

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 July 2008 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor D Thompson (Chairman)

Councillors

G Armstrong	P H May
L Armstrong	P B Nathan
S Barr	K Potts
L E W Brown	M Potts
G K Davidson	J M Proud
L Ebbatson	D L Robson
M Gollan	J Shiell
S Greatwich	T J Smith
R Harrison	A Turner
D M Holding	S C L Westrip
M D May	

Officers: R Templeman (Chief Executive), I Forster (Director of Corporate Services), I Herberson (Head of Corporate Finance) and C Turnbull (Democratic Services Officer)

There were 2 members of the public present.

30. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors JW Barrett, R Court, P Ellis, TH Harland, SA Henig, A Humes, CJ Jukes, W Laverick, M Sekowski, F Wilkinson and A Willis.

31. TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 26 JUNE 2008

The minutes of the proceedings at the meeting of the District Council held on 26 June 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.

32. 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.

33. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

Councillor D Holding declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item no. 10 on the agenda regarding the Countywide Common Early Retirement and Voluntary Redundancy Policy.

34. REPORT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Leader, Councillor L Ebbatson, advised that details of the key decisions made by the Executive in July had been circulated.

The Leader then advised of the following matters:

- Councillor Derek Robson wished to resign from the Board of Cestria Housing due to pressure of work. Councillor Ebbatson thanked Councillor Robson for his contribution as a member of the Shadow Board. Councillor Robson was one of five Council representatives on the Board and a replacement would be sought at next Council Meeting.
- New Chief Executives had been appointed to the new unitaries in Northumberland and Durham. The appointees were, in Northumberland, Steve Stewart currently Assistant Chief Executive at Northamptonshire, and in Durham, George Garlick, currently Chief Executive at Stockton Borough Council.
- A top level re-structuring had been designed for County Durham and all staff had been informed and asked for comments.
- District Council Officers had been asked to facilitate a countywide consultation on the shape of local governance/area action partnerships for the new unitary. A presentation would be given by County Council Officers to the Steering Group of the LSP on Tuesday of the following week.
- An event for stakeholders was planned for 4 September in the Civic Centre and the Leader, Deputy Leader or Portfolio Holder for Partnerships from the new authority would be present.
- The Action Learning Sets designed around our People and Place priority were progressing well. Some projects, such as the Federation of Residents Associations and the Town Council, have had to be put on hold as a consequence of the work commenced by the Boundary Committee but Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups on a Town Council and the future of the market had been set up.

- The Leader reminded Members of the ‘handing over the flag’ event on 24 August 2008 to mark the end of the Beijing Olympics and a forerunner of public involvement in the London 2012 Olympiad. Attendance of Members would be very welcome at the event.

35. REPORTS FROM PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

a. Neighbourhood Services

Councillor SCL Westrip reported on the following items: -

Environmental Services

The declining quality of parks and green spaces throughout the United Kingdom was a cause for concern in many places but in Chester-le-Street there were many examples of thriving popular sites run by dedicated, enthusiastic people working closely with their local communities. Many places that were run-down and neglected were now shining examples of outstanding green space management and this had been recognised nationally with the Green Apple Award and runners-up in the Cemetery of the Year Award. This success in managing green spaces was further recognised by a recent award of a Green Flag for the Ropery Lane Cemetery. Winning a second Green Flag acknowledged the Council’s commitment to the Government’s Liveability Agenda by recognising the valuable contribution good quality parks and green spaces make to the well-being of communities.

Planning Services

Planning Services Officers facilitated a well-attended community consultation event in the Waldrige Parish Rooms, at the request of local Members. The event was staged to allow the public to consider proposals submitted for development of West Farm. The application would be reported to the September meeting of the Planning Committee.

Leisure Services

The Riverside site was successful in retaining the Green Flag Award for the sixth consecutive year and was a testimony to all the staff on the site who worked so hard in maintaining its excellent standards. An arts project was completed at Roseberry Grange whereby the external face of the driving range was decorated by a local artist. The artwork covered the entire length of the driving range and depicted scenes linking the sites mining past to its current golfing role. As part of the design process, artist-led workshops were held within the local community and golf club. Early indications showed an increase in usage of the driving range.

Environmental Health

Food Safety Week was an annual initiative promoted by the Food Standards Agency and looked to highlight the importance of good hygiene practice within

the home. The 2008 campaign was entitled 'Germwatch' and focused on the potential hygiene hazards found in the domestic kitchen. The Environmental Health Team took the campaign to the Lilac Community House in Sacriston on 10 June and created the Holly Kitchen of Horrors crime scene in which scores of kitchen hazards were planted in the Community House kitchen. The project was aimed predominantly at the 12-18 year old group and participants were given 5 minutes in which to identify as many hazards as they could find. All participants enjoyed the fun filled afternoon, which promoted a serious health message.

b. Regeneration and Strategic Planning

There was no report from Councillor CJ Jukes.

c. Resources and Value for Money

There was no report from Councillor L Armstrong.

d. Community Engagement and Partnerships

There was no report from Councillor M Sekowski.

36. QUESTIONS TO LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

There were no questions to the Leader or Portfolio Holders.

37. TO ACCEPT THE REPORT OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE HELD 24 JUNE 2008

The Council RESOLVED:

"That the report of the meeting of the Audit Committee held 24 June 2008, copies of which had previously been circulated, be accepted."

38. TO CONFIRM THE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ENFORCEMENT POLICY

Consideration was given to a report from the Chief Environmental Health Officer seeking approval to and adoption of the Transitional Environmental Health Enforcement Policy.

Councillor SCL Westrip introduced the report and advised that the draft policy was approved by Council in December 2007 for public consultation. Following the consultation process and changes in legislation and guidance, the policy document had been revised.

Councillor D Holding proposed, seconded by Councillor L Armstrong, that the recommendations in the report be approved.

The Council RESOLVED:

- “1. That the responses received following public consultation be noted.
2. That the Transitional Environmental Health Enforcement Policy, appended to the report as appendix A, be agreed.”

Prior to consideration of the following item, Councillor D Holding left the meeting.

39. PROPOSED COUNTYWIDE COMMON EARLY RETIREMENT AND VOLUNTARY REDUNDANCY POLICY

Consideration was given to a report from the Director of Corporate Services seeking adoption of a countywide common and harmonised policy on early retirement and voluntary redundancy.

The Director of Corporate Services introduced the report and advised that the harmonised policy had been agreed by the Joint Implementation Team. The policy included an agreement to extend protection for staff for three years beyond vesting day.

Councillor L Ebbatson proposed, seconded by Councillor SCL Westrip, that the recommendations in the report be agreed.

The Council RESOLVED:

- “1. That the countywide Common Early Retirement and Voluntary Redundancy Policy, as detailed on the appendix to the report, be adopted subject to an assurance that there would be no detriment to employees as a result.
2. That details of the Policy be made available to all members of staff.”

40. CORRESPONDENCE

There were no items of correspondence.

41. CONFERENCES

There were no invitations to attend conferences.

42. 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:

Lease in duplicate relating to former Mechanics Institute building, Chester-le-Street.
Transfer in duplicate relating to land at Fleece Terrace, Edmondsley.”

The meeting terminated at 6.34 pm