

EXECUTIVE

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Consett on Monday, 7th June, 2004 at 4.30 p.m.

PRESENT:

Councillor A. Watson, Chair

Councillors W. Armstrong, C. Christer, J. Huntley, O. Johnson, D.G. Llewellyn, M.J. Malone and A. Taylor.

IN ATTENDANCE

Councillors C. Bell, J. Pickersgill and W.J. Tyrie.

Prior to the commencement of business the Chair welcomed Councillor C. Christer to his first meeting of the Executive in his capacity as Portfolio Holder for Community Safety.

1. MINUTES

Provided that the following wording is added to Minute 155 – Redevelopment of Stanley Bus Station, the minutes of the meeting held 5th May 2004 were agreed as a correct record.

- (a) That the Stanley Bus Station project be added as a regular item to be placed on the Economy Scrutiny Panel Agenda.

2. EMBEDDING PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Councillor M. Malone presented the report which proposed significant changes to the mechanisms employed by the Council in relation to performance management.

Option: Whether or not to agree, reject or amend changes to the performance management framework as detailed in the report.

RESOLVED: that:-

- (1) The changes to the Performance Management Framework as detailed in the report be agreed.

- (2) The timetable for consideration of Performance Management reporting information contained in Appendix Three of the report be agreed.

Reason: The findings of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment Inspection Team as detailed in the report require the Council to make revisions to its Performance Management framework.

3. NOISE ANALYSIS AND MONITORING EQUIPMENT

Councillor W. Armstrong presented the report which requested the release of capital resources to allow the acquisition of suitable analysis and monitoring equipment to enable the Division to respond to noise complaints. This equipment would then be used to investigate complaints of noise nuisance in industrial commercial and domestic situations as well as being used to provide technical reports in respect of Planning Applications.

In response to Councillor Watson's questions regarding monitoring of the use of the equipment the Director of Environmental Services advised that after the equipment had been in use for approximately 12 months officers would produce a follow-up report on the effectiveness of the equipment.

Options: Whether to purchase or lease noise analysis and monitoring equipment.

RESOLVED: that:-

- (1) A capital sum of £8,400 be allocated to allow the noise analysis and monitoring equipment to be purchased.

Reason: This is an essential piece of equipment in the investigation of potential statutory noise nuisance.

4. DATA CAPTURE AND DIGITAL STORAGE, CAPITAL BID

Councillor O. Johnson presented the report which sought retrospective permission to acquire suitable surveying equipment to carry out a survey of the land uses within the Council's land bank.

Councillor Malone commented that the Council had recently approved a Corporate Procurement Strategy and in future these issues should be examined using this system.

Options: to carry out the survey by means of:-

- (1) Hard copies of maps and different treatment areas sketched on.
- (2) Amendments to the existing database. (This has been ongoing for some years and without dedicating large amounts of staff time this will not be available to allow grass-cutting tenders to be prepared).
- (3) Purchase of two sets of Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and two hand held husky hunter systems.

RESOLVED: that the retrospective ordering of the Global Positioning System at a cost as detailed in the report be endorsed by Executive as a capital commitment.

Reasons: The Council need to make some significant decisions in the very near future, including Leisure Trust options; the future of its Housing Stock and the disposal strategy of its surplus land. All of these decisions need to be based on sound and accurate information.

5. **ASSET MANAGEMENT – PROPERTY REVIEW PROGRAMME**

Councillor J. Huntley presented the report which advised Members of the programme for the review of the Council's Land and Property Holdings which will form a major part of the implementation for the Council's Asset Management Plan.

Options:

- (1) Agree to the implementation of the Property Review Programme
- (2) Change elements of the Property Review Programme
- (3) Not implement the Property Review Programme.

RESOLVED: that the Property Review Programme – Process and Schedule, as appended to the report be approved.

Reason: To enable the Council to achieve the requirement which was placed on local authorities to prepare and submit Capital Strategies and Asset Management Plans.

**6. THE BOUNDARY COMMITTEE FOR ENGLAND:
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNITARY
LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN COUNTY DURHAM**

Councillor Watson presented the report which advised that the Boundary Committee for England had produced their final report with recommendations for County Durham. The report had been published on 25th May 2004 and summarised the results of their consultation on their draft proposals, and made proposals for two options for patterns of Unitary Authorities in County Durham.

The two options that the Boundary Committee are recommending to the Deputy Prime Minister are:-

- Option A: A single Unitary Authority comprising the whole of County Durham County area;
- Option B: Three Unitary Authorities based on combinations of existing districts in County Durham (Chester-le-Street and Derwentside; Durham City and Easington; and Sedgefield, Teesdale and Wear Valley.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister will now consider the recommendations made by the Boundary Committee as part of its preparations for referendums on elected Regional Assemblies and Local Government change. The Boundary Committee report states that the Government will not take a final decision on the Local Government options for a period of six weeks (up to 6th July 2004) during which time the Deputy Prime Minister will receive any comments.

Councillor Watson suggested and it was agreed that a press release be issued to ensure the facts in the report on the public opinion research results are fully explained to members of the public. There was a need for enhanced public communication to ensure quality information is available in the public domain with regard to the benefits of the three unitary Council options for County Durham. In particular, the reference to the results of the survey which revealed that 45% of those expressing a preference preferred a sub-county structure (i.e. either two or three Councils for County Durham). It was also relevant that increased costs of changing to County Unitary status were available in the public domain.

Councillor Malone highlighted the need to raise public awareness at as many Council organised events/festivals as possible. He also stressed the need for targets to be set for achieving public relations outcomes and the need for a system to monitor success of the programme. He suggested and it was agreed that an internal campaign team consisting of Members and Officers be set up to steer the campaign. Ideas for the

Team to look at included: - Celebrating Success; Stanley Blues Festival; Newsletter and Newspaper wrap-around.

Councillor Llewellyn advised that he had asked for information from Durham County Council on the budget they had allocated for the publicity campaign for unitary status, but had not as yet received a reply.

Councillor Taylor commented that Durham County Council's proposals for Area Boards/Community Boards seemed to be an attempt to create a 'local voice'. One Area Board meeting had been held in Stanley, she was unaware if it was successful or not however, Derwentside already had this 'local voice' through groups such as the LSP and SPICE.

Option: Whether to accept, reject or amend the conclusions in the report to continue to support the three Unitary Authority option.

RESOVLED: that:-

- (1) The Council continue to support the Unitary Authority option with our colleague District Authorities, noting that a fairly clear implication of the content of the Boundary Committee's report is the need for enhanced public communication to ensure quality information is available in the public domain with regard to the benefits of the three Unitary Council options for County Durham.
- (2) A Press Release be issued to enhance public communication to ensure quality information is available in the public domain with regard to the benefits of the three unitary Council option for County Durham.
- (3) An internal campaign team consisting of Members and officers be established to raise public awareness and promote the benefits of the three Unitary Authority option for County Durham.
- (4) The information that the Boundary Committee report had been submitted to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and that the Government will take final decisions on Local Government options by 6th July 2004 be noted.

Reason:

- (1) To raise public awareness of the Boundary Committee's final recommendation to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

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

8. CAR PARKING STRATEGY

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

Councillor D.G. Llewellyn presented the report which advised of the results of the Parking Study carried out by Capita Infrastructure Consultancy and gave an overview of the recommendations proposed in the resultant strategy document.

The Executive Director advised that this report had been considered by the Scrutiny Board at their meeting on 4th June. The Scrutiny Board had suggested that it would be advisable to await the outcomes of a joint meeting with Durham County Council before making any decisions on this issue. It was also requested that once this meeting had been held the report be forwarded to Scrutiny to enable all Members to debate the issues prior to any decision being made by Executive.

Options: Whether or not to agree to the recommendations in the report regarding the Car Parking Strategy or defer the report as requested by Scrutiny.

RESOLVED: that the report be deferred until the joint County/District meeting has been held to consider options for the Car Parking Strategy. Once this meeting has been held the report be forwarded to Scrutiny for Members to debate prior to any decision being made by Executive.

Reason: To enable Scrutiny the opportunity to debate the issues in the report.

9. STANLEY TOWN CENTRE – CORE RETAIL AREA STUDY UPDATE

(Not for publication by virtue of Paragraph 8).

Councillor D.G. Llewellyn presented the report which provided an update on the Stanley Core Retail Area Study commissioned in August 2003. In addition, authority was sought to accept the report subject to post submission minor alterations and public consultation on the final document, once presented to the Stanley Steering Group.

Options:

- (1) Accept the report subject to any minor revisions
- (2) Reject the report at this stage and commission further work to be carried out.

RESOLVED: that:-

- (1) The report is accepted subject to minor revisions following submission on the 14th May, 2004
- (2) Authority is granted for public consultation to take place once the report has been presented to the Stanley Steering Committee.

Reason: The Stanley Town Centre Steering Group along with the Derwentside LSP and the County Durham Sub Regional Partnership identified the need for a study which would clearly demonstrate how ambitious the plans for the Core Retail Area (CRA) should be and have chosen a time frame to carry out the process that coincides with the development of the new Bus Station which is to be constructed in the area adjoining the CRA.

10. PLANNING DIVISION – STRUCTURAL REVIEW

(Not for publication by virtue of Paragraph 1).

Councillor O. Johnson presented the report, which advised that the Government has introduced the Planning Delivery Grant to drive up Local Authorities' performance in the delivery of planning functions both in respect of development control and development planning.

The Executive Director reported that whilst the report had not been 'called-in' by Scrutiny, Chairs of Scrutiny Panels at their Board Meeting had requested that the report be tabled for discussion at the next available 'Overview' meeting. He reported that this would be actioned.

Option: Whether to approve, reject or amend the proposal in the report in respect of the Planning Division – Structural Review.

RESOLVED: that the report be approved as the framework for the utilisation of the additional resources that have been identified, and approved be granted in principle for the changes to the establishment of the Planning Division as outlined in the report.

Reason: Without effective measures being put in place, there is an immediate risk that the Authority will struggle to achieve the

Government' aims.

11. DERWENTSIDE TRAINING – STAFFING COMPLEMENT

(Not for publication by virtue of Paragraphs 1, 7, 8 and 9).

Councillor J. Huntley presented the report which gave details of progress made by Derwentside Training in expanding and diversifying its training activities, the report also sought permission to increase staffing levels in order to further facilitate the delivery and securing of training contracts.

Councillor Huntley highly commended the officers for the report and for making a success of Derwentside Training. She also suggested that the Council should celebrate this success with a visit to Derwentside Training, this suggestion was supported by Councillor Taylor.

Options:

- (1) Whether to endorse the action taken in creating two new Training Officer posts and agree to advertise the Finance Officer's post as a permanent position.
- (2) Whether to require a review of staffing requirements within Derwentside Training.

RESOLVED: that:-

- (1) The action taken in creating two new Training Officer posts be endorsed and agreement granted to advertise the Finance Officer's post as a permanent position.
- (2) The Executive visit Derwentside Training to celebrate the success of the organisation in expanding and diversifying its training activities.

Reason: This will ensure the delivery of existing contracts; strengthen the management, development and delivery capabilities of Derwentside Training support the generation of additional net income.

12. ORWELL GARDENS, STANLEY

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

Councillor J. Huntley presented the report which was to advise Members of the tenders submitted for a site at Orwell Gardens, Stanley.

Consideration was also given to an offer from Paragon Health Care Ltd. who had expressed an offer for the site prior to the Tender process. Councillor Watson advised that Paragon proposed to provide state of the art facilities for disabled people involving millions of pounds being invested into the District, together with the potential to create over 100 jobs. This investment would contribute to the regeneration of Stanley.

Councillor M. Malone also supported the bid by Paragon as this was a much-needed resource, would benefit residents across the District and would contribute to the regeneration of Stanley.

In addition, it was noted that the Council were not guaranteed to receive the amount submitted by the highest tender as there may be unforeseen ground conditions or other issues which may result in the reduction of the original tender offer.

Considerable debate took place regarding the proposals and that acceptance of the Paragon offer was conditional upon satisfactory negotiations relating to a covenant being agreed limiting the use of the site and defining any 'claw-back' of value, a jobs guarantee, the value and extent of the site in addition there was also discussion on training issues relating to skilled jobs.

Option: The Executive give direction with regard to the disposal of the site, including considering the merits of the alternative proposals.

RESOLVED: that:-

- (1) the offer from Paragon Health Care Ltd. be accepted for the development detailed in the report subject to approval of the Secretary of State (if necessary);
- (2) a caveat be included in the sale preventing Paragon or any other purchaser from on-selling or developing the land for any other use other than that proposed by Paragon and detailed in the report.
- (3) prior to completion of the sale confirmation be obtained from Paragon that the majority of jobs created will be locally filled.

Reason: The proposal would enhance the regeneration potential for Stanley and if successful create a potential 100 jobs in the Stanley area.

CONCLUSION OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 6.10 p.m.

Chair.