

EXECUTIVE

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Consett on 15th May 2006 at 4.30 p.m.

PRESENT:

Councillor A. Watson, Chair.

Councillors: W. Armstrong, J Huntley, D.G. Lewellyn and A. Taylor

IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor W. Tyrie.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors C.D. Christer, O. Johnson and M.J. Malone.

1. 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 items was discussed. A copy of the notes of the Board meeting held on 12th May 2006 are attached for information (Appendix A)

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held 24th April 2006 were agreed as a correct record.

3. EFFICIENCY STRATEGY

Councillor Malone presented the report which reminded Members that the Gershon Review in July 2004 led to the implementation of the Efficiency Agenda in the Public Sector. The main aims of the review were:

- To release major resources into frontline services to meet the publics highest priorities.
- To reduce the bureaucracy faced by frontline staff and free them up to better meet the needs of the public.

Local Authorities had just completed their second round of Forward Looking Efficiency Statements under the Efficiency Agenda, and targets were expected to

be exceeded by some for the first wave. It was widely accepted that Efficiency targets would continue beyond the initial three year period and concerns existed that these could become even more searching. Therefore to achieve targets authorities were facing a progressively more difficult task, with the types of Efficiencies left to claim becoming more and more difficult to identify, quantify, measure and implement.

In order to give the Council the best possible chance to continue to deliver Efficiencies, there needed to be a broader and more formal approach, embedding the drive for greater efficiency into the culture of the organisation.

Councillor Lewellyn commented officers were currently expecting to exceed our year three target by approximately £1.5 million by the end of year two.

Options: Whether to approve, amend or reject the proposal to devise an Efficiency Strategy.

RESOLVED: That the Authority devise and implement a suitable Efficiency Strategy, incorporating various Members and Officers across the Authority.

Reasons: To better embed and cultivate the efficiency culture, and to identify, assess, manage, control and maintain current and future efficiencies, and to help improve the Authority's Use of Resources and CPA scores.

4. EXCLUSION

RESOLVED: On the motion of Councillor Armstrong seconded by Councillor Lewellyn 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 3 of the Local Government Act 1972 (As Amended)

5. BURNSIDE RESOURCE CENTRE

Councillor Armstrong presented the report which sought agreement for the disposal of the Burnside Resource Centre and associated car park in accordance with Derwentside's protocol for disposal of buildings at less than market value.

Members were reminded that at an Executive Meeting held 1st September 2003 it had been agreed that Burnside Resource Centre was surplus to the Council's requirements and that discussions take place with the then Craghead Area

Partnership (now know as Craghead Development Trust or CDT) in order to facilitate the continuing use of the Centre for the community.

In response to Councillor Lewellyn's questions regarding the ability to attract funding, the Executive Director advised that to help CDT with grant applications and not impede the ability to access funding it was proposed to enter into a long lease (approximately 25 years) with CDT. He further highlighted that it was normal practice to charge a market rent and reimburse community groups subject to satisfactory performance. In this instance however, it was considered appropriate to let at a peppercorn rent in lieu of freehold disposal at nil value. In response to Councillor Taylor's questions she was advised that CDT would be responsible for raising the capital for maintenance and any extensions to the building.

Options:

1. Disposal to Craghead Development Trust.
2. Retention of ownership by Derwentside District Council.
3. Disposal on the Open Market.

RESOLVED:

1. That Executive agree to dispose of the Burnside Resource Centre on a Long Lease at a peppercorn rent to Craghead Development Trust. The Lease to be for a term which will enable Craghead Development Trust to access external funding, and contain requirements that:
 - A. The Lease will be subject a five year review.
 - B. Craghead Development Trust are required to report on their financial and operational performance annually to Derwentside District Council.

Reasons:

1. The future of this Resource Centre had been the subject of discussion for a number of years. This option may enable access to over £1, 000,000 funding to be invested in the Craghead & South Stanley Ward allowing them to continue to develop the provision of community activities and services and also provide rentable workspace for local businesses and community groups.
2. This facility contributes to the Corporate Aim of the Council to work with others to: 'Deliver a place with strong, cohesive communities'; 'Deliver an economically successful place' and 'Deliver a learning community'.

CONCLUSION OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 4.50 p.m.

