

EXECUTIVE

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

PRESENT:

Councillor A. Watson, Chair

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

IN ATTENDANCE

Councillors J. Docherty, W.J. Tyrie and J. Pickersgill.

149. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th April, 2004 were agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

In response to Councillor M. Malone's query regarding Minute Number 148 – Tennis Development, the Leisure Services Manager advised that he had written to the County Council on this issue and was awaiting a response.

150. 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 1, 7, 8, and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of the Act (as amended).

151. INFORMATION SERVICES RESTRUCTURING

(Not for Publication by virtue of Paragraphs 1 and 9).

Councillor M. Malone presented the report which updated Members on the activities of the Information Services Directorate relating to strategic development of the service, affirming current operations in terms of their legality, financial impact on the authority and capacity for expansion and development of new initiatives/contracts.

Councillor Malone also referred to the minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 22nd April, 2004 and queried that his name was included in the list of apologies as he had not been aware that he had been invited to attend.

It was noted that this report had been debated at Overview and Scrutiny and Councillor J. Docherty advised that the main concerns arising from the debate had been the overall management direction. Councillors had also raised concerns regarding possible officer conflict of interest that may arise from the staffing arrangements made with Durham County Council. As these items had been resolved at the meeting, the report was now acceptable to Overview and Scrutiny.

Councillor Llewellyn raised the issue of the DurhamNet and wished to clarify that this was a Derwentside District Council initiative and project. Councillor Malone commented that perhaps in retrospect more thought could have been given to the naming of the project to prevent confusion with any other local authority.

Councillor Taylor raised questions on the 'Aspirations Begin at Home Project' and whether this project could be mainstreamed. In response, Councillor Malone advised that a report was being prepared on this project and would be presented to Members at a future meeting.

Options: Whether or not to agree to the proposals in the report for the Information Services Restructuring.

RESOLVED: that:-

- (1) Members note the content of the report, with particular reference to the success of I.T. related initiatives over recent years, especially those which have led to the generation of external activities and the resources which have flowed as a consequence of this work.
- (2) Members agree to continue the principle of funding capacity building within the I.T. Division, utilising surplus from external trading account and that the projections for the next three to five years indicating a net surplus on these contract activities of the amount as detailed in the report be noted.
- (3) Members note the progress which has been made with regard to the development of DurhamNet and agree that further legal and financial advice should be taken by this authority in conjunction

with Durham County Council with regard to an analysis of future options. In doing so, Members note the need to ensure service integrity within the District Council, the protection of services currently delivered to the community of Derwentside and the need to ensure that Derwentside District Council does not suffer financial loss as a consequence of any change.

- (4) Members agree to the implementation of the staffing changes identified in Table 1 of the report recognising that the eventual cost of the service change is estimated as detailed in the report and that the cost of this change should be borne by the surplus on external trading accounts.
- (5) Any surplus over and above the cost of change recouped as a consequence of external trading, continues to be utilised as part of this Council's Corporate Development Fund.
- (6) Members accept the need for further regular reports to Executive and Scrutiny Committees on the performance of both our internal and external I.T. activities, this process to be facilitated by the newly appointed Business Development Manager.
- (7) Members agree to a review of the effectiveness of the current service provision agreement with Durham County Council as detailed in the report.
- (8) Members agree to receive a further report on the current consortium and DurhamNet arrangements, with reference to future options, in conjunction with (6) above, by September 2004.
- (9) A report be requested from the Director of Information Services. to the appropriate Scrutiny Panel in June 2004 detailing performance of and risk associated with the 'Aspirations Project' as referred to in the report.

Reasons:

- (1) To support the continued development of the Council's I.T. service both internally and externally, ensuring a response to community and organisational requirements as well as through the building of capacity ensuring the completion of our contractual obligations with external users which, through the generation of surplus, will continue to be beneficial to the Council.
- (2) The proposed new structure will result in the stabilisation of the directorate, identification of clear accountabilities and responsibilities and the achievement of sufficient capacity to facilitate this Council's current operational requirements.

152. VEHICLE PLANT AND EQUIPMENT RENEWALS 2004/05

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

Councillor Armstrong presented the report which advised Members of the need to replace vehicles, plant and equipment used in the day-to-day functions of providing Building Services and General Services.

Option: Whether or not to agree to the proposals in the report to renew vehicles and plant.

RESOLVED: that:-

- (1) The renewal of vehicles and plant as outlined in the report be agreed.
- (2) The finance of the renewals be agreed through an operating lease over a three or five year period dependant on the type of vehicle.

Reason: To enable the continuation of front line services by Building Services and General Services.

153. REVIEW OF FINANCIAL SERVICES ESTABLISHMENT

(Not for publication by virtue of Paragraphs 1 and 7).

Councillor E. Coulson presented the report which asked Members to consider proposals for the implementation of a new structure for the provision of the authority's financial services. This was part of a series of ongoing reviews following the establishment of the new Directorate structure at the beginning of 2003.

Option: Whether or not to agree to the proposals in the report for the restructure of the Financial Services establishment.

RESOLVED: that:-

- (1) The proposed structure as detailed in the report be agreed.
- (2) The ERVR requests as detailed in the report be agreed, the effective date to be determined by the Director to take account of operational issues associated with the introduction of the new Financial Management System.
- (3) The effective date for all other changes detailed in the report be agreed as 1st June, 2004.

Reason: The establishment changes are required to meet the organisations changing demands.

154. LAND AND EASEMENT AT CONSETT PARK

(Not for publication by virtue of Paragraphs 7 and 9).

Councillor A. Watson presented the report which concerned the disposal of land and the granting of an easement at Consett Park in exchange for the construction of a pedestrian and cycle entrance to the park and a cycle path as detailed in the report. The developer of the land, has as a result of a planning requirement, undertaken to construct a new entrance to the park as well as relocate the existing footpath. The construction will be in-line with planning conditions and will be a considerably higher specification than the existing path that it will replace. The design encompasses new piers, paving and lighting to the specification of the adjacent Heritage Lottery development of the park itself. Officers consider that this entrance will provide significant benefit to users of the park, enhancing and developing the current heritage project.

Councillor Malone suggested that it would be opportune to involve local groups such as 'Friends of Blackhill and Consett Park' and in response the Head of Leisure commented that there was still the opportunity to involve community groups in the development of the park.

Local Members had been consulted on this issue and an objection to the proposal had been made on the basis that there may be a possible Public Inquiry concerning the future of adjacent woodland and open space – whatever the decision

Councillor Watson advised that it would be some time before the decision regarding Village Green designation is determined and either way the appeal mechanism would come into play, which would mean further extensive delays.

Options: Whether or not to agree to the proposals for the disposal of land and the granting of an easement at Consett Park.

RESOLVED: that the proposed exchange of interests as set out in the report be approved.

Reasons:

- (1) The disposal of land and easement will result in a public cycle track including access gates being constructed and given to the Council. It is estimated that the cost of these works are in excess of the value of the land and easement being given in exchange.
- (2) Officers consider that this proposed entrance will provide significant benefit to users of the park, enhancing and developing the current heritage project.
- (3) The proposals will ensure aesthetic lines of the path-ways are

maintained and will avoid introducing an area which would both be a litter trap and potential safety issue.

155. REDEVELOPMENT OF STANLEY BUS STATION

(Not for publication by virtue of Paragraphs 8 and 9).

Councillor D. Lewellyn presented the report which considered the recommendations from the Economy Scrutiny Panel held on 21st April, 2004 to take the lead in the Stanley Bus Station project. The Stanley Steering Group had also considered this issue at the meeting held on 27th April when a recommendation for the District Council to adopt the lead role in the project was accepted.

It was pointed out that it was very likely that an additional financial commitment will need to be made in order to deliver the project. It was also essential to monitor the progress of the project and suggested that an update be presented to the Executive every two months.

The Director of Environmental Services advised that officers had programmed weekly meetings to monitor the progress of the project. There was also a need to clarify officer roles and the issues of funding for the project

Councillor Malone commented that it was important to demonstrate as clearly as possible that the Executive are giving 100% support to this project and suggested that the minutes of the weekly officer meetings be e-mailed to Members of the Executive, and Members be invited to attend on a monthly basis. He also requested that officers produce a performance measurement system to ensure performance can be measured against targets.

Lengthy discussion took place on the issue of a Project Manager and Councillor Malone and Councillor Lewellyn agreed that it was important that any Project Manager was responsible to Derwentside District Council and that there was no conflict of interest with any other authority. It was suggested that this Council specifically employ a Project Manager to oversee the project.

The Divisional Head of General Services advised that the Strategic Alliance had designed the project and that officers were attempting to achieve agreement to use this design. In addition, the Director of Development and Asset Management was preparing a funding bid for the project and officers were attempting to clarify the precise level of contribution by the County Council in respect of legal/administration fees and the contribution in terms of actual building work.

In response to Councillor Armstrong's query, regarding publicity for the meetings, the Director of Environmental Services advised that it was proposed that a series of exhibitions be held to keep members of the public informed of progress of the project. Councillor Taylor suggested that some sort of notice board or bill board be erected in Front Street, Stanley to ensure the public are kept informed of progress.

Options: Whether or not to agree to the proposals by the Economy Scrutiny Panel and the Stanley Steering Group for Derwentside District Council to take over the lead in the project to redevelop Stanley Bus Station.

RESOLVED: that:-

- (1) Members agree that Derwentside District Council will lead on the project to redevelop Stanley Bus Station.
- (2) Further reports to be submitted to Executive regarding proposed delivery and budgetary arrangements.
- (3) Authority be granted to put in place the necessary Project Management arrangements. Any Project Manager appointed or seconded must be responsible to Derwentside District Council and to no other local authority.
- (4) A notice-board be erected in Front Street, Stanley to keep Members of the public up-to-date with progress on the Stanley Bus Station project.
- (5) That the Stanley Bus Station project be added as a regular item to be placed on the Economy Scrutiny Panel Agenda.

Reason: To ensure that the Stanley Bus Station project proceeds as quickly as possible.

156. COUNCILLOR MRS. E.J. COULSON

Councillor A. Watson informed the meeting that this would be the final Executive meeting attended by Councillor Coulson in her capacity as Portfolio Holder for Learning. He went on to describe her commitment and dedication to her work as a Councillor which had been demonstrated by her determination to continue to attend meetings throughout her recent illness. These comments were echoed around the Chamber.

In response, Councillor Coulson thanked the Chair, fellow Councillors, colleagues and officers for their help, advice and support throughout her time as a Portfolio Holder.

CONCLUSION OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 5.50 p.m.

Chair.