

EXECUTIVE

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Consett on Monday, 4th October, 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 J. Pickersgill and W.J. Tyrie

57. REVIEW OF SCRUTINY BOARD DEBATE

A list of items discussed at Scrutiny Board was circulated to all at the meeting with the comments being referred to as each agenda item was discussed.

58. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

A) MINUTE NUMBER 55- DISPOSAL OF HOUSING SITE IN MOORSIDE TO ENDEAVOUR HOUSING ASSOCIATION

The Executive Director referred to the Scrutiny Board Notes regarding the Disposal of Housing Sites in Moorside to Endeavour Housing Association (Minute No. 55 refers) and in particular to the covenant attached to the sale to ensure that the land would be used for social housing purposes only. As a consequence of the covenant, Endeavour Housing Association had advised that they were experiencing difficulties in securing funding arrangements. Endeavour Housing Association were controlled by the Housing Corporation and as a consequence would be required to seek the permission of both the Housing Corporation and the District Council to dispose of the land for any other purposes than that agreed. In view of these difficulties they had requested that the covenant be withdrawn.

The Executive Director advised that the Housing Corporation would be meeting in the near future to determine grant applications and that this issue would need to be determined before such a meeting, if the proposed scheme was to go ahead.

Derwentside had been assured that the land will be used for Social Housing and one way forward would be to negotiate to include the following in the contract for the sale of the land:

- commit to building homes to Housing Corporation Scheme Development Standards;
- Agree at first let to offer the properties for rent (at restructured rent levels) on an assured tenancy basis to residents nominated by the Council;
- Guaranteed 50% nomination rights on future lets.

It was noted that the Scrutiny Board had not raised any objection to the withdrawal of the covenant.

Following discussion it was agreed as follows:-

RESOLVED: that Minute Number 55 be amended by removing the words “subject to a covenant being attached to the sale to ensure that the land would be used for social housing purposes only”.

Reason: Housing Associations only receive 40% - 50% of scheme costs in grant. The remainder is raised by way of a private mortgage. The funders will provide the balance at competitive rates as long as the Housing Associations are able to offer clean title. Any restrictions naturally affect value and the ability to raise sufficient capital. Less capital puts the scheme back in jeopardy.

B. MINUTE 47 – CCTV – PHASE 1 EVALUATION / PHASE 3 ROLL OUT

Councillor Malone referred to Minute Number 47 (CCTV – Phase 1 Evaluation / Phase 3 Roll out) and following discussion Executive agreed that Minute 47 be amended as detailed in the report as follows:-

RESOLVED: that all nine wards listed in the report are dealt with in a single phase with the continuing target date of March 2005, on the proviso that Officers are allowed time to test the resilience of the connections within Benfieldside, Cornsay, Ebchester and Medomsley that may result in a delay in these Wards coming on-line, and subject to the timescales of external contractors.

59. MINUTES

RESOLVED: provided Minute Numbers 47 and 55 are amended as above the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 7th September, 2004 be agreed as a correct record.

**60. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
17TH AUGUST, 2004**

Councillor Watson commented on Minute Number 15 of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17th August 2004 (Rules and Regulations associated with the Erection of Headstones in Cemeteries) and proposed that this item be forwarded to the Health Scrutiny Panel to set up a time-limited working group to look at the policy and report the findings and recommendations to Executive.

Option; Whether or not to request Scrutiny to review the policy regarding cemeteries.

Councillor Taylor also suggested that the Scrutiny Panel should look for possible ways to fund on-going repairs to headstones such as payment of a fees to create a reserve to finance future maintenance of the headstones.

RESOLVED: that the report be forwarded to the Health Scrutiny Panel to set up a time-limited working group to look at the Rules and Regulations associated with the Erection of Headstones in Cemeteries and report the findings and recommendations to Executive.

Reason: The need to review the existing policy in view of recent requests in relation to reinstatement/re-erection of headstones in cemeteries.

**61. COUNTY DURHAM STRUCTURE PLAN PARTIAL REVIEW;
KEY ISSUES PAPER**

Councillor Johnson presented the report which advised of the Key Issues Paper for the County Durham Structure Plan Partial Review, which had been approved for consultation by Durham County Council's Cabinet and identified the issues that the County Council had considered important.

The County Council identified twenty-seven key issues and questions upon which views are invited, which are based on the five interlinked themes of:

- Locational Strategy
- Developing the Economic Scrutiny Panel
- Strengthening Communities
- Looking after the Environment and
- Managing Natural Resources.

Included in the document were suggested strategies for each district and for Derwentside the proposals were:-

- Focus major development on the main towns of Consett and Stanley strengthening their role as accessible locations for employment, shopping and leisure.
- Encourage appropriate development in other places where regeneration is a priority.
- Facilitate measures aimed at strengthening and diversifying the local economy.
- Build upon the area's strengths in relation to broadband ICT.
- Plan for infrastructure improvements where these are needed to support regeneration.
- Protect the countryside from urban sprawl by maintaining the North Durham Green belt and
- Afford special protection to the part of the District included in the AONB.

Option: Whether to agree, reject or amend the suggested strategies in the key issues paper.

In response to questions regarding the number of dwellings, the Development Plans Manager confirmed that the proposal for Derwentside was an annual average of 255 new dwellings per year (2002-2006) and 270 each year over the following 10 years. He suggested support for this issue as this number was greater than the pro-rata share based on district populations within the County.

In response to Councillor Lewellyn's comment on building affordable housing the Executive Director advised that Government advice via the Barker Review had suggested that Councils should aim to co-ordinate their Housing and Planning Policies and also that the Government should introduce schemes such as grants, shared ownership etc. to help people get into the housing market.

It was noted that following lengthy discussions the majority of Scrutiny Board had supported the report but had many concerns making particular reference to the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy and in particular:-

- the implication such a document would have on future housing development
- long term future of schemes which relied on capital receipts
- effect on rural communities
- renewable energy sites
- conflicting statements relating to wildlife and areas of natural beauty

Councillor Taylor raised concerns that housing was needed in regeneration areas and also that 255 houses would not bring in many

capital receipts. In response, she was advised that one of the key strategies in the review was to encourage appropriate development in other places where regeneration is a priority. Following the discussion it was

RESOLVED: that the Key Issue Paper for the County Durham Structure Plan Partial Review (as attached to the report) is noted and support is given to the suggested strategies.

Reasons:

- (1) The suggested approach be welcomed as this will be very useful in helping to justify sub-regional principles in the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy.
- (2) The Strategies suggested for the sub-county areas and the apportionment of the overall allocation of new dwellings from RPG1 appear to strike the right balance between regeneration and conservation.
- (3) For Derwentside this is based on regeneration and sustainability needs, Brownfield capacity, local jobs, Green Belt limitations, good public transport links and a track record on delivering new build.

Councillor Lewellyn left the meeting at this point.

62. CORPORATE COMMUNITY SAFETY PLAN

This item had been withdrawn from the Agenda.

63. MANAGEMENT REVIEW OF HOUSING AND CAPITAL WORKS

This item had been withdrawn from the Agenda.

In accordance with Section 100(B)(4) of the Local-Government Act 1972 (as amended) the Chairman agreed that the following item of business be considered as the Group had been served notice to vacate their current premises.

64. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED: on the motion of Councillor Armstong seconded by Councillor 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 Paragraph 9.

64. PROPOSED NEW LEASE – CLAVERING YOUTH CLUB – ANNFIELD PLAIN

(Not for publication by virtue of paragraph 9)

Councillor Huntley presented the report which sought authorisation to grant a lease to the National Associations of Clubs for Young People at a rent, which is less than open market value. Under the General Disposal Consent (England) 2003 Local Authorities can grant a lease in excess of 10 years at a rent less than the best consideration reasonably obtainable where the authority considers that the purpose for which the land is to be disposed of is likely to contribute to the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of the whole or part of its area or any persons resident or present in the area.

It was noted that Scrutiny Board had advised that the Local Ward Members were supportive of the recommendation for approval of the request. It was also noted that under the terms of the lease the Council would no longer have any liabilities for the premises.

Options:

- (1) Let the building at an undervalue to the National Association of Boys' Clubs (NABC) on a ten year lease.
- (2) Declare the property surplus to requirements and advertise it for sale/to let on the open market for a similar type of use.
- (3) Advertise the building for sale as a residential development opportunity.

RESOLVED: That authority be granted to let the property to the National Association of Boys' Clubs on the terms outlined in the report.

Reasons:

- (1) This is considered a valuable and much needed facility for local residents.
- (2) The building has been vacant for some time and it would be beneficial to both the community and the Council to encourage occupation at the earliest opportunity.

CONCLUSION OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 5.03 p.m.

Chair.