

THE DISTRICT COUNCIL OF CHESTER-LE-STREET

Report of the meeting of Executive held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Newcastle Road, Chester-le-Street, Co Durham, DH3 3UT on Monday, 2 March 2009 at 3.00 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor L Ebbatson (Leader of the Council)

Councillor L Armstrong, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Value for Money
Councillor M Sekowski, Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Partnerships

Councillor C J Jukes, (Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Strategic Planning)

Councillor S C L Westrip, (Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services)

Officers: R Templeman (Chief Executive), I Forster (Director of Corporate Services), T Galloway (Director of Development Services), I Herberson (Head of Corporate Finance), J Elder (Acting Head of Resources), S High (Leisure Services Manager), L Dawson (Acting Head of Regeneration), A Stephenson (Executive Assistant), C D Simmonds (Assistant Solicitor) and D Humble (Democratic Services Assistant)

The Leader advised that this would be the last Meeting of the Executive of Chester-le-Street District Council and gave thanks and appreciation for the support that Executive Members and Officers had given over the last six years.

94. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

95. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 2 FEBRUARY 2009

RESOLVED: "That the minutes of the meeting held 2 February 2008, copies of which had previously been circulated to Members, be agreed as a correct record."

The Leader proceeded to sign the minutes.

96. PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no questions or representatives received from Members of the public.

97. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Leader declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item No.12 of the Agenda as reference was to be made in relation to the District Learning Partnership of which her husband was the Chairman.

98. FORWARD PLAN AND WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED: "That the contents of the Forward Plan and Work Programme be noted."

99. EXECUTIVE DECISION TRACKER

An update was given by the Acting Head of Regeneration on the progress of the Heart of the Village at Sacriston. She advised that planning approval had been granted and quotations had been invited for the soft landscaping work with the lowest tender being submitted by Service Direct who were due to commence on site next week.

A Meeting was due to be held with members of the community on 16 March at the Fulforth Centre to consider Art works for the Heart of the Village.

The Chief Executive spoke in relation to the contribution made by Linda Surtees on this project and advised of a positive meeting of the trust he had attended. He felt it was good to see the way representatives of the trust had dealt with and benefited through this scheme.

The Leader thanked the Acting Head of Regeneration, the Chief Executive and Leisure Services for the work they had undertaken.

RESOLVED: "That the Decision Tracker be noted."

100. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT APRIL 2008 - DECEMBER 2008

The Director of Corporate Services spoke in relation to the Corporate Performance Report for April 2008 – December 2008 and highlighted the key issues in the Overall Performance Summary on page 66 of the report.

He advised that the Council had continued with the positive direction of travel whilst contributing to LGR and this good performance would be reflected in the Audit Commission's report. He also reported that the new national set of Performance Indicators were performing very well against other Districts.

Councillor Westrip raised queries in relation to a number of low performing indicators including NI156 – number of households living in temporary accommodation, NI181 – the time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit new claims change events, NI194 – Air quality and NI191 – Residual household waste per household, which were clarified by Officers.

The Director of Corporate Services advised that the Government had recently produced a report on the efficiency of public buildings and that he was pleased to report that the District Council Civic Centre had been confirmed as being the most efficient building in all of the County and had achieved a category B status. He also reported that Sacriston Depot in terms of its location and activity was confirmed as the most efficient depot to operate from a C02 point of view.

The Leader spoke in relation to the value and presentation of this report, which she felt was a very important document that provided very clear and accessible information for Members that allowed performance to be monitored.

The Director of Corporate Services gave thanks to the team involved in collating this report, particularly Julie Scott the Senior Performance Officer. Thanks were also conveyed to the team on behalf of the Executive.

RESOLVED: "That it be noted that the Executive considered and commented on the progress on improvements and the contents of the Performance Report in Appendix 1 of the Report."

101. REVIEW INTO THE MARKETING OF SPORTS ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The Director of Corporate Services spoke in relation to the report that had been deferred for consideration following the last Meeting of the Executive to review the conclusions and recommendations in the report.

He advised that the comments from the Executive had been fed back and amendments to the report had been agreed by Councillor T Smith the Lead Member of the Task and Finish Group and Councillor G Armstrong the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It was noted that this report would be included as part of the 'handing over the baton' report.

RESOLVED:

- "1. That the conclusions reached in Paragraph 9.1 of the report should form the basis of future improvement to service delivery by the unitary authority.
2. That the findings of the review and the proposals for the future be submitted for the consideration of the new Unitary Council as part of the Handing Over the Baton Report with a recommendation that they consider the adoption of detailed recommendation above when considering improvements to the activities provided for young people."

102. OUTLINE OF NEW EXTERNALLY FUNDED PROGRAMMES

The Acting Leisure Services Manager gave a background to the report to inform Executive of three new programmes targeted at vulnerable groups that

were due to be implemented by the Leisure Services Team as a result of successful grant funding applications by the team to a number of external partners.

Councillor Westrip thanked the Acting Leisure Services Manager and his team for the hard work they had put into to this and for everything they had done over the years.

RESOLVED: "That the contents of this report and the efforts of the Leisure Services Team in securing this funding to allow delivery of these programmes within Chester-le-Street over the next three years be noted."

103. COMMUNITIES FOR HEALTH - MENTAL HEALTH PROJECT FINAL REPORT

Councillor Westrip introduced the report on the Final Evaluation of the Communities for Health Mental Health project. He advised that this had been an extremely successful project and was something to be proud of. He advised that mental health was becoming more of an agenda item and he was pleased to see Local Authorities working in partnership with the voluntary sector to deliver projects that will help people across the spectrum of mental health issues. He reassured Members that he would continue to work with MIND over the coming months/years.

The Leader thanked everyone involved in this project and asked that appreciation be passed on to the people at MIND on behalf of the Executive for the work they had done. It was agreed to establish the appropriate people in the new unitary to receive this report when it was finalised in June.

RESOLVED: "That the contents of the report be noted."

104. FINAL FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT AND MONITORING UPDATE

The Head of Corporate Finance gave a background to the Final Financial Management report and summarised the Council's General Fund Revenue position and Capital performance as well as the key issues arising from the financial monitoring processes and actions taken to address these.

He spoke in relation to three issues of concern including recycling credits, concessionary fares, financial penalties which were acknowledged by the Executive.

Discussion ensued on the concerns with the concessionary fares costs. The Chief Executive advised that he had written to the County Treasurer to seek validity and an audit trail of these costs. The Leader requested that the Executive endorse this action.

The Leader thanked the Head of Finance and his team for the hard work they had carried out this year. Thanks were also conveyed to Councillor L

Armstrong for his support and encouragement to the finance team and particularly the work he had done on the Capital Programme.

The Chief Executive spoke in relation to the underspend on the main priority area of People and Place Strengthening Partnerships Agenda and outlined possible projects that would see the continuation of the delivery of this agenda.

He spoke in relation his proposal to support the Outreach Worker to continue the debt counselling and advice work within Grange Villa, Sacriston and Pelton Fell and to help the Cestria Credit Union get established within Lilac House, Sacriston. He felt these services were essential to help support people through this economic recession particularly within the most vulnerable areas. A copy of his proposal had been circulated to Executive Members in advance of the Meeting.

He requested that he be delegated authority to finalise a Service Level Agreement to establish this project. Members supported this proposal and agreed that an additional recommendation be added to the recommendations to this effect.

The Leader declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the following issue that was to be discussed and left the meeting.

The Chief Executive briefed the Executive on a further project that he wished to be considered also using the funding from the People and Place Priority Strengthening Partnerships Agenda.

He spoke in relation the work of the District Learning Partnership that he wished to see continue working at a local level and to feed into other partners delivering services within Mile House alongside Enterprise Agency, PCT and New College Durham as well as linking into the Partnerships for Future project.

He therefore proposed that a further recommendation be added so that he be granted delegated authority to enter into a Service Level Agreement for this project also.

Councillor Westrip spoke on the good work that had been achieved by Brian Ebbatson through the District Learning Partnership and gave his support for the continuation of this work through the project outlined by the Chief Executive.

RESOLVED:

- “1. That the financial monitoring information detailed in section 5 and the projected balance on the General Fund Reserve detailed in section 6 of the report be noted.
2. That delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive to finalise the Service Level Agreement for the following projects using the

available funding as appropriate from the People and Place Priority - Strengthening Partnerships:

- To support the Outreach Worker for the continuation of the Citizens Advice Bureau Debt Advice Service and to assist the Cestria Credit Union work.
- To support the work of the District Learning Partnership to operate out of Mile House working with the Enterprise Agency, PCT and New College Durham linking also to the Partnerships for Futures Project.”

At this point the Leader returned to the Meeting.

Councillor Jukes left the Meeting at 4.06pm.

105. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS. TO RESOLVE:

RESOLVED: “That, in accordance with Regulation 21 (1)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) Regulations 2000, the public be excluded during the transaction of the following business because it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1,2 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972”

106. WRITE-OFF OF IRRECOVERABLE DEBT

The Acting Head of Resources spoke in relation the report to seek Executive approval to write-off irrecoverable debts.

RESOLVED: “That the debts detailed in section 5.2 of the report be written off.”

107. LAND MATTERS

The Acting Head of Regeneration spoke in relation to the report on various land matters.

Village Green application, East Parade, Kimblesworth

RESOLVED: “That the Executive notes the position regarding the application for Village Green status at East Parade, Kimblesworth and that no objections be raised to the application going forward.”

Allotments at Stella Gill, Pelton Fell for the purposes of a food co-operative serving the villages of Pelton Fell, Grange Villa and Sacriston.

The Assistant Solicitor updated Members on the process of this land matter which required Executive theoretical approval before it can be referred to the Government Office of the North East for the Secretary of State’s approval.

RESOLVED: "That subject to no formal objections from the Government Office North East approval be granted for a twenty year lease term to the Pelton Fell Community Group at a peppercorn rent."

The meeting terminated at 4.15 pm