

## **EXECUTIVE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Consett on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2007 at 4.30 p.m.

### **PRESENT:**

Councillor A. Watson (Chairman)

Councillors; C.D. Christer, J. Huntley, D.G. Llewellyn, M.J. Malone and A. Taylor.

### **IN ATTENDANCE:**

Councillors W. Stelling and W.J. Tyrie.

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors W. Armstrong and O. Johnson.

## **ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Chairman advised that he had been asked to consider an urgent item regarding Derwentside Domestic Violence Forum and the financial difficulties being experienced by that organisation. It was agreed that this would be taken after the last item of the agenda.

### **97. 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. A copy of the notes of the Board meeting held 4<sup>th</sup> January 2007 are attached for information. (Appendix 'A')

### **98. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor C.D. Christer declared an interest in the Item to be taken as an urgent item – Derwentside Domestic Violence Forum.

## **99. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held 11<sup>th</sup> December 2006 be agreed as a correct record.

## **100. DERWENTSIDE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK: CORE STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT (DPD) ISSUES AND OPTIONS**

Councillor Watson presented the report which sought approval for the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) Issues and Options. The document was the first stage in the preparation of the Council's first Local Development Documents (LDDs). The Core Strategy has close links with the Community Strategy and would be a key component in its delivery.

The Chairman referred Members to the notes of Scrutiny Board held 4<sup>th</sup> January 2007.

**Options:** Whether to agree, amend or reject the proposals for the Core Strategy DPD.

**RESOLVED:** That the contents of the Cores Strategy Development Plan Document Issues and Options be approved and agreement granted to allow it to be published for public consultation beginning 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2007.

**Reason:** The publication of the Core Strategy DPD was an important step in the preparation of the Derwentside Local Development Framework. The responses received would give an indication of the needs and aspirations of the community and enable them to be integrated into the policies and proposals that are to be brought forward in future stages.

## **101. VALUE FOR MONEY STRATEGY**

Councillor Malone presented the report which sought approval for the adoption of a corporate value for money strategy. The Audit Commission has a statutory responsibility to assist in improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of local services. Part of the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Performance Assessment framework involved an annual examination of how effectively the Council uses its resources. The use of resources assessment looked at how financial management was integrated with strategy and corporate management, supports council priorities and delivers value for money.

The Chairman referred Members to the notes of Scrutiny Board held 4<sup>th</sup> January 2007.

**Options:** Whether to agree, amend or reject the proposals for a Value for Money Strategy.

**RESOLVED:** That the Value for Money Strategy as appended to the report be agreed.

**Reason:** The Audit Commission scored Derwentside as 3 (performing well) against the value for money theme. The Council has set itself a target within the Corporate Plan to at least maintain this assessment. However, the Council's auditors commented that whilst the Council was performing well in this area, there was a need to develop an approach to assessing value for money corporately and improve monitoring, review and challenge arrangements in relation to vfm.

**102. DERWENTSIDE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK:  
ADOPTION OF STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

Councillor Watson presented the report which requested that Members adopt the Derwentside Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) which formed part of the Local Development Framework (LDF). A full copy of the Adoption SCI was attached to the report. Members were reminded that a Submission draft SCI was reported to Executive in June 2006, which was approved for public consultation. This consultation had lasted for six weeks, produced 23 representations and ended on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2006.

Councillor Malone commented that the bookmarks were not defined on the contents page and also that in Appendix 1 he would like an additional 4 religious groups from Blackhill area to be included in the consultation details. In response the Principal Planning Officer advised that the contents page had been re-drafted and that the consultation list was not exhaustive and additional groups could be included.

The Chairman referred Members to the notes of Scrutiny Board held 4<sup>th</sup> January 2007.

**Options:** Whether to agree, amend or reject the Statement of Community Involvement.

**RESOLVED:** That the Derwentside Statement of Community Involvement be adopted.

**Reason:** To comply with the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004.

### **103. DERWENTSIDE AFFORDABLE HOUSING POLICY**

Councillor Watson presented the report which outlined the main findings of the Derwentside Housing Needs Assessment 2006, prepared for the Council by Fordham Research and focuses on the finding related to affordable housing in Derwentside. The report sought agreement to the process and timetable outlined in the report for the development of an interim affordable housing policy and asked for Members to be nominated onto an affordable housing internal working group.

Councillor Llewellyn commented that in his opinion this was a good report which covered all the important issues relating to affordable housing. He thought that this was essential for the people of the area and wanted to see these issues implemented as quickly as possible.

The Chairman referred Members to the notes of Scrutiny Board held 4<sup>th</sup> January 2007.

**Options:** Whether to agree, amend or reject the Affordable Housing Policy Report.

#### **RESOLVED:**

1. That the robustness of the Housing Needs Survey, be acknowledged and that the findings of the Derwentside District Council 2006 Housing Needs Assessment be approved.
2. That five members be nominated to attend an internal working group, and the nominated Members to include a Minority Group Member and a Scrutiny Chair, the nominations to be made by end of January 2007.
3. That a stakeholder event be held January / February 2007 to inform the interim affordable housing policy.

**Reason:** The evidence in the Housing Needs Assessment makes it clear that Derwentside now has a significant shortage of affordable housing. The report outlined a range of policy options and issues that need further consideration in order to develop a local interim affordable housing policy.

### **104. EXCLUSION**

On the motion of Councillor Malone 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 paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Local Government Act 1972 (As Amended).

## **105. REVIEW OF RESERVES AND BALANCES**

Councillor Huntley presented the report which updated Members on current reserves and balances together with the impact of LSVT to Derwentside Homes and a recent revaluation of the Insurance Reserve.

The Chairman referred Members to the notes of Scrutiny Board held 4<sup>th</sup> January 2007.

**Options:** Whether to agree, amend or reject the proposals in the report for the review of reserves and balances.

### **RESOLVED:**

1. That the general reserve working balance to remain in place at £1.3m and that this be reviewed annually.
2. That the current reserve to be increased by £312,000 from the surplus in the insurance reserve increasing the forecast balance to £472,954 (plus working balance of £1.3m).
3. Subject to the authority being able to close the Housing Revenue Account, a further £3.6m will become available from 2008/09.
4. The insurance reserve be reduced to £1.2m and its remit be widened but, close management of the position to be kept in place.
5. A Risk Management Reserve of £50,000 to be established that would also cover a tri-annual review of the insurance reserve.
6. A Single Status/Equal Pay reserve of £250,000 can be established to help the authority implement job evaluation and cover some of the potential risks from equal pay (this would need to be kept under review as the pay modelling system is agreed).
7. The Right to Buy sharing agreement would allow for the creation of a budget management / corporate improvement reserve at £750,000 for 2007/08 and 2008/09 with a reducing figure for future years. This will help the authority to balance its budgets in periods where cost pressures are building up and still meet its priorities from the corporate plan, although this should not be seen as a substitute for tight fiscal management and the search for efficiencies.

**Reason:** The use of the Council's reserves and balances is integral to the management of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the ability to deliver the commitments from the Corporate Improvement Plan. The changes brought about through LSVT and the review commissioned of the Insurance reserve give the opportunity to stabilise current reserves and create new reserves to manage known and future risks.

## **106. GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2007-08**

Councillor Huntley presented the report which gave an update on the 2007-08 general fund budget to keep Members informed on the progress towards setting the budget and council tax which was to take place at the Special Council meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2007. This followed a report to the Strategic Planning Panel in October, a discussion on growth bids to Overview & Scrutiny in November and a brief update incorporated within the Probable Outturn report to Executive.

Councillor Watson confirmed that it was the Council's intention that there would be no increase in the level of council tax for the second year running.

The Chairman referred Members to the notes of Scrutiny Board held 4<sup>th</sup> January 2007.

**Options:** Whether to agree, amend or reject the proposals in the report regarding the General Fund Budget 2007-08.

### **RESOLVED:**

1. That the current position regarding the general fund base budget for 2007-08 be noted and also that work is still ongoing in preparing a final position particularly around strategic housing and leisure services.
2. That Members endorse the proposal to recommend a nil increase in council tax for 2007-08.
3. That the proposals regarding growth bids as detailed in Paragraph 3.5 of the report be agreed.

**Reason:** Work is ongoing in producing final general fund budget proposals for 2007-08. Within the resources available it is felt that the target of a nil increase in council tax is a realistic recommendation. The growth bids recommended all fall within the highest priority as they target areas within the Corporate Improvement Plan.

## **107. DERWENTSIDE CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU REQUEST FOR ADVANCE PAYMENT**

Councillor Llewellyn presented the report which requested that an advance payment be made to the Derwentside Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) during 2006/07 from the contribution included in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan for 2007/08.

The Chairman referred Members to the notes of Scrutiny Board held 4<sup>th</sup> January 2007.

### **Options:**

1. Agree to the request for an advanced payment.

2. Agree to the request for an advance payment but a reduced level.
3. Refuse the request for an advance payment.

**RESOLVED:** That an advance payment at the reduced level as detailed at Option Two on the report be agreed.

**Reasons:**

1. Derwentside Citizens' Advice Bureau provide a valuable service to local residents across a diverse range of support areas.
2. The CAB is funded from a number of sources that inevitably causes on-going difficulties and problems, particularly in relation to the ability to project long-term budget positions.

**108. DERWENTSIDE TRUST FOR SPORT AND THE ARTS  
SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN**

Councillor Taylor presented the report which sought Members' in principle approval of the transfer of leisure services to a charitable Non Profit Distributing Organisation. (NPDO) in collaboration with Derwentside Leisure Limited subject to acceptance of the Service Delivery Plan which was attached to the report. She highlighted that page 9, paragraph 46.2 of the Rules of Derwentside NewCo need to be amended to read "up to two Members plus two Officers of the Local Authority"

Councillor Malone commented that this would be the final meeting attended by Mr Steve Howell, The Head of Leisure Services, as he was shortly to leave the employment of the authority. He commented that Mr Howell had been the driving force behind this project and thanked him for the amount of hard work and dedication to bring this project forward. Councillor Taylor agreed with these comments and also added that Mr Howell had been a good officer for the authority, thanked him for his help and guidance and was sorry to see him leave. Councillor Watson made a special thanks to Mr Howell for his dedication and hard work shown to the Council throughout his years of service. He went on to wish him the best of luck in his future career.

The Chairman referred Members to the notes of Scrutiny Board held 4<sup>th</sup> January 2007.

**Options:** Whether to agree, amend or reject the proposals for the transfer of leisure services.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the Service Delivery Plan for Derwentside Trust for Sport and The Arts be accepted.
2. That Officers negotiate indexation and inflation rates and finalise the management fee for 2007/08.

3. That subject to 1 and 2 above, budget provision be made for funding Derwentside Trust for Sports and the Arts.
4. That Officers be instructed to make the necessary arrangements for the transfer of those services outlined in Derwentside Trust for Sport and the Arts' Service Delivery Plan.
5. That page 9, paragraph 46.2 of the Rules of Derwentside NewCo be amended to read "up to two Members plus two Officers of the Local Authority".

**Reason:** The offer from Derwentside Trust for Sport and the Arts provides a robust financial package for the Council that meets many of the scheme's original aspirations.

### **109. TEMPORARY LABOUR**

Councillor Watson presented the report which informed Members of the evaluation of tenders received for the supply of temporary labour within the Environmental Services Directorate, and sought approval for the letting of the contract on the basis of the Most Economically Advantageous Tender.

The Chairman referred Members to the notes of Scrutiny Board held 4<sup>th</sup> January 2007.

**Options:** Whether or not to award the tender.

**RESOLVED:** That the tender be awarded to the company ranked first in the QPDTM Assessment (detailed at 5.1 on the report).

**Reason:** This was the company which ranked first in the Quality, Price, Delivery, Technology and Management Assessment Matrix (QPDTM).

### **URGENT ITEM**

**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 IN VIEW OF THE URGENT REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE WITH FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES.**

**PRIOR TO CONSIDERATION OF THE FOLLOWING ITEM COUNCILLOR C.D. CHRISTER DECLARED AN INTEREST IN THE FOLLOWING ITEM AS HE WAS A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT OF THE DERWENTSIDE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FORUM. HE LEFT THE MEETING AT THIS POINT AND TOOK NO PART IN THE DISCUSSION OR DECISION MADE.**



## **110. DERWENTSIDE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FORUM**

The Executive Director advised that he had been approached by the Chair of the Derwentside Domestic Violence Forum seeking the Council's assistance with financial difficulties that they are currently experiencing. These problems were both urgent and serious and, as such had requested that the Executive receive this item as an urgent item. The Chair of the Executive agreed to accept this item and he also advised that this issue had also been discussed verbally with the Scrutiny Chairs at the Board meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2007. As a consequence of the tight timescale a letter dated 5<sup>th</sup> January 2007 was forwarded to all Members of the Council giving brief details of the situation – no responses had been received from Members.

**Options:** Whether to agree, amend or reject the request for financial assistance.

### **RESOLVED:**

1. That Derwentside District Council make an immediate contribution of £20,000 to the Domestic Violence Forum which will stabilise their current financial position.
2. That Derwentside District Council, through its Strategic Housing Service, takes on the role of managing the support officers and the coordination of the Domestic Violence Forum's activities through the post of Domestic Violence Interventions Officer in the short term.
3. That Derwentside District Council enters into an arrangement with the Domestic Violence Forum which would see the Council taking on accountable body functions such as accountancy and payroll services, again to stabilise the Forum and to ensure the integrity of the service in the medium term, if no other option arises from 4 below.
4. That Derwentside District Council, in conjunction with the Domestic Violence Forum and its funders carries out a review (which is being funded by the Northern Rock Foundation) of the Forum and its activities to identify a strategy to ensure its continued operation in the future.

### **Reasons:**

1. The Domestic Violence Forum currently carries out much needed services for those fleeing domestic violence within the district which may fail without the intervention of the Council.
2. These matters will be raised with the Derwentside Community Safety Partnership and the Local Strategic Partnership Executive in order to seek assistance of other bodies both financially and operationally in an attempt to ensure the continued provision of services through the Domestic Violence Forum and the work of the support offices.

## **CONCLUSION OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 5.11 pm.