

## **EXECUTIVE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Consett on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2006 at 4.30 p.m.

### **PRESENT:**

Councillor A. Watson, Chair.

Councillors: W. Armstrong, J Huntley, O. Johnson, D.G. Llewellyn and M. Malone.

### **IN ATTENDANCE:**

Councillors A. Atkinson and W. Tyrie.

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors C.D. Christer and A. Taylor.

## **12. PRESENTATION ON STANLEY ADF AND CRAGHEAD ADF**

The Chair introduced M. Crookston and J. Moor of Llewellyn Davies Yeange who proceeded to give a short presentation on the principal findings and proposals contained in the Stanley and Craghead Area Development Frameworks.

In response to Councillor Watson's questions he was advised that throughout the consultation process the consultants were careful not to raise expectations as there was still no guarantee regarding the level of funding available from the Treasury to finance the total package of fifteen projects across County Durham.

Councillor Llewellyn commented that the Council should consider a press release regarding these issues.

Councillor Watson thanked M. Crookston and J. Moor for the presentation and for answering questions.

### **13. 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 refereed to as each agenda item was discussed. A copy of the notes of the Board meeting held 21<sup>st</sup> July 2006 are attached for information (Appendix A).

### **14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**In accordance with the provisions of Section 94 of the Local Government Act 1972 and Standing Order Number 33, Councillor A. Watson declared an interest in Item 14 and Councillor O. Johanson declared an interest in Item 15 on the Agenda.**

### **15. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held 15<sup>th</sup> May 2006 were agreed as a correct record.

### **16. AN AREA DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK (ADF) FOR STANLEY**

Councillor Llewellyn presented the report which set out a draft Area Development Framwork (ADF) for Stanley and sought approval for the final ADF document to be submitted to English Partnerships. This was part of a Former Coalfield Settlement Renewals package for fifteen settlements across County Durham seeking funding from HM Treasury to address housing market failure.

Councillor Watson referred Members to the notes of Scrutiny Board held 7<sup>th</sup> July 2006 (attached as Appendix A).

#### **Options:**

1. To approve, as drafted, the Stanley ADF and agree to it being part of a County Durham Coalfield Partnership Package.
2. To propose changes to the Stanley ADF before final submissions to the County Durham Coalfields Partnership Package.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the Stanley ADF be approved and arrangement granted for it being part of a County Durham Coalfields Package.

**Reasons:**

1. To ensure the Stanley ADF is submitted within the timescale provided by English Partnerships.
2. To ensure any opportunity for funding is maximised.
3. To allow the scale and type of interventions contained within the ADF to be developed in detail at a later date following further extensive consultation with all affected stakeholders.

**17. THE CRAGHEAD AREA DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

Councillor Llewellyn presented the report which requested Members accept the findings of the recent study conducted by Llewelyn Davies Yeang which had effectively produced an Area Development Framework (ADF) for the village of Craghead. This will eventually form part of the larger ADF that is currently being prepared for the wider Stanley area.

Councillor Watson referred Members to the notes of Scrutiny Board held 7<sup>th</sup> July 2006 (attached as Appendix A).

**Options:** Whether to approve, amend or reject the proposals in the report regarding the Area Development Framework.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the Area Development Framework for Craghead prepared by Llewellyn Davies Yeang be accepted.
2. That agreement be granted to the recruitment of a suitable qualified project manager to prepare an action plan of interventions and to initiate those interventions following agreement by the Council.

**REASON:** The Area Development Framework has been prepared in line with existing guidelines with substantial input from both interested bodies and community representatives.

**18. SMALL BUSINESS FRIENDLY CONCORDAT**

Councillor Lewellyn presented the report which sought endorsement of a procurement concordat between the Council and businesses in Derwentside.

In response to questions by Councillor Malone, the Director of Development and Asset Management advised that the Concordat was following Government and European guidelines and would assist both local and national firms when completing Council tenders.

Councillor Watson referred Members to the notes of Scrutiny Board held 7<sup>th</sup> July 2006 (attached as Appendix A).

**Options:** Whether to agree, amend or reject the Small Business Concordat.

**RESOLVED:** That the Derwentside Small Business Concordat be endorsed.

**Reasons:**

1. The Derwentside Small Business Concordat has the support of the Derwentside Business Network and provides a significant opportunity for the Council to demonstrate its support for small businesses in the area.
2. The completion of the Concordat is not an end in itself but will form the basis of continued effective working between the Council and small businesses in Derwentside.

**19. ON-STREET PARKING / VERGE HARDENING**

Councillor Armstrong presented the report which advised Members on progress of prioritisation of works for on-street parking / verge hardening as requested by Executive at the meeting held 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2005. This report builds on the previous decision to seek agreement on a prioritisation of verge hardening schemes before any commitment was made to support the work with Derwentside funding.

Councillor Llewellyn commented that this was a County Council function and he expressed his disappointment regarding the response of the County Council which had been to advise that they did not have the resources to carry out their responsibilities for this issue.

Councillor Watson referred Members to the notes of Scrutiny Board held 7<sup>th</sup> July 2006 (attached as Appendix A).

**Options:**

1. Agree to the project proceeding through to the Capital Programme assessment stage.

2. Accept the need for the project, but consider alternative schemes to proceed, with the following years' work programme being generated by the prioritisation matrix.
3. Not proceed with the project.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That Option 3.1 on the report be approved and that agreement to the project proceeding though to the Capital Programme assessment stage be granted. This would need to be considered at the next review of the unapproved Capital Programme.
2. The verge hardening programme only to progress on the basis of match funding from Durham County Council.
3. On the basis that the £40,000 budget was agreed for this year, the budget spend is fully committed by another project to be chosen following further consultation between Officers and the Portfolio Member.

**Reason:** This will deliver works which will materially improve the environment and life style of our residents where on-street parking causes conflict and concern.

**20. APPRENTICE REPORT – BUILDING SERVICES**

Councillor Huntley presented the report which identified issues relating to the appropriate recruitment, retention and development of staff within the Division of Building Services and sought approval to address the shortages in trainees within the Division. The report sought approval to progress the reintroduction of apprentices into the workplace.

Councillor Watson referred Members to the notes of Scrutiny Board held 7<sup>th</sup> July 2006 (attached as Appendix A).

**Options:**

1. Whether or not to agree to the recruitment and employment of 3 Apprentices.
2. Whether or not to use a work placement scheme attached to a learning facilitator.

**RESOLVED:**

- That approval be granted for the following:
1. The recruitment and employment of three Apprentices this financial year as detailed in Option 1 (paragraph 5.3) of the report.
  2. That the initiative is funded by the Council up to the point of transfer.
  3. The District Operations Manager and Head of Human Resources will undertake the recruitment of the apprentices in line with current Council procedures.
  4. That further structured dialogue is undertaken with Trade Union representatives, management and suitable training bodies to assist their support in producing a structured implementation and training programme.
  5. It is recommended to the Shadow Board of Derwentside Homes that they given in principle support to the above recommendations, subject to the Business Plan of Derwentside Homes and duly noting that:
    - The apprentices will transfer to Derwentside Homes under the TUPE regulations on the day of transfer.
    - Derwentside Home will finance the ongoing training of the apprentices.
    - Full approval be given following the finalisation of the Business Plan for Derwentside Homes.

**Reasons:** The Apprentice Scheme will assist in reducing the skills shortages previously identified, and will also allow the Directorate to build a firm employment foundation to underpin the future of Building Services whilst assisting with wider community and economic benefits.

**21. EQUIPPED PLAY AREAS STRATEGY**

Councillor Watson presented the report and also an addendum to the report which was circulated at the meeting. The report advised of a review of the current provision of play areas and an anticipated budgetary level for maintenance and inspection. The Play Strategy had now been completed, but following the removal of a number of older play areas a perceived imbalance across the District has developed. Both individual Ward Members and the Strong Communities Scrutiny Panel had requested the extension of the strategy and the provision of additional Local Play Areas.

Councillor Johnson raised concerns that the Equipped Play Areas Strategy and the use of commuted sums had changed since some of the Parish Councils had opted out of the scheme.

Councillor Malone raised concerns regarding the increased costs in play equipment mentioned in the report and questioned what methods had been used to evaluate the increased costs. He suggested that a further report be prepared for Executive giving details of the consultation / research carried out with local

Ward Members regarding the type of equipment required for each individual play area and details of costs Councillor Watson referred Members to the notes of Scrutiny Board held 7<sup>th</sup> July 2006 (attached as Appendix A).

In response to Councillor Watson's questions the Director of Environmental Services advised that the issue of commuted sums was currently under review.

**Options:** Whether to agree, amend or reject the proposals in the report regarding the Play Strategy.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the extension of the current Equipped Play Strategy be extended to include the five additional play areas to be placed in the following Wards:
  - Burnhope
  - Burnopfield
  - Dipton
  - Ebchester & Medomsley
  - Tanfield
2. That Commuted Sums received from developers to be used as a repairs and renewals fund for equipped play areas be agreed in principle. The Council's General Fund be used only for routine inspections and cleaning of play areas.
3. That a further report be prepared for Executive giving details of the consultation and research carried out with local Ward Members regarding the type of equipment required for each play area, such report to also include details of costs for the play equipment.

**Reason:**

Consultation with residents and work within Strong Community Scrutiny Panel had continually requested a more balanced provision of play areas across the District.

**22. EXCLUSION**

**RESOLVED: On the motion of Councillor W. Armstrong seconded by Councillor Llewellyn that under Section 100(A) 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, 3 and 10 of the Local Government Act 1972 (As Amended)**

**23. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2006/07 REVIEW**

Councillor J Huntley presented the report which appraised Members of changes to capital programme bids, approve new bids and show how resources had been allocated to priorities.

Councillor Watson referred Members to the notes of Scrutiny Board held 7<sup>th</sup> July 2006 (attached as Appendix A).

**Options:** Whether to agree, amend or reject the proposals in the report regarding the Capital Programme 2006/07 Review.

**RESOLVED:** That the information contained in the report be noted.

**Reasons:** To allow the limited available resources to be monitored and utilised in the most effective way, allowing the Council to mobilise the most essential projects.

#### **24. E.R.V.R. APPLICATION**

Councillor W. Armstrong presented the report which sought approval to allow an application for Early Retirement / voluntary redundancy.

Councillor Watson referred Members to the notes of Scrutiny Board held 7<sup>th</sup> July 2006 (attached as Appendix A).

**Options:** Whether to agree, amend or reject the proposal in the report.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the ERVR application as detailed in 5.1 of the report be agreed.
2. That the funding of the temporary structure and the service review from existing budgets be agreed.

**Reasons:**

- 1 To increase the on site supervision of the workforce in order to improve standards.
- 2 To formalise a structure for the Street Cleaning Section to accommodate changes that had developed over the past five years on service demands and legislation.



3. To fund a full service review and present options and recommendations for Members' consideration on how to improve the performance and customer satisfaction with the Street Cleaning Service

## **25. ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, CASTLESIDE**

Councillor J. Huntley presented the report which asked Members to consider a request for funding development at St. John's Church, Castleside.

Councillor Watson referred Members to the notes of Scrutiny Board held 7<sup>th</sup> July 2006 (attached as Appendix A).

**Options:** Whether to agree or reject the request.

**RESOLVED:** That the request be refused.

**Reasons:**

1. The lack of budget currently available within revenue budgets.
2. The priorities already competing for both revenue and capital resource.
3. Agreements to support the project will fall outside of the normal policy for developing and prioritising capital expenditure.
4. The potential precedent created by supporting such a request.

**In accordance with the provisions of Section 94 of the Local Government Act 1972 and Standing Order Number 33, Councillor A Watson declared an interest in the following Item, when it was agreed that he be allowed to remain in the meeting.**

## **26. MAJOR DISPOSALS PROGRAMME**

Councillor J Huntley presented the report which advised members of the progress made on the implementation of the Major Disposals Programme and to seek endorsement to the continuation of the Programme.

Councillor Watson referred Members to the notes of Scrutiny Board held 7<sup>th</sup> July 2006 (attached as Appendix A).

**Options:**

1. Endorse the Programme identified and declare all sites, within the first two years of the Programme, surplus to requirements.
2. Endorse a Major Disposal Programme but subject to an amended Programme.

**RESOLVED:** That the information contained in the report be noted and approval be granted to the Major Disposal Programme.

**Reasons:** This facilitates the funding of the Council's Capital Programme and demonstrates good asset management practice.

**In accordance with the provisions of Section 94 of the Local Government Act 1972 AND Standing Order Number 33, Councillor O. Johnson declared an interest in Item 15 on the Agenda, left the meeting and took no part in the discussion or decision made.**

## **27. LANGLEY VIEW, STANLEY**

Councillor J. Huntley presented the report which sought Members approval to the disposal of 60.2 acres to North East Community Forests (NECF) and to make a grant payment to enable future maintenance to be undertaken.

Councillor Watson referred Members to the notes of Scrutiny Board held 7<sup>th</sup> July 2006 (attached as Appendix A).

The Executive Director advised that Councillor E. Coulson, as a local Ward Councillor for the area wished to register her support for the recommendations.

### **Options:**

1. Sell the land to NECF at the Open Market Value and to make a single grant payment as detailed in the report.
2. Dispose of the site NECF at the Open Market Value.
3. Let the site NECF for an 85 year period and make the single grant payment.
4. Retain the land in its current state.

**RESOLVED:** That the site be sold to NECF for the amount detailed in 5.1. of the report and that a grant as detailed in the report be made for future maintenance.

### **Reasons:**

1. Enable the site to become a community asset, giving access to the public as well as enhancing the area.

2. Provide a capital receipt and reduce the Council's liabilities for maintenance.
3. Secure for NECF, HLF funding with a grant in support of future maintenance.

### **CONCLUSION OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 6.02 p.m.