalf of the Council.
- (b) To advertise an open tender arrangement to procure the Bus

- Station.
- (c) To advertise a restricted tender arrangement to procure the Bus Station.

RESOLVED: that:-

Derwentside District Council appoint Durham County Council to procure the construction of the new Stanley Bus Station on its behalf through the Strategic Alliance arrangement ensuring that Derwentside District Council are identified as the client and the building owner in any and all relevant documentation.

Reason:

To ensure that the works commence in a reasonable time to meet the spending requirements of the funding agency.

CONCLUSION OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 5.20 p.m.

Chair.