

## **THE DISTRICT COUNCIL OF CHESTER-LE-STREET**

Report of the Meeting of the Executive held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Chester-le-Street on Monday 1 October 2007 at 3.00pm.

### PRESENT

Councillor L Ebbatson (Leader of the Council)  
Councillor S A Henig (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Value for Money)  
Councillor S C L Westrip (Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services)  
Councillor M Potts (Portfolio Holder for Health and Well-being)  
Councillor S Barr (Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Partnership Working)  
Councillor C J Jukes (Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Strategic Planning)

Officers: R Templeman (Chief Executive), L Chambers (Director of Resources), I Forster (Assistant Chief Executive), C Potter (Head of Legal and Democratic Services), A Hutchinson (Head of Planning and Environmental Health, M Walker (Head of Regeneration), J Lulic (Community Development Manager), A Ainsley (Acting Head of Housing Services), L Howley (Acting Team Leader, Environmental Health), D Bell (Regeneration Contracts Officer), A Stephenson (Executive Assistant) and K Fletcher (Democratic Services Assistant).

### **68 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

### **69 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 3 SEPTEMBER 2007**

It was proposed and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held 3 September 2007 be agreed as a correct record, subject to Councillor Henig's name being included on the list of attendees.

RESOLVED: "That the minutes of the meeting held 3 September 2007, copies of which had been previously circulated to Members be agreed as a correct record, subject to Councillor Henig's name being included on the list of attendees."

### **70 PUBLIC SPEAKING**

There were no questions or representations received from the public.

## **71 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Barr declared a Personal and Prejudicial interest in relation to Item No 15 – Land Matters as he is a Ward Councillor for the area detailed within the report.

## **72 FORWARD PLAN AND WORK PROGRAMME**

The Leader introduced the Forward Plan and Work Programme.

Discussion took place with regard to those items included within the document and Members of the Executive agreed the current programme.

It was noted that a revised date for consideration of the Review into Environmental Enforcement in relation to the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environments Act 2005 was required.

RESOLVED: “That the Forward Plan and Work Programme be noted.”

## **73 DECISION TRACKER**

Members considered the Decision Tracker and were updated on the progress of a number of developments including: Neighbourhood Management; Procurement Strategy; Proposals for a New Youth Development Programme; Surplus Land Proposals; Sacriston Community and Sport Trust Grant Funding; Review into toilet provision in the Town Centre; and Sacriston Area Development Framework.

The Head of Regeneration advised that he was confident that the scheme for the new Youth Development Programme would be delivered within the four priority areas previously agreed by the Executive and that he would circulate information to Members on the indicators and measurable outcomes for the scheme.

In relation to Surplus Land Proposals, it was agreed by Members that the financial position of available resources for surplus land proposals would be incorporated within the Mid-Term Financial Strategy, to be considered at the November meeting of the Executive.

The Chief Executive referred to Sacriston Community and Sport Trust Grant Funding and advised that building works had now commenced and the programme was on schedule. It was agreed by Members that this current item be removed from the Decision Tracker but a further item be included to allow for updates to be provided when necessary.

In relation to the review of public toilet provision within the Town Centre, Members agreed to remove all points of this item with the exception of the investigation into a community toilet scheme. It was agreed that an update be provided at the November meeting of the Executive following discussions at the Business Association meeting this month.

It was agreed that Items 10, 17, 18, 22 (in part) and 25 be removed from the Decision Tracker.

RESOLVED: "That the Decision Tracker be noted, amended and updated accordingly."

#### **74 REVIEW OF CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

Consideration was given to a report from the Assistant Chief Executive detailing a review and proposals for corporate priorities.

The Assistant Chief Executive advised that the existing priorities had been in place for over two years and needed to be reviewed. He identified the two key proposals would be to: (1) revise the corporate priorities of the Council and (2) revise the improvement plan following CPA Judgement.

The Assistant Chief Executive highlighted the impact of Local Government Reorganisation on the priority setting process.

He referred to Appendix 1 of the report and advised that the report suggested the continuous development of corporate priorities through the Executive and Corporate Management Team. He confirmed that a report would be presented to the December meeting of the Executive to agree the corporate priorities, with a view to take forward the priorities as part of the budget process and for final agreement by Council in March 2008.

It was proposed and seconded that the recommendation to the report be agreed.

RESOLVED:

- "1 That the process for considering revising Council priorities and proposals as set out in Appendix 1 be agreed.
- 2 That the relevant decisions to be taken and appropriate timescales be included within the Forward Plan and Work Programme."

**The Assistant Chief Executive left the meeting at 3.33pm**

## **75 REVIEW OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

Consideration was given to a report from the Director of Resources detailing the findings of a review of the Council's current governance arrangements.

The Director of Resources advised that the current governance arrangements were last reviewed in 2003 based on 'best practice'. She confirmed the current review had been undertaken against the new CIPFA/SOLACE framework which defined six core principles of good governance, which were outlined in paragraph 5.5 of the report.

She advised that the six core principles had a series of supporting principles, each of which translated into a range of specific requirements and should be reflected within the Council's new corporate governance code.

Discussion took place with regard to the need to 'flag up' the assessment of the effectiveness of scrutiny and that an action point could be created to address this within the code.

The Director of Resources advised that this matter should be discussed with the appropriate Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny and the Leader confirmed that she would raise this matter at the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

It was proposed and seconded that the recommendations to the report be agreed.

RESOLVED:

- "1 That the areas for action to ensure the Council meets the requirements of the new governance framework be noted.
- 2 That the Corporate Governance Steering Group be responsible for the development, implementation and monitoring of the detailed action plan.
- 3 That a verbal update on progress be provided at the November meeting of the Executive.
- 4 That the Leader discuss the effectiveness of Scrutiny in relation to the new governance framework at the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board."

## **76 COMMUNITIES FOR HEALTH – ACTION PLAN**

Consideration was given to a report from the Director of Development Services to update Members on the commissioning process for an Intervention Programme under the Department of Health's Communities for Health Programme.

Councillor Westrip confirmed a meeting had been held to discuss the proposal to deliver the project from Mind.

He confirmed that a new action plan would be drawn up by Mind and presented to the Board this week for approval and that the action plan considered by Members of the Executive would be updated to reflect these changes.

Councillor Westrip suggested that he and the Director of Development Services be delegated authority to process the Action Plan due to time and budget constraints. The Leader suggested that the recommendation to the report be reflected to amend this.

It was proposed and seconded that the amended recommendation to the report be agreed.

RESOLVED:

- “1 That the report and action plan be noted.
- 2 That delegated authority be granted to Councillor Westrip and the Director of Development Services to agree the commissioning of the work referred to within the report and action plan with the successful bidder, subject to it being within budget. Further more a SMART Action Plan be created for the work to be carried out and be brought back to the Executive for information via the Decision Tracker. “

## **77 REVIEW OF PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING POLICY**

Consideration was given to a report from the Head of Planning and Environmental Health detailing a review of Private Sector Housing Policy.

The Head of Planning and Environmental Health advised that the main purpose of the Policy was to target financial assistance effectively in order to reduce the number of vulnerable households living in non-decent private sector owner-occupied housing. It was highlighted that the review also took into account the effectiveness of the current Waiting List System.

She highlighted the current situation within the district and of action to be taken to ensure that the Council remain on target to reduce the number of vulnerable households living in non-decent housing.

The Leader queried the current grants afforded to vulnerable households and the Head of Planning and Environmental Health and Acting Team Leader, Environmental Health provided clarification to Members.

It was proposed and seconded that the recommendations to the report be agreed.

RESOLVED:

- “1 That further capital funding bids for the financial years 2008/09 and 2009/10 are made to the Capital Working Group in order to meet the Council’s target of 70% vulnerable households living in decent homes by 2010.
- 2 That the amendment to the Waiting List System as detailed in paragraph 5.4 of the report be agreed.
- 3 That Security Grants be removed from the Policy but can be considered as part of a future review if an appropriate scheme is delivered.
- 4 That the existing mechanisms for policy review as well as performance standards and monitoring be continued.
- 5 That officers be authorised to participate in the development of the Regional Loans Scheme which will be the subject of a future report to Members.”

## **78 COMMUNITY FACILITIES REVIEW – BASELINE REPORT**

Consideration was given to a report from the Head of Regeneration, which summarised the position and knowledge at this current stage of the review regarding Community Facilities in Chester-le-Street.

The Community Development Manager advised that work had commenced on the review during July 2007 and that a Steering Group had now been established for the review.

He advised of the consultation process, which had taken place to date and highlighted the content of the appendices.

The Leader referred to the appendices and raised issues in relation to the need to identify those premises which had a long term lease; the need to make clear that the annual revenue costs for Bullion Hall was not from the District Council but generated from voluntary services; and the need for libraries to be included within the review.

### **Councillor M Potts left the meeting at 4.02pm**

Detailed discussion took place with regard to the information which should be derived from the review and it was highlighted that wider stakeholder consultation be deferred until further investigation work had taken place.

It was proposed and seconded that the recommendations to the report be agreed.

RESOLVED:

- “1 That progress made so far in conducting the Community Facilities Review, including the Terms of Reference for the Steering Group, as attached at Appendix 1 be noted.
- 2 That the vision statement for community facilities in the District, as included at Appendix 1 be agreed.
- 3 That the baseline information on community facilities as attached at Appendix 2 be noted.
- 4 That the Head of Regeneration be authorised to identify any early wins that can be brought forward for consideration by the Executive that can contribute to the agreed vision for community facilities within the Council’s existing policy and funding framework and reported back to the Executive in December 2007.
- 5 That the Head of Regeneration be authorised to continue with the further progress in developing a strategic approach and action plan for community facilities, as outlined in Section 5 of the report.
- 6 That wider stakeholder consultation be deferred until further investigation work on community facilities had been undertaken.”

## **79 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

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 paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.”

## **80 REGENERATION QUARTERLY REPORT**

Consideration was given to a report from the Head of Regeneration to provide progress in delivery of the regeneration strategy and specifically capital projects that contribute towards it.

The Head of Regeneration advised the report highlighted some of the main achievements or issues over the last quarter and that 18 of the 40 agreed actions within the Regeneration Strategy had now been completed, 19 were on target and of the 3 which were behind target measures had been put in place to ensure targets would be met.

The Head of Regeneration proceeded to update Members on the content of the Appendices.

It was proposed and seconded that the recommendation to the report be agreed.

RESOLVED: "That progress on the regeneration projects as set out in the Regeneration Projects Quarterly Report as set out in Appendix 1 (capital projects) and Appendix 2 (regeneration strategy) be noted."

**Prior to consideration of the following item, Councillor Barr declared a personal and prejudicial interest as a Ward Councillor, left the meeting at this point and did not return.**

## **81 LAND MATTERS**

Consideration was given to a report from the Regeneration Contracts Officer relating to requests made from residents within Henley Avenue, regarding the open plan area to the front of their properties.

The Regeneration Contracts Officer advised of consultations which had taken place within Pelton Fell. He confirmed that requests had been made by residents for the second phase of the Poets Estate Environmental Improvement Scheme, which included: provide clear defined front gardens; provide parking within gardens; and improve the quality of open spaces.

Discussion took place regarding the options available for the scheme and it was proposed and seconded that the recommendation to the report be amended to reflect the discussions held.

RESOLVED:

- "1 That the Executive agreed not to gift the land in question at this time.
- 2 That further discussions take place with residents in Henley Avenue with a view to agreeing a comprehensive scheme, uniform to all properties with owner-occupiers paying, at cost, costs incurred in improving the frontage to their properties."

The meeting terminated at 5.05pm