

**City of Durham**

At a Meeting of **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in the Mayor's Chamber, Town Hall, on Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> July, 2008, at 5.30 p.m.

**Present:** Councillor Hopgood (in the Chair)  
and Councillors Carr, Colledge, Freeman, Howarth, Kelly, McDonnell, Rae, Robinson, Simpson, Turnbull, Wilkes and Wilkinson.

**Also Present:** Councillors Kellett, Kinghorn, Marsden and Stoddart

**113. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Walton

**114. MINUTES**

Minutes of the Meeting of 16<sup>th</sup> June, 2008, were confirmed as a correct record.

**115. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS**

The Chair advised Members that she had received clarification from the Leader of the Council of which Parish Councils had received funding for Parish Plans, these were Belmont, Sherburn, Pitlington, Cassop cum Quarrington and Witton Gilbert.

The Chair informed Members that Portfolio Holder Decisions would continue to be made for the duration of the Authority and therefore all scheduled Scrutiny Committee dates would be kept in place in order to consider those decisions.

The Chair advised Members that she would be attending a meeting of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Members and Officer Network on Tuesday, 29<sup>th</sup> July, 2008 at County Hall. The topic for discussion would be how scrutiny recommendations can be fed into the Unitary Authority's system.

The Chair read out to Members a letter from the Executive Director relating to the issues raised at the last meeting concerning Freeman's Quay Leisure Centre. The letter advised Members that the project was on time and within budget and that this had been a joint City Council and D.V.R.C. project therefore it was not within the remit of the Committee to scrutinise D.V.R.C. budgets. A request was made and it was agreed that all Members receive a copy of the Executive Director's letter.

**116. CABINET DECISIONS**

There were no Cabinet decisions on which Members wished to comment. The Chair advised Members that scrutiny reports on Decent Homes and Equalities had been accepted and adopted however, the Review of Leisure Services had had one of its recommendations rejected. The Portfolio Holder would report back on the rejected recommendation.

**117. SCRUTINY PANEL REPORTS**

**a). Policy Scrutiny Panel – Telephone Communications Update**

Copies of the report were circulated with the Agenda papers for Members consideration.

**Resolved:** That the report be sent to Cabinet for consideration.

**b). Policy Scrutiny Panel – Review of Sickness Absence**

Copies of the report were circulated with the Agenda papers for Members consideration.

**Resolved:** That the report be sent to Cabinet for consideration.

**118. VERBAL REPORTS OF PANEL CHAIRS**

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

**119. REPORTS FOR INFORMATION**

**a) Scrutiny Annual Report 2007/2008**

Copies of the Annual Scrutiny report had been circulated for Members' consideration

**Resolved:** Members agreed that the Annual Report be forwarded to Council for consideration

**b). County Durham Joint Overview and Scrutiny Member Network – Transport Report**

Due to the size of the document a copy of the report had been placed in the Members' Room for information.

**Resolved:** That the report be forwarded to Cabinet for information only.

**120. FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee considered the Forward Plan No. 74, which had been circulated at the meeting and was effective from 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2008, and had no comments to make.

**121. DECISIONS TAKEN BY PORTFOLIO HOLDERS SINCE LAST MEETING**

The Committee considered the Portfolio Holder Decisions and noted the report. Members asked for further information on decision No.5 and No.6 and it was agreed that a letter of clarification be requested from the Leader of the Council.

**122. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business to discuss.

Meeting terminated at 6.16 pm

## Economic Scrutiny Panel

### Review of Scrutiny of Tourism

#### 1. Background

- 1.1 The Economic Scrutiny Panel carried out the original scrutiny of Tourism between September 2006 and January 2007.
- 1.2 The Panel were concerned that they had not received feedback on the recommendations that had been adopted by Cabinet June 2007.
- 1.3 Therefore the emphasis of the review was to focus on the recommendations and ascertain their impact.

#### 2. Findings

- 2.1 The Panel decided that they would invite the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture, the Head of Cultural Services, the 2020 Vision Regeneration Manager, the Tourism and Conference Officer and the Events Co-ordinator to attend panel meetings.
- 2.2 The Panel were advised that information boards were used at the Park and Ride and on the buses. Issues regarding the lack of information available at the Railway Station were being investigated. Members were concerned with transport in and out of the city, there are a lack of trains stopping at Durham and were concerned that bus timetables were not adapted for large scale events.
- 2.3 It is planned to move the coach drop off point from the Market Place Steps to Walkergate opposite the bottom of Millennium Place steps and lift. This will be easier for visitors and they will be able to use the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) for maps of the city, places to visit etc.
- 2.4 Members had enquired whether it would be possible to divert the Cathedral bus or the Park and Ride buses to places of interest, but were informed that it was unlikely that the buses would be able to divert their routes.
- 2.5 Members were advised that the City had a good relationship with partners and the World Heritage site pulls all the partners together. There was joined up working with partners, this was particularly good knowing of events that partners had planned.
- 2.6 The Panel were advised that Durham City Vision were working on online information of events. The TIC and City Info Centres would be able to advise visitors and residents of events.
- 2.7 There were concerns of the numbers of empty shop units in the City and the imminent closure of Waitrose in the Gates. The Head of Cultural Services advised that retail experience in the City should match the heritage experience.
- 2.8 A Town Hall Manager was now in place and the Panel was advised that tours of the Town Hall would take place; a souvenir facility would not be available in the Town Hall, if patrons wished to purchase souvenirs this could be done at the TIC.
- 2.9 The new Events team had had a positive affect on attracting funding for events. Funding has been secured from The Arts Council and Culture 10. Positive feedback is being received from funders who are very interested in supporting Durham Mystery Plays.
- 2.10 It was suggested by Members that the Park and Ride should review its operating hours during Summer months to include Sundays and later into the evenings.

### **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1 That the New Unitary Authority review the operating hours of the park and ride during the Summer months to include Sundays and to extend the cut off period to later in the evening.
- 3.2 That the work of the 2020 Vision, Tourism and Events teams be commended to the New Unitary Authority asking that they continue with the good work that has been established.
- 3.3 That the Events, Tourism and 2020 Vision teams are congratulated on their efforts.

## REPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL

### SCRUTINY TOPIC – REVIEW OF NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDENS

#### 1. BACKGROUND

The topic of Neighbourhood Wardens was originally looked at by the Panel in late 2004 and in light of the Local Government Reorganisation within County Durham and suggestions from Scrutiny Members the topic was tabled for review by the Panel.

#### 2. AIMS

It was the remit of the Panel to consider a briefing paper prepared by the relevant Officers and to question those Officers at a meeting of the Panel to gain further insight. Members wished to assist in helping Officers from the City of Durham Council in improve services within this area if possible, and if not, to help ensure the good practise undertaken by the City of Durham Council was continued by the new Unitary Authority post April 2008.

#### 3. ACTIONS

The Panel invited witnesses from Environment & Leisure Services Department to attend a meeting to outline the Council's current position in relation Neighbourhood Wardens. Accordingly, the Technical Support Manager and the Senior Neighbourhood Warden attended a meeting of the Panel in June 2008 to speak to Members.

##### 3.1 Focus

The primary focus of the City of Durham Neighbourhood Warden Scheme is that of environmental enforcement and education together with associated low level anti-social behaviour. The Wardens work in close partnership with other responsible organisations such as the Police.

##### 3.2 Staffing and Training

Initially, the City of Durham scheme had 3 Neighbourhood Wardens, but this has now increased to 6 to provide a Warden for each operational area of the District. In addition, the post of Senior Neighbourhood Warden was created to provide a front line supervisory / co-ordinating role and to ensure consistency of service / implementation of policy across the District.

Neighbourhood Wardens are accredited under the Durham Constabulary Community Safety Accreditation Scheme. Accreditation gives certain additional powers granted by the Chief Constable. These include the right to request a name and address from a person in order to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice, and the power to confiscate alcohol from those under the age of 18 and tobacco products from those under the age of 16.

The City Council invested in the Police "Airwaves" radio communication system and this enables many incidents to be dealt with quickly as there is a constant, reliable connection between Neighbourhood Wardens and the Police.

Neighbourhood Wardens have undertaken joint training in conjunction with the Police, on topics such as problem solving and information gathering / evidence collection.

### **3.3 Branding and Communication**

Neighbourhood Wardens have established themselves as a “brand” and are easily identifiable out in the District by their distinctive Smart cars. Residents recognise the practicality of using the Neighbourhood Wardens as a mobile “on-stop-shop” for many issues.

To further enhance working together, the Neighbourhood Wardens and other frontline Council services meet with the Police on a fortnightly basis and together areas of concern are identified so that resources are targeted effectively. Neighbourhood Wardens also attend the Crime and Disorder Partnership meetings, Neighbourhood Forum meetings, Beat Officer surgeries and Parish Council meetings in order to keep up to speed with, and feedback on, local issues.

Neighbourhood Wardens also attend schools within the District to help educate young people on issues relating to the environment / taking pride in their community. This is considered an important role within the Wardens job remit.

## **4. OUTCOMES**

### **4.1 In Practise**

By working closely with the Street Scene Team Leaders for their area, Neighbourhood Wardens are able to get positive action on issues so that problems are resolved quickly and efficiently.

Many successful campaigns have been conducted by the Neighbourhood Wardens including campaigns to reduce littering (including chewing gum), in preventing graffiti, Streetsafe Initiatives, reducing incidents of dog fouling, and in helping to bring about the provision of skatepark facilities in several areas of the District in conjunction with the Durham Skate and Bike Partnership (Durham Police, City of Durham and Investors in Children).

Currently there are 6 Neighbourhood Wardens and a Senior Neighbourhood Warden. However there is no additional provision to cover for holidays, long-term sickness or maternity leave. In such circumstances the Senior Neighbourhood Warden, with assistance from the rest of the team, provides cover. However this does, at times, severely stretch the resources of the Service. This is evidenced by the experience of elected Members who, in working with their Neighbourhood Wardens, perceive an increase in the workload of the Wardens. Neighbourhood Wardens can receive a high volume of calls and queries direct as they have mobile phone provided by the City Council. Also, in preparing to move to Unitary Local Government in April 2009, further additional work may be required of the service.

Members agreed that, whilst perhaps ideally there should be two Wardens per operational area, any recommendation by Members to appoint additional Neighbourhood Wardens, or to provide assistance from other City of Durham staff, could prove difficult to carry out as spending during the transitional period leading up to the new Unitary Authority is limited by the agreed “Transitional Plan” and the usual budgetary constraints.

## **4.2 Future Model for Durham**

Officers from the Neighbourhood Warden service feel that evidence gathered to date shows that the methods currently being employed by the current Neighbourhood Warden Scheme are highly effective in dealing with environmental education and enforcement; and associated low level anti-social behaviour issues (Higher levels of anti-social behaviour / crime being more effectively dealt with by the Police.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Panel gained insight into the work that has been undertaken by City of Durham Neighbourhood Wardens and the progress the service has made since its inception in 2003.

Therefore the following recommendations are made by the Panel:-

1. The Panel recognises the many achievements of the City of Durham's Neighbourhood Warden service and recommends that the City of Durham take action to strengthen and maintain the frontline services within the City of Durham's operational areas, in particular the Neighbourhood Wardens and Street Scene Team Leaders. The Panel also acknowledges that the visible success in the City of Durham district can be attributed to a focus on tackling issues primarily through environmental enforcement and education, carried out by well trained and highly motivated Officers.
2. The Panel urges the new Durham Unitary Authority to maintain the high level of service provision achieved in this area and continue to strengthen the service in the future.



## **REPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL**

### **SCRUTINY TOPIC – SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT POLICY & CARBON EMISSIONS FROM THE COUNCIL'S FLEET OF VEHICLES**

#### **1. BACKGROUND**

Further to the Panel's Report on the topic of Climate Change, Members put forward suggestions for two specific areas that they wished to be considered as further topics, those being specifically the Council's Sustainable Procurement Policy and the Carbon Emissions from the Council's Fleet of Vehicles.

#### **2. AIMS**

It was the remit of the Panel to consider briefing papers prepared by the relevant Officers and to question those Officers at a meeting of the Panel to gain further insight. Members wished to assist Officers from the in improving in these areas if possible, and if not, to help ensure the good practise undertaken by the City of Durham Council was continued by the new Unitary Authority post April 2008.

#### **3. ACTIONS**

The Panel invited witnesses from Cabinet, Strategic Services and Property Services to attend a meeting to outline the Council's current position in relation to the two matters under consideration. Accordingly, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, the Director of Strategic Services and the Council's Transport/Depot Manager attended a meeting of the Panel in May 2008 to answer Members' queries.

##### **3.1 Sustainable Procurement Policy**

The main driver in developing a Sustainable Procurement Policy was the 2005 Sustainable Development Strategy set out by Central Government which aimed to have the United Kingdom being amongst the leaders in the European Union in relation to sustainable procurement by 2009. Many other policies and strategies followed on from this initial Strategy and an aspect of the City of Durham response was to produce its Procurement Strategy 2007-2010. It was noted that the direction given from Central Government was always influenced heavily from the Private Sector. Indeed Sir Neville Simms, a leading private sector proponent of sustainability was asked to head up the Government's Sustainable Procurement Taskforce.

"Sustainability" does not purely refer to environmental concerns, but rather encompasses those concerns alongside economic, social and commercial issues. A balance between these elements must be achieved in order to secure any truly sustainable resource or system. Accordingly, a "whole-life" approach must be taken, rather than a simple view only encompassing the "best" initial cost or perceived environmental benefit. This whole-life approach fits with the Council's Corporate Policy of "Working for a cleaner and greener local environment" and is reflected within work relating to the Local Strategic Partnership and Community Plans.

### **3.2 Carbon Emissions from the Council's Fleet of Vehicles**

The City of Durham obtained useful data relating to the carbon emissions from the Council's fleet of vehicles from an audit of the Transport Section. This audit was carried out in conjunction the Energy Saving Trust who provided 2½ days consultation, free of charge.

## **4. OUTCOMES**

### **4.1 Sustainable Procurement Policy**

The tendering process at the City of Durham contains within it a set of criteria relating to sustainability. Harmonisation across the North-East in relation to these criteria, amongst others, has led to Contracts being much more uniform across Authorities, enabling Companies to focus on achieving higher standards of Tenders, rather than wasting resources drafting many forms of Tender to match varying stipulations.

The City of Durham, within its Sustainable Development Policy, encourages local companies in efforts to minimise their impact on Climate Change. The Council has also helped in achieving a "Fair-Trade" status for the City and the Council sources from Fair-Trade Suppliers wherever possible.

By utilising electronic procurement and by working with other Local Authorities in the "Durham Virtual Procurement Partnership", efficiencies have been made. The Council also has a role in providing advice to small and medium sized enterprises in informing them how they themselves can become more efficient and translate this into a positive reduction in any negative impact on the environment.

Through using the "Local Multiplier 3", a tool for calculating local, regional and national impacts of Local Authority spending, it has been possible for the Council to perform a benchmarking process that will enable meaningful measurement of progress in the future. With approximately 33% of the Council's total spend in 2006 / 2007 being spend with local Suppliers, i.e. a payment address within the City of Durham; and approximately 58% of the total spend being made within the North-East area, there is a clear demonstration of commitment to supporting the local economy.

Where appropriate, the Council utilises the North East Purchasing Organisation and Office of Government Commerce methods of securing Contracts. This not only helps ensure value for money to the Council, but also offers sustainable solutions that could be utilised a local level. The City of Durham has adopted Durham County Council's Temporary Agency Workers Contracts, which ensures that the level of equality given to those workers providing a service for the Council is the same as if they worked for the Council itself.

### **4.2 Carbon Emissions from the Council's Fleet of Vehicles**

Wherever possible, Council vehicles have been fitted with Continuous Regeneration Traps (CRT) in order to re-burn exhaust gases in order to reduce particulate size, in turn leading to improved figures relating to emissions. Unfortunately, some of the smaller fleet vehicles cannot utilise this technology as the system requires an engine temperature over 90°C.

A reduction in emissions of 30 tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> has been achieved by using a 5% blend of bio-diesel. The bio-diesel is secured via an Office of Government Commerce contract which helps ensure that the bio-diesel is obtained from sustainable sources.

Vehicle drivers within the City Council have access to training that can help to teach them efficient driving techniques to help give improved performance in relation to emissions and fuel economy.

Review and monitoring are crucial and the Council's Transport/Depot Manager regularly attends meetings of the Council's Transport Group where many issues relating to efficiencies are brought forward and developed.

The majority of the Council's fleet of vehicles are on average 9 years old. This figure is slightly skewed by the inclusion of older agricultural vehicles that are only used periodically and that would be impractical to replace on a regular basis. Accordingly, the average replacement age for the majority of fleet vehicles is broadly comparable with the national average.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Panel gained an insight into the work that has been undertaken by City of Durham Officers and appreciate that this work was not undertaken in isolation, but rather through discussions with other Local Authorities and Partner Organisations. Through these joint working relationships a robust and practical set of policies have been drafted and adopted.

Therefore the following recommendations are made by the Panel:-

1. The Panel endorse the work undertaken by the City of Durham Council in relation to both Sustainable Procurement (as set out in its Procurement Strategy 2007-2010) and in relation to minimising carbon emissions from the Council's fleet of vehicles. Accordingly, the Panel urge the new Durham Unitary Authority to adopt a similar approach in relation to both of these areas and would consider the work undertaken by the City of Durham via the appropriate Unitary Authority Workstreams.
2. The Panel note that in November 2007 the Cabinet had agreed that, in the event of a Transitional and new Unitary Authority being established, to urge those Authorities to develop a programme to maintain or increase the proportion of local spend. Accordingly, the Panel would also wish to encourage the new Durham Unitary Authority to adopt this course of action.



## SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

### REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

#### SCRUTINY OF THE ALLOCATIONS POLICY

##### 1. Background

- 1.1 As the new Allocations Policy, which was introduced in August, 2007, was a need based Policy in contrast to the previous date-order system, it was felt that the new Policy should be scrutinised after having been in operation for six months, to allow the effects on all parties involved to be assessed.

##### 2. Actions

- 2.1 Copies of the Allocations Policy and housing application form were circulated to Members and the Council's Housing Manager attended the Panel's meetings in June and July, 2008, to give Members an overview of the new Allocations Policy, details of why it had been introduced and explained how it operated.
- 2.2 The Strategic Older Persons Manager had also attended the July meeting to answer questions on how the medical need aspects of the Policy were dealt with, and how these impacted on an applicants options for housing.

##### 3. Outcomes

- 3.1 The new Housing Allocations Policy was introduced in August, 2007, to ensure that the Council's Policy was compliant with current legislation, codes of practice and best practice.
- 3.2 The new Policy is based on the principle of reasonable preference as defined in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002), and its introduction was timed to coincide with the introduction of the new housing management computer system. The new Policy is based on a band system and allocates properties to applicants based on their need, rather than the amount of time they had been on the waiting list as had happened previously.
- 3.3 All applicants on the waiting list at the time of the introduction of the new Policy were invited to re-apply and transitional arrangements were put in place to reflect the time they had spent on the waiting list.
- 3.4 Since the Policy was introduced in August, 2007, 3308 applications have been made and 3049 of them are currently live. There are approximately 3000 applicants on the list, a housing stock of around 6000 properties and 490 properties were re-let last year. Approximately 80 properties are in the turnover process and over the last two years, re-let times have been reduced from 73 days to 40 days.
- 3.5 Applicants are assessed on the basis of need and allocated to one of five bands, A – E, with and A being for those in most urgent need.
- 3.6 To date, 3% of applicants have been allocated to band A, 15% to band B, 20% to band C, 22% to band D and 40% to Band E.
- 3.7 An allocation to band E does not mean that an applicant will not be offered a property, but this is dependant on the demand for an area, the type and size of property required and the number of applicants who are in higher bands. Housing Options Officers also assist

applicants in looking for other housing solutions such as housing association properties and private accommodation.

- 3.8 As properties become available, the Housing Management System produces a shortlist of eligible applicants for a particular home. This is based upon the information from the application form which is input into the system. The list of eligible applicants produced is considered by a Housing Officer before the property is offered.
- 3.9 Applicants have a right of appeal, prescribed in law, against certain decisions such as having their application to be added to the housing list disallowed, or being removed from the list other than at their own request.
- 3.10 There is also an opportunity for applicants to appeal the decision to allocate them to a particular band. Appeals are made in writing although there is no specific form for doing so. Were a form introduced for all appeals, this could actually cause further delays, but it may be possible to devise a form, but continue to accept written appeals depending on the preference of the applicant.
- 3.11 These appeals are considered by the Senior Housing Officer and of 170 appeals to date, about one third resulted in a change of band, although in some of these cases, the applicants circumstances have changed since the original decision. Details of the reason are recorded on the individual application form, but are not analysed overall.
- 3.12 There is some backlog in dealing with appeals due to the volume of work involved.
- 3.13 The housing application form also asks detailed questions relating to any disabilities applicants may have. Where this is the case, the Council's Strategic Older Persons Manager, qualified occupational therapist, reviews the application form and medical need is taken into account when allocating an applicant to a band. In some cases, further information is needed before a decision can be reached, and in these cases, the applicants could be telephoned, a home visit could be arranged, or further details could be requested from their GP.
- 3.14 In October, 2007, the Strategic Older Persons Manager had been faced with a backlog of about 300 applicants awaiting assessment. This had been caused by the introduction of the new Policy, and the retirement of the previous postholder and delay before a permanent appointment was made.
- 3.15 Additional admin support has been provided, and together with more efficient ways of working being introduced, this figure has now been dramatically reduced.
- 3.16 On average, 10-12 applications are received per week which require assessment of medical needs, and now that admin support is in place, this is a manageable figure considering the Strategic Older Persons Manager's other duties and responsibilities such as the aids and adaptations service.
- 3.17 Each District in the County has an allocations policy which was based on Government guidance, although there are some differences in the banding criteria.
- 3.18 Choice-based lettings are due to be introduced next year and work is underway to produce a new allocations policy which will be effective County-wide, and during this process, there is a need to minimise disruption to applicants wherever possible.

#### **4. Recommendations**

- 4.1 That where bandings are changed on appeal, the reasons for this be recorded and, the application form be amended should patterns emerge.

- 4.2 That a simple and optional form requesting an appeal be drafted, and that this form be sent out to applicants if requested.
- 4.3 That extra/sufficient officer time be provided for dealing with appeals against bandings in a timely manner and in line with the needs of the Service.
- 4.4 That the reports and recommendations be passed to the new Unitary Authority in the context of the overarching Allocations Policy and Choice Based Lettings Policy.
- 4.5 That where any future changes in Policy occur, the need to minimise disruption for applicants wherever possible be taken into consideration.

Community Services Scrutiny Panel  
September 2008





## FORWARD PLAN

In accordance with Regulations 13 and 14 of The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2000, As Amended, details of matters likely to be the subject of key decisions to be made by the City Council in the following 4 month period, commencing on Monday, 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2008, are set out hereunder. Anyone wishing to make representations to the City Council Cabinet or to the Decision maker about the matter in respect of which the decision is to be made may do so by writing to the Executive Director, 17 Claypath, Durham City, DH1 1RH, by no later than Monday, 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2008.

Topic	Decision Maker	Target Date for Decision to be made	Consultees (if any)	Contacts	Background Documents
Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance/Appraisals	*Cabinet	October, 2008	None	Heritage and Design Manager Tel: 0191 3018703	Various
Town Hall Business Plan	* Cabinet	October, 2008	None	Town Hall Manager Tel: 0191 3018223	None

**\*Cabinet Members:** Councillors Bell, Moderate, Jackson, Pitts, Reynolds, Southwell, Thomson, van Zwanenberg & Woods

**Publication Date:** Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> August, 2008.

**Effective Date:** Monday, 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2008.

Councillor F. Reynolds  
Leader of the Council

**Forward Plan No. 76**



**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**15 September 2008**  
**DECISIONS TAKEN BY PORTFOLIO MEMBERS**

No.	Portfolio Member	Nature of Decision	Date
1	Councillor Reynolds	Application received from Mr Adams of 26 Cherry Park Brandon who has recently purchased the property, requesting that the council sell to him land adjoining the property for garden use. The land was previously leased to the former owner who cited special circumstances. Recommended that the application be refused.	3.7.08
2	Councillor Reynolds	Application received from Mr & Mrs Weirpert of 10 Runcie Road Bowburn enquiring if the council would consider selling to them land adjoining their property. They intend to use the land as garden land. Recommended to refuse the application.	3.7.08
3	Councillor Reynolds	The Coxhoe Cricket Club wish to improve access to its grounds located adjacent to the Council's Leisure Centre at Coxhoe. In order to do this the club has enquired of the council as to whether it could be permitted to construct a path over council owned land and to erect a gate within the perimeter fence. Any permission granted to the club shall be by way of an annual licence at a nominal fee and subject to the club paying the council's legal costs, appropriate indemnities and maintenance of the path. Recommended to approve the granting of an annual licence to the Coxhoe Cricket Club.	19.6.08
4	Councillor Woods (Licensing)	To consider an application from the Durham Independent Taxi Association to increase the hackney carriage fares scale as a consequence of rising fuel costs. The council is required by the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1876 to consider any application it receives to increase the hackney carriage fares scale. Recommended to approve the application made by the Durham Independent Taxi Association.	17.7.08
5	Councillor Reynolds	To award a grant of £5,000 to St Cuthbert's Hospice from the Flourishing Communities (Small Grants) Fund to help fund the purchase of equipment and furniture for a coffee shop to better cater for visitors to the Hospice. Recommendation to award the grant of £5,000 on condition that the equipment and furniture be purchased by 30 September 2008 and the grant be claimed and paid to the hospice by 31 October 2008	17.7.08
6	Councillor Woods	Award a grant of £1,000 to Durham Athletic Football Club from the Flourishing Communities (Small Grant) Fund to purchase trophies for each child in the club and purchase new football strips and equipment for the under 9's team. Recommended to award the grant of £1,000 on condition that the trophies, football strips and equipment be purchased by 31 August 2008 and that grant to be claimed and paid by 30 September 2008	17.7.08
7	Councillor Reynolds	An application has been received from Miss J Fenwick	22.7.08

		of 3 Front Street, Davy Lamp, Kelloe enquiring whether the Council would consider selling to her land to the front of her property, or an area along the street for use as garden land Recommend that the application be refused	
8	Councillor Reynolds	An application has been received from Mr Cooke of Artful Ink, 7a Durham Road West, Bowburn enquiring if the Council would consider selling to him land adjacent to his business and 7 Durham Road West, Bowburn for use as a garden area with a litter bin and seating. Recommendation that an area of 26 square metres or thereabouts be offered to the applicant on terms to be agreed by the Council's Valuer.	29.7.08
9	Councillor Reynolds	Application received from Mr Robinson of 27 Halliday Grove Langley Moor enquiring if the council would grant a vehicular access licence over council land at 22 Lowland Road Brandon. Mr Robinson owns the property and was intending to demolish and re-develop the site. He has now decided to refurbish the property and widen the access thus requiring a vehicular access licence. Recommended that subject to contract and noted conditions that a vehicular access licence over an area of 11 square metres or thereabouts be offered to the applicant.	29.7.08
10	Councillor L Thomson (Communities)	Application has been made in respect of a Disturbance payment as a result of the Council compulsorily displacing the applicant from his one bedroom bungalow (321) Recommend that a payment of £1,000 be made to the applicant	01.8.08
11	Councillor Reynolds	An application has been received from Durham County Council enquiring if the Council would consider dedicating land to them in order to carry out footpath improvements alongside the B6302 at Newhouse Road, Esh Winning Recommend that the land be dedicated to the County Council for nil consideration conditional upon the County Council accepting the scheme into their adoption and maintenance regime.	08.8.08
12	Councillor L Thomson (Communities)	Application has been received in respect of a Home Loss payment as a result of the Council compulsorily displacing the applicant from his home (321) Recommend that a payment of £4,400 be made to the applicant	1.8.08
13	Councillor Reynolds	An application has been received from Mrs A Bowes of 26 Gray Avenue, Sherburn Village enquiring if the Council would consider selling to her land adjoining her property for use as a driveway and vehicular hard standing. Recommend that subject to conditions an area of 30 square metres or thereabouts be offered to the applicant on terms to be agreed by the Council Valuer	20.8.08
14	Councillor Woods (Legal)	Notice served on Mr C Turnbull on 31 March 2008 under Section 79 of the Building Act 1984 as the owner of Witton Garage, Front Street Witton Gilbert as the	16.8.08

		<p>property was in a ruinous and dilapidated condition. The work has not been carried out and as a result it is the council's intention to carry out the demolition in default and seek to recover the cost from Mr Turnbull. Quotations have been received from three contractors. Under the Council's Contract Procedure Rules the authority should obtain four quotations and accept the lowest quote. Under rule 4.2 a Portfolio Holder can consent to waive the requirement for four quotations. Such authority is sought due to the specialist nature of the demolition. Authority is also sought under Rule 4.2 to dismiss the lowest quote as this does not take into account an asbestos survey and/or removal that may be necessary.</p> <p>Recommended to grant authority for proceeding on the basis of three quotations and rejecting the lowest offer.</p>	
15	Councillor Reynolds	<p>Application has been received from Mr Niles of 4 Glue Garth Gilesgate enquiring if the council would consider selling to him land adjacent to his property. Mr Niles intends to use the land as a hard standing for parking his vehicles.</p> <p>Recommended that subject to contract and certain conditions an area of 119 square metres be offered to the applicant by way of a licence.</p>	28.8.08