

THE DISTRICT COUNCIL OF CHESTER-LE-STREET

Report of the meeting of Council held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Newcastle Road, Chester-le-Street, Co Durham, DH3 3UT on Thursday, 20 December 2007 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor A Humes (Chairman)

Councillors

A Turner	D M Holding
G Armstrong	C J Jukes
L Armstrong	W Laverick
S Barr	M D May
J W Barrett	P H May
L E W Brown	K Potts
G K Davidson	M Potts
L Ebbatson	J M Proud
M Gollan	M Sekowski
S Greatwich	J Shiell
T H Harland	T J Smith
R Harrison	S C L Westrip
S A Henig	F Wilkinson
A K Holden	A Willis

Officers: R Templeman (Chief Executive), L Chambers (Director of Resources), T Galloway (Director of Development Services), P Stephens (Acting Director of Community Services), G MacCallam (Environmental Services Manager), C Potter (Head of Legal and Democratic Services), L Dawson (Acting Manager for Regeneration), S High (Leisure Services Manager), L Howley (Acting Team Leader, Environmental Health), J Lulic (Community Development Manager) and C Turnbull (Democratic Services Officer)

There were 30 members of the public present.

The Chairman welcomed the visitors to the meeting.

102. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors R Court, P Nathan, D Robson and D Thompson.

103. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 29 NOVEMBER 2007

The minutes of the proceedings at the meeting of the District Council held on 29 November 2007, copies of which had previously been circulated, were submitted.

The Council RESOLVED:

“That the minutes be confirmed as a correct record.”

The Chairman proceeded to sign the minutes.

104. PUBLIC SPEAKING

No requests had been received from members of the public to speak at the meeting in accordance with the Council’s agreed policy.

105. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

Councillor SA Henig declared a personal interest in item no. 8 on the agenda.

Councillors L Armstrong and CJ Jukes declared personal interests in item no. 17 on the agenda.

Councillor L Ebbatson declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item no. 17 on the agenda.

106. REPORT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Leader welcomed visitors and guests and congratulated them on their well deserved success. Councillor Ebbatson then proceeded to give an update on Local Government Review.

- We are now looking at two ‘transition’ periods
 1. from late January – May elections
 2. from May 2008 – April 2009

The first will be overseen by an Implementation Executive. The second by the new Executive of the new authority post election.

- Under the Implementation Orders only the Chief Executive is required to be appointed under open competition.
- Brian Dinsdale has been appointed by Durham County Council as Programme Director until April 2008.

- The County Council Policy Unit has drafted a paper on Councillor Roles and a Council Overview.
- The County Council is also attempting to set up a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee made up of 8 Members from the County Council, 7 from the Districts and 1 Liberal Democrat, 1 Independent and 1 Conservative. The purpose is to scrutinise the Implementation Executive.
- The County Policy Unit has drafted a prospectus aimed at encouraging people to become Councillors in the new authority. Distribution is expected in mid-January.
- The Senior Officers Group (or Joint Implementation Team) continues to meet to work on the Implementation Programme.
- Meanwhile our dreams and aspirations are 'like apples on the Dead Sea shore', "all ashes to the taste".

The Leader stated that every challenge was also an opportunity and as a Council we have always looked for positive outcomes.

She advised that the Council had just over a year to make a difference here in Chester-le-Street and as elected representatives of the District the promises made in May, to serve the residents, to serve the electorate, still hold good for each of us.

In conclusion, the Leader said that priorities may change, and she would be asking Members to consider them afresh in the New Year, but our focus on working for the benefit of local residents simply becomes clearer and more imperative.

107. REPORTS FROM PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

a. Resources and Value for Money

Councillor SA Henig advised that the Audit Commission had issued a 3 rating to the Council for Use of Resources, this was compared to a 2 rating for 2006 and the Council continued to improve year on year. He extended congratulations to all of the staff in the Resources Directorate and to other staff concerned.

b. Regeneration and Strategic Planning

Councillor CJ Jukes had no report to give but extended seasonal greetings to Members, Officers and guests present.

c. Community Engagement and Partnership

Councillor S Barr referred Members to the December issue of Members' Update that contained details of his recent portfolio work and highlighted forthcoming Member development events. He conveyed seasonal greetings to all present.

d. Neighbourhood Services

Councillor SCL Westrip reported on the following:

Planning Services

The Planning Services Team had obtained top quartile status for all of the key Best Value Performance Indicators:

- Ranked 8th nationally in dealing with minor planning applications with 92% determined inside the 8 week target.
- Ranked joint 6th nationally in terms of percentage of planning appeals allowed, with only 12% of appeals against the Council's decision to refuse planning permission being successful.
- Ranked joint 6th with all other District Authorities in relation to customer satisfaction, with 85% of customers being satisfied with the level of service they received.

Councillor Westrip thanked Officers in the Planning Section, Councillor GK Davidson as Chairman and all Members of the Planning Committee.

Leisure Services

- Secured funding of £200,000 from the Big Lottery Fund in support of the Council's 3 year Play Strategy
- Association of Public Sector Excellence benchmarking – top quartile for 13 comparisons and 6 comparisons in the middle quartile.
- Achieved Quest quality standard for the Leisure Centre.
- Working with Sport England North East and Durham Sport to formally establish a Community Sports Network for Chester-le-Street.

Environmental Services

- Secured a new Waste Management Contract from April 2008 to include cardboard and plastics
- Loo of the Year Award
- Green Apple Award

e. Health and Wellbeing

Councillor M Potts reported on a conference she had attended on the subject of smuggling and counterfeit tobacco.

108. QUESTIONS TO LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

Councillor PH May asked the Leader whether she was aware if any of the Members of Parliament for County Durham constituencies supported the referendum results for a unitary county.

The Leader advised that John Cummings the Member of Parliament for the Easington Constituency had expressed his support for the referendum result.

109. REVIEW OF LICENSING POLICY

Consideration was given to a report from the Acting Environmental Health Team Leader regarding a review of the Council's Statement of Licensing Policy made under the Licensing Act 2003 and seeking approval to the adoption of a revised Policy following consultation.

Councillor SCL Westrip introduced the report and thanked the Officers and Licensing Committee Members for producing the revised Policy.

Councillor SCL Westrip proposed, seconded by Councillor CJ Jukes, that the recommendation in the report be approved.

The Council RESOLVED:

"That the revised Statement of Licensing Policy, as detailed on the appendix to the report, be approved."

110. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ENFORCEMENT POLICY

Consideration was given to a report from the Head of Planning and Environmental Health seeking approval to the draft Environmental Health Enforcement Policy.

Councillor SCL Westrip introduced the report and advised of the issue of a new Statutory Code of Practice to come into effect on 6 April 2008 to which the Council would be required to 'have regard to'.

The Council RESOLVED:

"1. That delegate authority be granted to the Director of Development Services to make consequential amendments to the draft Environmental Health Enforcement Policy in the light of the new Statutory Code of Practice.

2. That the draft Policy, suitably amended as above, be subject to public consultation."

111. AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Consideration was given to a report from the Housing Strategy Manager seeking approval of amendments to the Affordable Housing Policy.

The Housing Strategy Manager introduced the report and highlighted the changes to the Policy as detailed in section 5.2 of the report.

Councillor PH May enquired what was classed as 'affordable' in terms of affordable housing, and who decided on the number of affordable properties on a new development.

The Housing Strategy Manager advised that the level of affordability was based on statistics of earnings and income, and that 30% of properties on new development sites were allocated for affordable housing.

Councillor CJ Jukes proposed, seconded by Councillor S Barr that the recommendation in the report be approved.

The Council RESOLVED:

"That the changes to the Policy, as detailed in the report, be agreed and the revised Affordable Housing Policy be adopted."

112. BOND SCHEME

Consideration was given to a report from the Housing Options Manager regarding the introduction of a Bond Scheme to assist those who are unable to access the private rented sector and to assist those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The Housing Options Manager introduced the report and highlighted the benefits of a Bond Scheme.

Councillor CJ Jukes proposed, seconded by Councillor AK Holden, that the recommendation in the report be approved.

The Council RESOLVED:

"That the Bond Scheme as detailed in the appendix to the report, be approved."

113. PREVENTION FUND

Consideration was given to a report from the Housing Options Manager on the introduction of a prevention fund to assist those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The Housing Options Manager introduced the report and highlighted the benefits of a Prevention Fund.

Councillor CJ Jukes proposed, seconded by Councillor F Wilkinson, that the recommendation in the report be approved.

The Council RESOLVED:

“That the Prevention Fund Policy as detailed in the appendix to the report, be approved.”

114. CORRESPONDENCE

There were no items of correspondence.

115. CONFERENCES

There were no invitations to attend Conferences.

116. COMMON SEAL

The Council RESOLVED:

“That the action of the Officer in affixing the Common Seal of the Council to the following documents be confirmed:

Transfer in duplicate relating to 37 Medwyn Close, Bournmoor.
Transfer in duplicate relating to 5 Middlefield. Pelton
Transfer in duplicate relating to 20 Northlands, Chester-le-Street
DS1 in respect of 6 Roseberry Villas, Newfield
Form DS1 in respect of 16 Third Avenue, Chester-le-Street
Transfer in duplicate relating to 17 The Wynd, Pelton
Transfer in duplicate relating to 17 Jacques Terrace, Chester-le-Street
Transfer in duplicate relating to 53 Medway, Great Lumley
Deed of Grant in duplicate relating to right of access – land to front of 16 Plunkett Terrace, Pelton Fell
Transfer in duplicate relating to 27 Lilac Avenue, Chester-le-Street
Transfer in duplicate relating to 14 Pelaw Place, South Pelaw
Lease in duplicate relating to 61 Auckland, Chester-le-Street
Lease in duplicate relating to 32 Cumbrian Avenue, Chester-le-Street”

117. PRESENTATIONS

Councillor SCL Westrip advised there were a number of awards to be presented by the Chairman of the Council.

- ‘Game On’ Football League National and Home International Winners 2007. The Game On Project targets young people aged 14-16 living in former coalfield communities.
- The Green Apple Award. The Action for Wildlife Project won the outright Gold Award for a successful and innovative project.

- Loo of the Year Awards. The Foundry Lane facilities were entered for the individual attendant team category and gained a 5 star award. The facilities were entered into and won the All England competition and then into the UK category which they also won.

The Chairman of the Council presented the awards and trophies to the following:

'Game On' Football Winners

Daniel White
Michael Newton
Alistair Innis
Daniel Lowden
Jordan McGorrigan
Josh Young
Beau Henagon
Gareth Patterson

The Green Apple Award

Mike Keenleyside

Loo of the Year Awards

Julie Husband
Sonia Johnson

The Leader commented that everyone in the Council was aware that we work to a One Team ethos; an ethos that was actively pursued. However she pointed out that on this occasion all the successes celebrated at the meeting came from one directorate.

She thanked Councillor Westrip as Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services for his contribution and, in particular, on behalf of the Council paid tribute to the Director of Development Services, Tony Galloway, for creating, encouraging and developing a working environment which not only promoted a team ethos but also allowed success to flourish.

118. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Council RESOLVED:

“That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the Public and Press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.”

Prior to consideration of the following item Councillor M Gollan declared a personal and prejudicial interest and left the meeting. Councillor L Ebbatson having declared a personal and prejudicial interest earlier in the proceedings also left the meeting.

119. Review of Community Facilities 'Early Wins'

Consideration was given to a report from the Community Development Manager regarding leasing arrangements for Bullion Hall and Mile House.

The Community Development Manager introduced the report.

Councillor SA Henig proposed, seconded by Councillor S Barr, that the recommendations in the report be approved.

The Council RESOLVED:

“1. That the disposal of the leasehold interest of Mile House to the Chester-le-Street and City of Durham Enterprise Agency, for a period of 99 years on the same terms, other than the length of tenure, as the existing 25 year lease, be agreed.

2. That the disposal of the leasehold interest of Bullion Hall to Chester-le-Street and District CVS and Volunteer Bureau, for a period of 99 years on the same terms, other than length of tenure, as the existing 25 year lease, be agreed.”

Councillor L Ebbatson returned to the meeting.

120. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman of the Council thanked Members for their hard work during 2007 adding that 2008 would present huge challenges for which Members needed to remain focussed.

He thanked those Members who had made donations to his Charity Appeal in lieu of sending Christmas cards to other Members.

To all present, the Chairman extended best wishes for a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

The meeting terminated at 6.57pm

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