

**DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

**AT A MEETING** of the **COUNTY COUNCIL** held at the County Hall, Durham on **Wednesday 13 December 2006** at 10.00 a.m.

**Present:**

**COUNCILLOR E FOSTER** in the Chair

Councillors Armstrong, Barker, Bell, Bowman, Burlison, C Carr, R Carr, Carroll, Chapman, Coates, Cox, Davies, Douthwaite, Fergus, Forster, N C Foster, Freeman, Gray, Henderson, Hodgson, Holroyd, Hunter, Magee, Manton, Marshall, Martin, Mason, Meir, Morgan, Myers, Nugent, O'Donnell, Pendlebury, Priestley, Pye, Robson, Shuttleworth, Simmons, Southwell, Stradling, Tennant, Vasey, Wade, Walker, Williams and Young

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cordon, Ebbatson, Graham and Ord.

**A1 Declarations of Interest**

Councillors Bell, C Carr, Fergus, Freeman, Gray, Henderson, Priestley, Shuttleworth, Simmons, Southwell and Stradling each declared a personal interest in relation to Item 3 (Local Government White Paper) in their capacity as Members of Borough or District Councils in the County.

**A2 Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Colin Carr, the newly elected Member for Ouston and Urpeth, to his first Council meeting.

**A3 Local Government White Paper**

The Council noted a report from the Chief Executive providing details of the new Local Government White Paper which included an invitation to councils to put forward proposals to improve and strengthen local government in areas that currently had two-tier structures. The report also outlined the nature of the invitation and asked the Council how it wished to respond to the Government's invitation (for copy see file of Minutes).

The following Motion was **Moved** by Councillor Nugent and **Seconded** by Councillor Walker:

*In the light of the challenges facing County Durham and the opportunities presented by the new Local Government White Paper, the County Council resolves to respond to the Government's invitation to improve governance in two-tier areas by putting forward proposals for a new, single unitary council for County Durham, the details to be agreed by the Council's Cabinet with input from Overview and Scrutiny Members prior to submission to Government in January 2007.*

The following Amendment to the Motion was **Moved** by Councillor Martin and **Seconded** by Councillor Southwell:

*Delete all after "..., single unitary council for County Durham" and insert:*

*In so resolving, the County Council notes with concern the current prevailing public attitude of disengagement with local government across England as exemplified by low turnouts at local elections.*

*The Council believes that centralising decision making for the largest county in England at County Hall will simply reinforce this disengagement.*

*In addition, therefore, the County Council resolves to develop and embed within its proposals the principal of subsidiarity to ensure that, as far as possible, decisions affecting the varied local communities across the County will be taken by the elected representatives of those communities, via effective local area committees and partnerships with the relevant town and parish councils.*

*The details of these and other relevant matters will be agreed by the Council's Cabinet with input from Overview and Scrutiny Members prior to submission to Government in January 2007.*

On a vote being taken, the Amendment was **Lost**.

On a further vote being taken it was

**Resolved:**

In the light of the challenges facing County Durham and the opportunities presented by the new Local Government White Paper, the County Council responds to the Government's initiative to improve governance in two-tier areas by putting forward proposals for a new, single unitary council for County Durham, the details to be agreed by the Council's Cabinet with input from Overview and Scrutiny Members prior to submission to Government in January 2007.

#### **A4 Ouston and Urpeth By-Election – Statement of County Returning Officer**

The Council received a Statement from the County Returning Officer of the person elected as a County Councillor for the Ouston and Urpeth Electoral Division at the By-election held on 30 November 2006 (for copy see file of Minutes).

#### **A5 Scheme for the Allocation of Seats on Committees and Sub-Committees of the Council**

**Moved** by Councillor Williams, **Seconded** by Councillor O'Donnell and

##### **Resolved Unanimously:**

That the following Scheme for the apportionment of seats be adopted under the enabling power of Section 17 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989:

##### **(A) COMMITTEES**

###### **Overview and Scrutiny**

Labour	42
Liberal Democrat	5
Conservative	2
Independent	3
	<b>52</b>

*Voting Members for education matters:*

*Church Representatives (2)*

*Parent Governors (3)*

###### **Standards**

Labour	3
Liberal Democrat	1
Conservative	1
Independent	1
Non-County Councillors (including Chairman)	2
	<b>8</b>

###### **Appeals and Complaints**

Labour	25
Liberal Democrat	2
Conservative	1
Independent	2
	<b>30</b>

**Chief Officer Appointments**

Labour	12
Liberal Democrat	1
Conservative	1
Independent	1
	<b>15</b>

**Highways**

Labour	26
Liberal Democrat	2
Conservative	1
Independent	1
	<b>30</b>

**Human Resources**

Labour	26
Liberal Democrat	2
Conservative	1
Independent	1
	<b>30</b>

**Licensing, Registration and General Purposes**

Labour	26
Liberal Democrat	2
Conservative	1
Independent	1
	<b>30</b>

**Planning**

Labour	26
Liberal Democrat	2
Conservative	1
Independent	1
	<b>30</b>

**Pension Fund**

Labour	9
Liberal Democrat	1
Independent	1
	<b>11</b>

County Durham Borough/District Council Members (4)

Darlington Borough Council Members (2)

## **(B) OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEES**

### **Building a Strong Economy**

Labour	20
Liberal Democrat	3
Conservative	1
Independent	1
	<b>25</b>

### **Corporate Management Issues**

Labour	13
Liberal Democrat	1
Conservative	1
Independent	1
	<b>16</b>

### **Developing Lifelong Learning**

Labour	20
Liberal Democrat	2
Conservative	1
Independent	2
	<b>25</b>

*Voting Members for education matters:*

*Church Representatives (2)*

*Parent Governors (3)*

### **Health**

Labour	11
Liberal Democrat	1
Conservative	1
Independent	1
	<b>14</b>

*Borough/District Council Members (14)*

### **Looking After The Environment**

Labour	20
Liberal Democrat	2
Conservative	1
Independent	2
	<b>25</b>

### **Promoting Strong, Healthy & Safe Communities**

Labour	20
Liberal Democrat	3
Conservative	1
Independent	1
	<b>25</b>

**Also Resolved Unanimously:**

That the Acting Director of Corporate Services be authorised, under the Scheme, to allocate seats to political groups in respect of any ad hoc groups set up by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider any specific issues together with any new Sub Committees, Panels or Groups which might be established in the future.

**A6 Awards**

The Council received details of the following awards and the Cabinet Members concerned made presentations to representative groups of staff -

- (a) Highways Magazine Excellence Awards
  - (i) Passive Safety Initiative
  - (ii) The Country's most Innovative Local Authority
- (b) Equality Standard for Local Government – Level 3 Validation
- (c) New College Durham's Apprentice of the Year

(for further background see file of Minutes).

**Resolved:**

That the Council place on record its congratulations and appreciation to all the staff concerned for their efforts and achievements.