

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, 24 April 2008 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor A Humes (Chairman)

Councillors

A Turner	W Laverick
L Armstrong	M D May
J W Barrett	P H May
L E W Brown	P B Nathan
R Court	M Sekowski
G K Davidson	J Shiell
L Ebbatson	T J Smith
S Greatwich	D Thompson
R Harrison	S C L Westrip
S A Henig	F Wilkinson
A K Holden	A Willis
D M Holding	

Officers: R Templeman (Chief Executive), J Henderson (Acting Head of Resources Directorate), I Herberson (Head of Corporate Finance), L Dawson (Acting Head of Regeneration), C Potter (Head of Legal and Democratic Services) and C Turnbull (Democratic Services Officer)

There were two members of the public present.

172. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors G Armstrong, S Barr, P Ellis, C Jukes, JM Proud and D Robson.

173. TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 27 MARCH 2008

The minutes of the proceedings at the meeting of the District Council held on 27 March 2008 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.

174. 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.

175. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

176. REPORT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Leader, Councillor L Ebbatson, advised that three key decisions taken by the Executive on 7 April 2008 had been circulated.

People and Place Priority

The Leader reported that work had commenced on the delivery process for the People and Place priority. Four Action Learning Sets had been set up to focus on:

- Partnerships for the Future
- Town Centre Development
- Strengthening Partnerships
- Neighbourhoods

A member of the Executive was involved in each one.

The Leader advised that a workshop for all Councillors was being arranged for mid May to explore new scrutiny arrangements and more particularly how 'task and finish' groups could help deliver the agreed priorities.

Local Government Review

The Leader reported that following on from discussion at the Implementation Executive on 4 April 2008 it had been agreed there should be a further session, scheduled for 25 April 2008, to look at the transitional constitution for the new authority; the Local Area Agreement, the Sustainable Community Strategy for the County; and the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer of Sedgfield Borough Council Housing Stock.

News Items

- Coalfields Regeneration Trust spend in 2005-2008 – Chester le Street received £841,356. (Second only to Easington in County Durham).

- The Rural Communities Council run the Village of the Year Award for village community groups with populations of less than 5000 and the Leader invited anyone who was interested to contact the Executive Assistant on 0191 3872010 for further information.
- Chester-le-Street District Council was a lead in the North East in making the intranet available to Members at home and at work. The Leader advised that guidance was available for all Councillors.

177. REPORTS FROM PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

a. Resources and Value for Money

Councillor SA Henig reported that following the agreement of the Budget for 2008/09 at the Council Meeting on 28 February 2008, the Capital Working Group had met to prioritise bids for capital spending. Bids for £2.127million had been made (including unreleased schemes from 2007/08) and in line with previous years, resources would not be released until they become available, largely through asset sales that had been agreed.

Councillor Henig advised that the February 2008 Council Meeting had agreed that a prioritisation process be carried out with priority given to those schemes needed to address health and safety needs, which supported the Council's new priority areas and which would help lever in external funding. The set of priorities formed the basis for discussion by the Capital Working Group earlier in the week when a number of schemes were identified which were required to meet health and safety needs and they were being proposed as the priority for resources as soon as they became available.

With regard to the Revenues and Benefits Team, Councillor Henig reported that the Direct Debit take up for Council payments was at 73.6%, its highest ever level, and collection rates for Non Domestic Rates was also at its highest level of 98.2%. Additionally, in the 2007/08 financial year the Council had successfully prevented in excess of £210,000 being paid out fraudulently in Housing and Council Tax Benefit, with 18 people having been prosecuted and cautions also issued. Councillor Henig said he was pleased to have reported on this matter in view of adverse comments previously made.

Councillor Henig, thanked the dedication of staff throughout the Resources Directorate for continuing with 'business as usual' throughout the periods of upheaval caused by the housing transfer and local government reorganisation.

Councillor Henig stated that the Council's customers, the residents and businesses of Chester-le-Street district, remained the priority and it was a credit to staff that during a period which involved such great pressures, services were being maintained at such a high level.

b. Regeneration and Strategic Planning

There was no report from Councillor CJ Jukes.

c. Community Engagement and Partnerships

There was no report from Councillor S Barr.

d. Neighbourhood Services

Councillor SCL Westrip had no report to present but thanked the staff for their endeavours during the difficult period.

e. Health and Well-Being

There was no report from Councillor M Potts.

178. QUESTIONS TO LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

Councillor P Nathan submitted the following question: -

‘How successful has the implementation of the new waste recycling scheme been at this stage and what feedback and complaints have been received from the public about this scheme? If there have been problems so far, could the portfolio holder describe how these problems are being resolved.’

Councillor SCL Westrip replied that the kerbside recycling scheme commenced on 1 April and was into its fourth week of operation and was proving to be a resounding success. Early estimations indicated that the introduction of the new kerbside collection scheme had led to an impressive 100% increase in the rate of recycling across the District, compared to the same period the previous year and indications were that the upward trend would continue. The recycling of the additional items, namely cardboard and plastics, had been extremely well received by residents and had been reflected in the increased participation and recycling rates.

Councillor Westrip said that the Council should thank and congratulate residents for their invaluable support in helping to increase participation which had resulted in a staggering 350 tonnes of household waste being diverted from landfill to date. It was anticipated that between 25% and 30% of the District’s household waste would be recycled in 2008/09, which would ensure the Council met and exceeded its own and the Government’s recycling targets. It should not be forgotten that Green Cycle had created approximately 70 new jobs and employed over 100 staff.

Councillor Westrip added that the introduction of a completely new and complex recycling service across four Districts was always likely to suffer some teething problems and in the first three weeks of the scheme some criticism and complaints had been received mainly around missed collections, collections not being carried out on the scheduled day and the distribution of

bags. Following a number of meetings between Senior Council Officers and the Managing Director of Green Cycle the problems had, in the main, been resolved and in week four of the contract the scheme was running more effectively and efficiently and in line with the Council's and customers' expectations.

Councillor PH May advised that a recycling bag had not been delivered to his address.

179. CORRESPONDENCE

There were no items of correspondence.

180. CONFERENCES

There were no invitations to attend conferences.

181. 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 land at North Lodge, Chester-le-Street
Transfer in relation to land and buildings at Pelton Fell (Phase 2)
Deed of Release relating to 6 Shakespeare Terrace, Pelton Fell
Nominations Agreement relating to land at Phase 3 Pelton Fell
Form of Deed of Assignment of tenant and leaseholder rent and service charge arrears, in duplicate.
Lease in duplicate relating to Unit 22 Stella Gill Industrial Estate to Bars Factory Limited.
Lease in duplicate between the Council and Derek Miller, Geoffrey Curry and Denis Hayes being trustees of the Chester-le-Street and District Angling Club.”

The meeting terminated at 6.20pm

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