

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, 15 January 2009 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor D Thompson (Chairman)

Councillors

G Armstrong	C J Jukes
L Armstrong	W Laverick
S Barr	M D May
L E W Brown	P B Nathan
R Court	K Potts
G K Davidson	M Potts
L Ebbatson	J M Proud
P Ellis	M Sekowski
M Gollan	T J Smith
S A Henig	S C L Westrip
A K Holden	F Wilkinson
D M Holding	A Willis

Officers: R Templeman (Chief Executive), I Forster (Director of Corporate Services), J Elder (Acting Head of Resources), T Galloway (Director of Development Services), N Tzamarias (Assistant Director of Development Services), I Herberon (Head of Corporate Finance), C Potter (Head of Legal and Democratic Services), L Dawson (Acting Head of Regeneration), C D Simmonds (Assistant Solicitor), J Smerdon (Regeneration and Planning Strategy Manager) and D Humble (Democratic Services Assistant)

Also in Attendance: Two Members of the public.

87. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors R Harrison, J Shiell, D Robson, A Turner, A Humes, J W Barrett, S Greatwich and P H May.

88. TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 20 NOVEMBER 2008

The minutes of the proceedings at the meeting of the District Council held on 20 November 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.

89. PUBLIC SPEAKING

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

90. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

Councillor D Holding declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item No. 9 on the agenda due to the nature of his employment in the Transport Industry. Councillor P Ellis also declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item No. 9 on the agenda in his capacity as an employee of Go-Ahead Northern Bus Company.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services confirmed that they would need to leave the meeting and return once a decision had been made.

91. REPORT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Leader referred to the key decisions from the Executive Meeting in December that were circulated to all Members. She advised that an urgent business decision had been taken in accordance with the Council’s Constitution on 16 December 2008, which related to the adoption of the Model Freedom of Information publication scheme, which was required to be in place by 1st January 2009.

The Leader gave an update in relation to Local Government Organisation and confirmed that the Area Action Partnerships geographical areas had now been finalised and agreed. Each Member had been circulated a copy of a letter that had been sent to Councillor Henig on behalf of the County Durham Association of Local Authorities following the outcome of the Meeting of the District Forum. The letter raised concerns about the transparency of the appointment process; managerial support for staff post April 1st; closure of accounts; continuing support for small business and prompt payment to suppliers.

It was noted that at the Executive Meeting that was scheduled to be held on 2 February 2008 there would be a presentation from all of the Action Learning Sets on the delivery of our single ‘People and Place’ priority and that all Members were welcome to attend.

Members were circulated a copy of a letter to David Miliband MP the Foreign Secretary that the Leader had drafted expressing dismay and concern at the events in Gaza. The Leader requested that Members support that the letter be sent on behalf of the Council.

92. REPORTS FROM PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

a. Neighbourhood Services

Planning Services

Councillor Westrip reported on a surge of major development applications within the District including developments at the Riverside led by Durham County Cricket Club to increase seating capacity as well as proposals for a new hotel and landmark gateway building which would significantly enhance Chester-le-Street County Cricket ground as a premier North East Venue. Also proposed were four unique dwellings at High Farm, Great Lumley which with the assistance from the Authority were striving to achieve sustainable improvements (level 6) which if achieved would be one of the few in the country and certainly the region. Proposals had also been submitted for the Holly Crescent site, Plawsworth Farm and the Former Jingling Gate Public House.

He drew Members attention to the excellent work that had been carried out by the Authority's Section 106 Multi Disciplinary Officer Working Group. He spoke in relation to the efforts being expended to commit Section 106 monies for Public Art to maximise the benefit to local communities within the new Merlin Drive play area, Drum Industrial Estate and Chester North Ward.

He also reported on the effort to ensure any unlawful and harmful signage along Front Street was pursued for advertisement consent to ensure that it does not detract from the appearance of the area.

Environmental Health

Improvements in Food Safety

Councillor Westrip reported on a recent grant of £50,000 from the Food Standards Agency that was awarded to the Durham County Food Liaison Group, which was used to assist food businesses in the District struggling to meet modern food safety legislation. Of the 44 businesses that had been offered assistance all those inspected had successfully implemented a Food Safety Management Systems as required by Law, which significantly contributes to the National Indicator 184 (food premises that are compliant with food hygiene legislation).

All in drink promotions

In response to significant public and Member concerns on licensed premises in the District offering 'all inclusive' drink promotions, the Licensing Team had recently carried out a joint monitoring exercise of such a premise with Durham Constabulary.

Close monitoring of the premises was carried out including a 'walk through' to check for underage patrons and to ensure door supervisors were present. Senior Management of the premises explained the steps that had been put in place to ensure that the drinks promotion was ran in a responsible manner. At this time Officers are satisfied that appropriate controls are in place and the Team will continue to monitor such promotions.

Leisure Services

Riverside Multi Sport Environment Project

The Community Development Team had been successful yet again in attracting new grant funding. Sport England approved a grant of £292,000 to support a three-year project based at Riverside, £15,000 had been granted from the PCT and £31,000 from the school sports partnership. He outlined the Multi Sport Environment Project, which was a great opportunity to develop the riverside site as a sporting hub and build sports development capacity within the District. Thanks were conveyed to Bill Lightburn for the work he had done on this.

Selby Cottage

Selby Cottage reached to the final 5 of the 'nursery learning environment' category in the National 'Nursery Management Today Awards', which were announced at the gala awards dinner in London on 28 November 2008. Unfortunately Selby Cottage just missed out on this occasion but it was a tremendous achievement to get to the finals. Councillor Westrip conveyed his congratulations to all the staff for their efforts.

Ball Courts

All 5 ball courts funded through the Big Lottery Fund Play Grant had now been completed and were being well used by children and young people within our communities. Formal opening ceremonies to promote these new facilities were currently being arranged. Councillor Westrip conveyed his thanks to Barrie Alderson for his involvement in this.

Golf Course Driving Range

Councillor Westrip was pleased to report that following a fire at Roseberry grange driving range last year, all repairs had now been completed (with the costs covered by our insurers) and the range was now fully opened. The graffiti artwork on the range wall that was destroyed would be re-painted by the commissioned artist over the next few weeks.

Progress on Sacriston Community Facilities

The new Fulforth Centre at Sacriston opened two months ago and work on the external elements within the first phase of the project (which include car parking provision and a village heart) were due to start at the end of January

with a completion date of mid to late March. A feasibility study around phase 2 of the project (outdoor sports facilities and an extension of the centre to provide support accommodation and a gym) was being undertaken by County Durham Sport and was close to completion. This study will provide the basis for further funding applications by the community and sports trust in their efforts to achieve this second phase.

Progress on the New Community Facilities Pelton Fell

Work on the refurbishment of the village hall to create a new community resource centre for the village, along with the new play area and floodlit multi use games area had now begun with an anticipated completion date of early June 2009. The new facilities will be a major benefit to the local community and the leisure team will, over the coming months, be developing plans to deliver community based activities from them.

Environmental Services

Staff from within the Environmental Services Team had been leading the development and implementation of the Neighbourhoods element of the People and Place project and had spearheaded delivery of a number of projects as follows:

Chester in Bloom

- Presented the People and Place project to 11 Parish Councils and made 11 site visits to discuss the placement of trees, bulbs and seating
- Planted 100 trees, placed 16 new seats, planted 100,000 daffodil bulbs
- Worked with St Benedict's and Newker Schools to improve their local green spaces.
- Won 2 National Green Flag Awards and secured funding for the next round.
- Won 3 Gold Medals, 2 Silver Medals and a Bronze Medal in the Northumbria in Bloom

Reducing Anti-Social Behaviour (working with Barbara Cruikshank the Anti-Social Behaviour Officer)

- Anti-social behaviour questionnaires distributed to over 4000 pupils throughout the District, which had been analysed and used to inform future projects/schemes/activities for young people in combating Anti-social behaviour.
- Delivered a Crime and Safety Awareness Day on 23 October 2008 to over 200 pupils from Park View, Hermitage and Roseberry Schools.
- Developed and implemented a curriculum led and timetabled Anti-social behaviour schools surgery at Fyndoune School.
- Developed an Anti-social behaviour DVD, Website and Hotline number specifically for young people to help them recognise and report anti-social behaviour.

- Delivered the “Open Your Eyes” to Environmental Crime Campaign to 15 schools in the district and began to roll out to the Parish Councils and residents groups in the District.

Increasing Local Democracy (in conjunction with Democratic Services staff)

- Delivered a theatrical presentation of “Who runs this place?” to 200 Park View School pupils.
- Ran a political speed-dating event between pupils and elected Members.
- Ran a number of Equality and Diversity Workshops to over 800 pupils given by the “Word” rap group.
- Held junior school Council Meeting in the Council Chamber and assisted with School Council elections and produced school voting packs

Neighbourhood Environmental Toolkit

- Carried out consultation exercise with residents, residents’ groups, parish councils and young people on environmental issues.
- Produced a 20 page Toolkit guide booklet for local residents and community groups on “How to identify and get involved in local environmental projects”
- Devised a booklet containing practical advice and guidance including case studies, examples of good practice and key contact details.

b. Community Engagement and Partnerships

There was no report from Councillor M Sekowski.

c. Regeneration and Strategic Planning

Councillor Jukes advised that work on key projects continued to ensure so that we delivered as best we could on Regeneration and Strategic Planning issues in relation to the People and Place priority. He was particularly pleased with recent announcements in relation to lottery funding at Pelton Fell and the work ongoing on the Pelton Fell project and the Community Resource Centre developments. Work continues on the Action Learning Set that he was involved in with the view to try and complete the work by 31 March 2009 with presentations to Executive on 2 February 2009.

In terms of the business improvement development, works continue so ensure that everything was in order for when it is transferred to the unitary authority.

He reported that he had received a very helpful letter from the Business Association complimenting the Council for its work during December on the Town Centre, not least the festivities and Christmas lights etc. He thanked

the Officers involved and particularly the Town Centre Manager Robert McMullen for the work they had done.

He officially announced that Morrisons would be opening in place of the Co-Op supermarket store early next week and that the staff had been safeguarded to become employees of Morrisons.

He welcomed new businesses that were coming into the Town and hoped that more would follow. He respected the fact that this was a very challenging retail environment in the real economy at the moment and that it was with regret and sadness that we had all witnessed the closure of the Woolworths store which had been a presence in Chester-le-Street for very many years.

d. Resources and Value for Money

There was no report from Councillor L Armstrong.

93. QUESTIONS TO LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

Councillor Gollan echoed the Leader's comments in relation to the events in Gaza and proposed to move that the letter, which had been circulated at the Meeting, should be sent by the Leader on behalf of the Council to David Miliband. This was seconded by Councillor Westrip.

Councillor Westrip proposed a motion to send this letter to the Israeli Embassy as well as to the Foreign Secretary so that they are aware of the issues that had been raised. Councillor Davidson seconded this motion, which was agreed by Members

Councillor Henig advised that he had not yet received the letter that had been sent to him from Teesdale District Council on behalf of the County Durham Association of Local Authorities and that he would respond to this under his Durham County Council capacity.

94. PROTOCOL FOR APPOINTMENT OF HONORARY ALDERMEN

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services gave a background to the report on the legislative change on 28 November 2008 to the protocol for Appointment of 'Honorary Aldermen' which means that existing serving Councillors are now able to be nominated as 'Honorary Aldermen' as well as past serving Councillors ' if they satisfy the sole legal criterion.

Councillor Westrip advised that this was a very concise and informative report however he sought clarification on the concept of nomination.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services confirmed that nominations could be self nominated or be nominated by other people. In order to assist Members he had devised a form to be used for these nominations. He confirmed that both past Councillors and current serving Councillors were eligible for nomination and that completed nomination forms should be

returned to the Chief Executive. He also thought it would be good practice to acknowledge receipt of the nomination within 7 days so that people were aware that they have been received by the Council.

In response to a query from Councillor Nathan, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services clarified that the title of Aldermen who are appointed to this Council would change as appropriate to Durham County Council under the Local Government transitional arrangements regulations.

Councillor L Armstrong proposed, seconded by Councillor C Jukes, that the recommendations detailed in the report be approved.

The Council RESOLVED:

“That the protocol for appointment of honorary aldermen and honorary alderwomen (collectively described in legislation as ‘honorary aldermen’) as set out in this report under Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 be amended as agreed.”

Prior to consideration of the following item, Councillors D Holding and P Ellis declared their interest and left the meeting.

95. TOWN CENTRE MASTER PLAN

Councillor Jukes introduced the report on the Town Centre Master Plan and thanked everyone for their contribution through the various phases of consultation. He particularly welcomed the letter from the Business Association who had a very close interest and involvement during the consultation phases of the Master Plan. He requested that his thanks be officially recorded to them.

Councillor Jukes outlined the key elements on Section 5.15, page 53 of the report on the main requirements to enable the Master Plan to be taken forward. He also spoke on the proposed projects listed in Appendix 4 figure 5.3 Master plan Areas Matrix. He suggested that Members comments be included as part of the document that is handed over to the new authority.

The Regeneration and Strategic Planning Manager advised that the report was a summary of a full report from the consultants that was available from him upon request. He referred to Appendix 4, which listed a Matrix of projects and spoke on the various schemes proposed for the future.

Councillor Brown congratulated Officers on the report in general, but expressed concerns in relation to proposed recreational facilities, sustainable transport and preserving historic buildings.

Councillor Westrip commented on the next steps of this report and supported the continuation of partnership working. He expressed his concerns in

relation to the transport infrastructure, particularly the North Burns narrow junction and welcomed this being reviewed as part of the Master Plan.

Councillor Gollan welcomed the report, which would become part of the Local Development Framework and spoke in relation to social development. He welcomed the work proposed around the South of the Town.

The Chief Executive explained that the Master Plan was a framework of priorities and a guidance document used to set a planning framework of what we would like to see delivered within the District in the future. These proposals would be required to go through a process of statutory consultation and that this was only the starting point to very long process.

He encouraged the view that the Business Associations had taken, that the Master Plan was a good thing for the town and that concerns would be considered at the relevant time when planning applications were considered.

Councillor Ebbatson advised that since this report had been written, she had held a Meeting with the Youth workers from the Youth Centre at their request to discuss the young people's proposal for a fishing lake within the vicinity of the Leisure Centre. As this issue had arisen outside of the consultation period of the Master Plan she wanted to record this interest on behalf of the young people.

She reiterated the fact that this was very much a framework document and that we needed to have a Master Plan in place as part of the Local Development Framework for the entire County. As part of the work on the Local Development Framework there would be more avenues for consultation. She suggested that the comments made by Members at this Meeting needed to be included with the Master Plan.

The Leader proposed that the Executive consider a report on the feasibility of the proposed fishing lake and that the Council delegate the decision making to the Executive on this matter.

Councillor Nathan spoke in relation to the lack of open green space within Chester-le-Street for play areas and recreational use and requested that this should be included within the Master Plan to enhance the Town and attract visitors.

The Chief Executive responded to the comments raised by Members, which included sustainable transport, open green space, and youth provision and agreed that these should be included to support the Master Plan.

He suggested that the proposal by the Leader for Executive to be delegated authority to consider the detail of the leisure proposal should be incorporated within the recommendations within the report.

Councillor Jukes proposed to move the recommendations in the report with the suggested amendments and thanked Members for their comments and the Officers for their responses, which he felt were valuable.

The Leader seconded the proposal to include the additional recommendation to allow the Executive to consider a report on the feasibility of a fishing lake in the vicinity of the Leisure Centre and Members comments be included in the Master Plan.

RESOLVED:

- “1 That the Council agree to adopt the Master Plan Report.
- 2 That Members considered the 12 next steps outlined in the Master Plan Report.
- 3 That authority be granted to the Executive to look at a report on the feasibility or otherwise of a fishing lake in the vicinity of the Leisure Centre.
- 4 That the comments made by Members on the report be included as part of the Master Plan.”

Councillors D Holding and P Ellis returned to the Meeting.

96. COMMUNITIES FOR HEALTH PROGRAMME 2008-2009

Councillor Westrip gave a background to the report on the Communities for Health Programme 2008-2009. He highlighted the success of the first round of funding that had been granted to support the Children’s Development areas and Mental Health First Aid with MIND.

He advised that Chester-le-Street was classed as a spearhead area and therefore had been granted further funding of £120,000 for this year. He welcomed the opportunity for this Authority to work again with partners to set the priorities for this year and support the new unitary making sure health and equalities were highlighted and addressed.

He suggested that Members make him aware of any health and equalities issues they would like to see considered. Thanks were conveyed to Nick Tzamaras and Emma Golightly for the work they had done and also the PCT for their support.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services referred to the proposed recommendation in the report and advised that delegations needed to be given to specific Officers of this Council. He suggested that the recommendations be amended so that delegated authority was granted to the Director of Development Services, the Assistant Director of Development Services and the Community Development and Health Worker.

Members proposed and seconded that the recommendations in the report with the suggested amendment be approved.

The Council RESOLVED:

“That delegated authority be granted to the Director of Development Services, Assistant Director of Development Services and Community Development and Health Worker to develop/commission proposals and approve expenditure for the latest Communities for Health funding in 2008-2009.”

At this point Councillor J Proud left the Meeting at 7.16pm

97. CORRESPONDENCE

There were no items of correspondence.

98. CONFERENCES

There were no invitations to attend conferences.

99. 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 of Land adjacent to 2 Tennyson Avenue, Pelton Fell
Transfer in duplicate relating to sale of garage at South View, Kimblesworth
Transfer in duplicate relating to land at the West side of East Parade and North of South View
Transfer in duplicate relating to land West Side of East Parade and North of South View, 1 East Parade
Transfer in duplicate relating to Land West side of East Parade and North of South View, 5 South View
Transfer in duplicate relating to Land West side of East Parade and North of South View, 7 South View.”

The meeting terminated at 7.20 pm