

## **EXECUTIVE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Consett on Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> August 2005 at 4.30 pm.

## **PRESENT**

Councillor A. Watson, Chair

Councillors C. Christer, M.J. Malone, O. Johnson, A. Taylor and W. Armstrong.

## **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors J. Huntley and D.G. Llewellyn.

### **22. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT**

Councillor Watson advised Members that a welcome home event was to be held in Blackhill and Consett Park on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> August at 5.00 p.m. Members were advised that the event was to celebrate the success of Big Brother winner Anthony Hutton.

### **23. REVIEW OF SCRUTINY BOARD DEBATE**

A list of items discussed at Scrutiny Board were circulated, the Chair advised that the comments, if any, would be referred to as each agenda item was discussed.

### **24. MINUTES – 4<sup>th</sup> JULY 2005**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2005 were agreed as a correct record.

### **25. CORPORATE PLAN 2006 – 2010 AND DERWENTSIDE COMMUNITY STRATEGY FIRST YEAR REVIEW**

Councillor Malone presented the report, which sought approval for a proposed methodology to review the Corporate Plan in conjunction with the 1<sup>st</sup> year review of the Community Strategy.

Members were advised that developing and monitoring a community strategy for the area in collaboration with LSP partners is a statutory requirement for

local authorities. Members were reminded that the Derwentside Community Strategy was launched in April 2004.

Councillor Malone further advised that in addition the Council had agreed to review its Corporate Plan for the period 2006 – 2010.

The report detailed the following: -

- Principles in Reviewing the Community Strategy and Reviewing our Corporate Plan.
- The Community Strategy Review Board.
- The Role of the Thematic Review Co-ordinators.
- Arriving at the New Corporate Plan.
- Stakeholder involvement as part of the Community Strategy Review and new Corporate Plan development process.
- The Process and Timetable for Reviewing the Strategy and Developing the new Corporate Plan 2006 – 2010.

**Options:**

- (1) Whether or not to agree the proposed methodology to review the Corporate Plan in conjunction with the 1<sup>st</sup> year review of the Community Strategy.

**RESOLVED:** that: -

- (1) Members approve the proposed methodology to review the Corporate Plan in conjunction with the 1<sup>st</sup> year review of the Community Strategy.

**Reasons:**

- (1) To build on the successful experiences of the initial Community Strategy development process.
- (2) To ensure the essential element of ownership by all stakeholders.

**26. REVISION OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC STRATEGY 2005 – CONSULTATION**

Councillor Watson presented the report, which aimed to highlight the strategic issues raised in the review of the third Regional Economic Strategy in relation to the economy of Derwentside and to agree an appropriate response to ONE North East, as part of the formal consultation process.

**Options:**

- (1) Agree the draft Regional Economic Strategy as proposed.
- (2) Reject the core argument of the Regional Economic Strategy, as

currently drafted, that growth of the city regions is the most appropriate spatial level for the delivery of sustained growth for the region as a whole.

- (3) Agree in principle to support the draft RES subject to greater recognition of the need to support investment in areas other than core cities.

**RESOLVED:** that: -

- (1) Agree option 3 amended to read: - Agree in principle to support the draft RES subject to greater recognition of the need to support investment in areas outside the core cities.

**Reasons:**

- (1) To provide conditional support for the RES approach to regional economic growth.
- (2) To provide an opportunity for more evidence to be provided that can demonstrate that the RES will have a positive impact on Derwentside.

## **27. OPENING DOORS INITIATIVE – BRINGING EMPTY PROPERTIES BACK INTO USE**

Councillor Armstrong presented the report, which sought Member approval to work in partnership with Enterprise 5 on an initiative aimed at bringing empty properties back into use.

It was advised that vacant dwellings occur for a variety of reasons. The way in which the housing market operates will inevitably result in a proportion of the dwelling stock being vacant at any one time, but a significant number of privately owned houses within Derwentside have been vacant for considerable periods of time.

Members were advised that whilst there are pockets of long term vacant properties within the District, which may be indicative of a developing low demand situation, there is, surprisingly a significant number of individual long-term vacant dwellings located in highly marketable terraces or communities across the District. It was advised that this project is aimed at this sector of the housing market.

Following a question relating to property selection from Councillor Taylor, the Environmental Health Services Development Officer advised that the properties would be selected individually and developed within reasonable expense.

Councillor Taylor requested information regarding habitable targets relating to properties. The Environmental Health Services Development Officer advised that the project would work within the guidelines of the decent living standard.

**Options:**

- (1) Whether or not to agree in principle to support the Opening Doors initiative subject to a successful bid to the Housing Corporation by Enterprise 5.
- (2) Whether or not to agree a budget of £5000 to support administration costs, which may be incurred during the project.

**RESOLVED:** that

- (1) Members agree in principle to support the Opening Doors initiative subject to a successful bid to the Housing Corporation by Enterprise 5.
- (2) Members agree a budget of £5000 to support administration costs, which may be incurred during the project.

**Reason:**

- (1) To work in Partnership with Enterprise 5 on an initiative to bring empty properties back into use.

**28. REVIEW OF SMOKING POLICY – SHELTERED COURTS**

Councillor Christer presented the report, which sought approval for the introduction of a 'No Smoking' policy in the communal areas of the Council's Sheltered Courts.

**Options:**

- (1) Whether or not to agree the introduction of a No Smoking Policy in the Communal Areas of the Sheltered Courts from the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2005.

**RESOLVED:** that

- (1) Members agree to the introduction of a No Smoking Policy in the Communal Areas of the Sheltered Courts from the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2005.

**Reason:**

- (1) To demonstrate that the Council is being pro-active in implementing smoke free zones ahead of the Government target for departments, which is the end of 2006.

Councillor Malone requested clarification as to whether the policy would apply only to communal areas or whether it would be extended to cover the curtilage of the sheltered courts.

In response, the Executive Director advised that the policy would apply only to the internal communal areas and this would be made clear to the sheltered courts.

## **29. 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 Paragraph 12 of the Local Government Act 1972.

## **30. APPOINTMENT OF CONSULTANT TO PREPARE MASTER PLAN FOR CRAGHEAD**

Councillor Armstrong presented the report, which asked Members to consider the content of the report and to consider the appointment of Llewellyn Davies Consultancy to undertake the Master planning exercise in Craghead.

Members were reminded that in April 2005 that a report was considered outlining a successful bid to the North East Housing Board for Single Housing Investment Pot monies to enable a Master planning exercise to be undertaken in the village of Craghead.

Members were advised that the success of the bid had been agreed to allow the commissioning of the necessary work.

Councillor Malone made reference to the content of the report and requested that all reports that are considered by Members should include information relating to procurement and efficiency. Councillor Malone advised that officers should make a commitment to include such information in future reports.

The Executive Director advised Members that the proposed work as detailed in the report did not just relate to Craghead but also to parts of South Moor and Stanley.

### **Options:**

- (1) A – Require the work to be tendered.
- (2) B – Seek authorisation to suspend Financial Regulations as allowed under the Council's Standing Orders.

**RESOLVED:** that

- (1) Option B be approved.

Seek authorisation to suspend Financial Regulations as allowed under the Council's Standing Orders.

**Reason:**

- (1) To allow the continuation of the partnership approach that has been adopted within County Durham in both accessing Single Housing Investment Programme funding and under achieving wider coalfield regeneration.
- (2) To allow the appointment of Llewellyn Davies to undertake the Master planning work in Craghead.

**31. FURNITURE PROVISION – LAMPLIGHT ARTS CENTRE**

Councillor Taylor presented the report, which sought approval for the purchase of new furniture provision at the Lamplight Arts Centre as an invest to save initiative. It was advised that an initial expenditure of £21,000 to be met from General Reserves was requested, on the condition that not only was this amount repaid in forthcoming years, but the future repair and replacement of this furniture is planned for in advance. It was also proposed that an additional revenue saving could be made following this investment.

Members were advised that the Lamplight Arts Centre has traditionally played host to a number of wedding receptions and related functions each year. It was advised that in the last four years the quantity of these wedding bookings has dropped from approximately twenty per annum, to just three. It was stated that research had shown that this was directly attributable to the poor standard of furniture provision within the main hall.

Councillor Malone made reference to the Capital Programme and in particular the reason for a bid of such a nature being considered by Members when in the recent past, the bid had been considered as a low priority. Councillor Malone reminded Members of the need for such bids to be considered in-line with the policy for considering capital bids.

Councillor Taylor advised that the proposed money borrowed to replace existing furniture would be repaid due to the potential income stream generated by the facility as a result of the improved furniture.

**Options:**

- (1) Whether or not to approve a figure of £21,000 to be made available from General Reserves for the purchase of new furniture for the Lamplight Arts Centre.

**RESOLVED:** that

- (1) Members approve figure of £21,000 to be made available from General Reserves for the purchase of new furniture for the

Lamplight Arts Centre.

**Reason:**

- (1) To allow for the replacement of furniture at the Lamplight Arts Centre in order to increase the number of wedding functions held within the facility.
- (2) To provide an improved level of service for all bookings.

**32. ENTERPRISE PLACE – REQUEST TO RE-ENGAGE MOST RECENT BUILDING CONTRACTOR**

Councillor Watson presented the report, which requested that the Council re-engaged a recent contractor to carry out stage 2 of a factory unit refurbishment to provide an innovative venue for enterprise education within the District, known as Enterprise Place.

Members were advised that the report was supported by an audit report that had recently been completed, which found that the contractor's performance on the first contract was satisfactory.

**Options:**

- (1) Agree to the request to re-procure the most recent contractor (ROK) through negotiating a partnering contract
- (2) Refuse the request to re-procure the most recent contractor and recommend a new procurement process be undertaken.

**RESOLVED:** that

- (1) Option 1 be approved. - Agree to the request to re-procure the most recent contractor (ROK) through negotiating a partnering contract

**Reason:**

- (1) To ensure a minimum delay in completing the refurbishment.
- (2) To allow Enterprise Place to relocate and develop/implement sustainability options sooner.

**CONCLUSION OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 5.20 pm.

**Chair.**