

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Council Chamber,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Friday,
27 March 2009

Time: 11.00 a.m.

Present: Councillor J. Robinson J.P (Mayor) and

Councillors Mrs. A.M. Armstrong, B.F. Avery J.P, W.M. Blenkinsopp, Mrs. D. Bowman, D.R. Brown, V. Chapman, D. Chaytor, Mrs. K. Conroy, Mrs. P. Crathorne, V. Crosby, Mrs. L. M.G. Cuthbertson, D. Farry, T.F. Forrest, P. Gittins J.P., Mrs. B. Graham, A. Gray, G.C. Gray, Mrs. J. Gray, B. Haigh, Mrs. S. Haigh, D.M. Hancock, Mrs. I. Hewitson, J.E. Higgin, A. Hodgson, J.G. Huntington, Mrs. H.J. Hutchinson, Mrs. S. J. Iveson, J.M. Khan, B. Lamb, Mrs. E. Maddison, D.A. Newell, B.M. Ord, Mrs. E.M. Paylor, Mrs. C. Potts, A. Smith, B. Stephens, K. Thompson, A. Warburton, T. Ward, W. Waters and Mrs E. M. Wood

Apologies: Councillors T. Brimm, J. Burton, T. Hogan, Mrs. L. Hovvels, G.M.R. Howe, Ms. I. Jackson and C. Nelson

C.67/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

C.68/08 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 27th February 2009 and 16th March 2009 were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Mayor. (For copies see file of Minutes).

C.69/08 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor reported that since the meeting held on 27th February 2009 he had attended 28 functions and events including Golden Weddings, Civic Balls and Civic Charity evenings.

The Mayor made specific reference to the Oscar presentations held at Wellfield School, Wingate, the Rheinhausen visit hosted by Sedgefield Borough Council and the Sedgefield Borough Twinning Association and the Sedgefield Awards Evening for Sensational Youth held at Ferryhill Leisure Centre.

The Mayor explained that although fundraising was still ongoing over £23,500 had already been raised for his nominated charity, the Butterwick Hospice. He thanked the Deputy Mayor, local community, business sector and members of staff for their support and generosity.

**C.70/08 HANDING OVER OF CIVIC AND CEREMONIAL REGALIA TO
SEDGEFIELD TOWN COUNCIL**

The civic regalia was handed over to Councillor T. Jeanes, the Mayor of Sedgefield Town Council and Councillor D. Waters.

In response Councillor Jeanes thanked the Mayor and expressed his appreciation for the work which Sedgefield Borough Council had undertaken.

C.71/08

AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER 2007/2008

Consideration was given to the above letter which included the latest assessment on the Council's performance under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment Framework including the Direction of Travel report and the results of any inspections carried out by the Audit Commission under Section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999. (For copy see file of Minutes).

The key messages arising from the Inspection were as follows :-

- Value for money was generally good service standard and satisfaction levels were generally high and the Council had achieved its Gershon Efficiency targets.
- The Audit Commission had given an unqualified opinion on the Council's Accounts for 2007/08 and an unqualified conclusion on its arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. For the purpose of the final comprehensive assessment the Council's use of resources arrangements had scored 3 out of 4 overall. Given that the assessment represented a harder test incorporating some new requirements and in view of the additional challenges posed by impending Local Government Review it was to the Council's credit that it had maintained its overall performance.
- The prospect of abolition through Local Government Re-organisation had not distracted the Council from maintaining and in some cases, further improving, already high quality services focusing on its priorities whilst supporting workstreams for the new Council. It had continued to maintain its good performance with 38% of Performance Indicators in the best 25% compared to 33% nationally. Some improvements had been made in processing planning applications, Council Tax collection and repairs and maintenance. However, the Council's sickness absence rates were high and would need to be kept under review by the new unitary council to ensure costs were reduced and service standards maintained.
- Good progress had been made in major projects including re-developing Newton Aycliffe Town Centre and Spennymoor Leisure Centre and the Training partnership with Bishop Auckland College was proceeding well. However, the existing economic climate was expected to have an adverse effect on the Council's ability to generate capital receipts and progress development schemes planned with private sector partners.
- Until recently the Council had retained its Management Team despite the uncertainty of Local Government Review which had enabled it to support the new unitary Council through staff involvement in key workstreams.
- Members noted that the letter would be published on the Audit Commission's website and on the Council's website.

RESOLVED : *That the report be received.*

C.72/08

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2008/09

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Resources regarding the Council's Annual Governance Statement 2008/09. (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was reported the Account and Audit Regulations 2003 and 2006 required the Council to ensure that its financial management arrangements were adequate and effective and that there was a sound system of internal control in place which facilitated the effective exercise of the Council's functions and included arrangements for the management of risk.

Members' attention was drawn to the Annual Governance Statement 2008/09 which had been attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

It was explained that in accordance with the CIPFA/SOLACE guide and best practice, the statement covered the following areas:

- The scope of responsibility
- The purpose of the governance framework
- The governance framework itself
- A review of its effectiveness
- Outstanding issues from previous statements
- Any significant governance issues

The document recognised the importance of having sound internal control and governance arrangements in place at the new Council during 2009/10 to improve the governance environment, in particular, in connection with some of the Council's Transition Plan projects and in dealing with ongoing issues involved in the re-organisation of local government in the County.

RESOLVED : That the Annual Governance Statement for 2008/09 as shown in Appendix 1 be approved and accepted.

C.73/08

CORNFORTH CONSERVATION AREA - ARTICLE 4 (2) DIRECTION - 2009

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services regarding the above. (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was reported that the Article 4(2) Direction had been made in order to introduce additional planning control within the Cornforth Conservation Area where changes to the visual element of all dwellinghouses facing a highway or The Green were likely to have a direct impact upon the special character of the Conservation Area.

Under provisions in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 the Borough Council could make an Article 4(2) Direction which would assist the Councils positive policy of enhancing the Cornforth Conservation Area.

The draft Article 4(2) Direction was subject to consultation between 16th February and 13th March, 2009 by way of a Notice served on individual householders, local newspaper advertisement and an entry on the Council's website. The consultation, however, did not produce a single response.

A copy of the draft Article 4(2) Direction and accompany plan was attached to the report.

RESOLVED : That the Article 4(2) Direction within Cornforth Conservation Area be adopted.

C.74/08

MINUTES OF MEETINGS

The Minutes of the following meetings were confirmed as correct records:-

- Licensing Committee 2 - 2nd October, 2007
- Chief Officer Appointments Panel - 27th March, 2008
- Strategic Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 6th January, 2009
- Healthy Borough with Strong Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 13th January, 2009
- Prosperous and Attractive Borough Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 27th January, 2009
- Standards Committee - 5th February, 2009
- Area 2 Forum - 17th February, 2009
- Area 3 Forum - 25th February, 2009
- Area 4 Forum - 3rd March, 2009
- Development Control Committee - 6th March, 2009
- Area 1 Forum - 9th March, 2009
- Area 5 Forum - 10th March, 2009
- Cabinet - 19th March, 2009
- Audit Committee - 23rd March, 2009
- Licensing Committee1 - 25th March, 2009
- Employment Issues Panel - 27th March, 2009

(For copies see file of Minutes).

C.75/08

LAST MEETING OF SEDGFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

As this was the last meeting of Sedgfield Borough Council, Members expressed their thanks and appreciation for the good work carried out by officers and Members of the Council.

B. Allen, Chief Executive also thanked Members and Officers and commended the good working relationships.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection, etc., in relation to these Minutes and associated papers should contact Lynsey Walker 01388 816166 ext 4237 email:lwalker@sedgefield.gov.uk