

City of Durham

At a Meeting of **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in the Studio, Gala Theatre, on Thursday, 25th October, 2007 at 5.30 p.m.

Present: Councillor Howarth (in the Chair)
and Councillors Colledge, McDonnell, Moderate, Robinson, Simpson, Wilkes and Wolstenholme.

Also Present: Councillors Bell, Carr, Cowper, Jackson, Kellett, Marsden, Stoddart and Turnbull.
Head of Environment & Leisure Services and The Technical Manager, Property Services

315. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Hopgood, Mitchell and Walton.

316. MINUTES

Minutes of the Meeting of 13th September, 2007, were confirmed as a correct record.

Note: 5.32p.m. *Councillor Moderate joined the meeting*

317. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

The Chair informed the committee that there were several speakers at the meeting; The Head of Environment and Leisure Services to speak on amendments to recommendations on the Playing Pitch Strategy review; The Technical Manager, Property Services to speak on the Town Hall Refurbishment and Councillor Jackson to speak on the Telephone Communications System Report.

5.45 p.m. *The Meeting adjourned for Members to take refreshments which had arrived late.*

318. SCRUTINY PANEL REPORTS – PORTFOLIO HOLDER/OFFICER CONSULTATION

a). Playing Pitch Strategy Review

The Head of Environment and Leisure Services advised the Committee of several amendments to the report and that an addition to recommendation 3.12 "Alternatives need to be investigated including an in-house option."

The Committee agreed the changes and confirmed that subject to Community Services Scrutiny Panel's approval the report be sent to Cabinet.

b). Scrutiny of Tourism

The Committee agreed that the report be sent to Cabinet.

319. UPDATE ON TOWN HALL RENOVATIONS

The Technical Manager, Property Services advised Members of the progress of the refurbishment of the Town Hall and the reasons for the refurbishment. The Officer was asked about information on the company carrying out the refurbishment and advised that the company are from the Bishop Auckland area and have carried out

major works for the University and the County Council. The Company were very strategic in their approach to the refurbishment and possessed excellent references. Councillor Bell while not wishing to complain about the choice of contractor had requested information about the company's credentials at Cabinet, but this was not available at that meeting. Scrutiny Committee agreed to send a letter to the Leader of the Council asking that details of the choice of company be available to Cabinet at the time of the decision being made.

The Officer advised that currently there is a three week delay due to uncovering unforeseen problem areas of work and the Christmas break. However the works were financially on target.

320. SCRUTINY PANEL REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

Note: 6.35 p.m. Councillor Kellett left the meeting

- a). Scrutiny of Disabled Parking -- That the report be sent to Cabinet
- b). Scrutiny of Graveyards -- That the report be sent to Cabinet
- c). Review of Sickness Absence -- That the report be sent to Cabinet
- d). Telephone Communications System – Councillor Jackson as the relevant Portfolio Holder addressed the Committee and informed Members of ongoing problems with the system software. The problems had a direct bearing on certain recommendations contained in the report.

The Committee agreed that subject to suggested amendments the report be forwarded to Cabinet.

Note: 6.45 p.m. Councillor Jackson left the meeting

321. CABINET DECISIONS – 17 October 2007

The Cabinet report had been noted and there were no items the Members wished to raise.

Note: 6.50 p.m. Councillor Turnbull left the meeting

Note: 6.51p.m. Councillors Marsden and Stoddart left the meeting

322. VERBAL REPORTS OF PANEL CHAIRS

An update was given by each Panel Chair on the progress of their Panel business.

323. FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the Forward Plan No. 65, which was effective from 1st October, 2007, and had no comments to make.

324. DECISIONS TAKEN BY PORTFOLIO HOLDERS SINCE LAST MEETING

A copy of the schedule indicating the decisions taken by Portfolio Holders since the last Meeting was circulated at the meeting.

Councillor Robinson queried Portfolio Holder Decision no. 4 and asked how long rent arrears were allowed to increase before action was taken.

Councillor Wilkes queried Portfolio Holder Decision no. 4 and asked if the Council had an obligation to pay home loss and disturbance payments to tenants with rent arrears. He also asked what the level of rent arrears was across the district in actual figures.

It was agreed that a written response be requested.

325. SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR SCRUTINY

- Corporate Equalities Policies -- Allocated to Policy Scrutiny Panel

326. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

It was agreed that all Members of the Council be sent a questionnaire regarding proposed training on budgetary issues.

Meeting terminated at 7.00 p.m.

Chairman