

## **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, 7 April 2008 at 3.00 pm

### PRESENT:

Councillor L Ebbatson (Leader of the Council)

Councillor S A Henig, (Portfolio Holder for Resources and Value for Money)  
Councillor C J Jukes, (Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Strategic Planning)

Councillor M Potts, (Portfolio Holder for Health and Well-being)

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

Officers: R Templeman (Chief Executive), I Herberson (Head of Corporate Finance), J Henderson (Acting Head of Resources Directorate), G MacCallam (Environmental Services Manager), M Keenlyside (Environmental Strategy Co-ordinator), L Dawson (Acting Head of Regeneration), A Kinsey (Housing Strategy Officer), M Mansbridge (Asset Management Assistant), J Bradley (Assistant Solicitor), N Cummings (Scrutiny Officer) and D Allinson (Democratic Services Assistant)

Also in Attendance: Councillor D M Holding (Chairman of Partnership and Efficiency OSP)

### **156. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor S Barr.

### **157. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 3 MARCH 2008**

The Leader made reference to Minute number 153 – Partnerships for Futures and queried when the nominations for a Member representative would be considered. It was noted that this would take place at the Council Meeting in May 2008.

RESOLVED: “That the minutes of the meeting held 3 March 2008, copies of which had previously been circulated to Members be agreed as a correct record.”

### **158. PUBLIC SPEAKING**

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

### **159. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received from Members.

## **160. FORWARD PLAN AND WORK PROGRAMME**

The Leader introduced the Forward Plan and Work Programme. The Director of Development Services made reference to two items he wished to add to the Forward Plan for consideration in May, which included a Life Check Programme from the Department of Health, and the Communities for Health Programme. Members agreed to these additions.

It was agreed that the Taxi Licensing Policy item on the Work Programme should be deferred for consideration until July 2008.

RESOLVED: "That the Forward Plan and Work Programme be noted and updated accordingly."

## **161. EXECUTIVE DECISION TRACKER**

**At this point Councillor C Jukes entered to the Meeting at 3.10pm**

Members considered the Decision Tracker and the Leader referred to a number of items that were to be amended on the Tracker as follows:-

Item 1 - Poets Estate, Pelton Fell – Environmental Improvement Strategy

Item 2 - Pelton Fell Neighbourhood Regeneration Partnership

It was agreed that these items be removed from the tracker and be incorporated into the Quarterly Regeneration Update Report.

Item 3 - Neighbourhood Management

It was agreed that this item be deleted from the tracker as this was to be included within the Council's single priority arrangements which were currently being drafted.

Item 5 - Procurement Strategy Action Plan

It was agreed that this item be deleted from the tracker and be included in the Quarterly Corporate Performance Report.

Item 6 - Regeneration of Priority of Villages using Single Housing Investment Programme Round Two

It was agreed that this item be deleted from the tracker and be included in the Quarterly Regeneration Report. It was also suggested that a summary on what had been delivered through the SHIP investment be provided to Executive in June and a state of the District report be produced to Council in June.

Item 7 - Single Housing Investment Programme (SHIP 1)

It was agreed that this item be deleted from the tracker and be included in the Quarterly Regeneration Update Report

Item 8 - Medium Term Financial Strategy

It was agreed that this item be deleted from the tracker and be included within the Work Programme in light of the Local Government Review.

It was noted that the Section 151 Officers had been in discussions with the County Treasurer on a written statement to allow for business as usual. The Leader suggested its existence should be formally acknowledged within the Authority.

**Item 10 - Review of Industrial/Business Sites**

It was agreed that this be deleted from the tracker as this issue would be subsumed when looking at business assets for the new Authority.

**Item 11 - Review of Community facilities**

The Leader went through each of the bullet points listed under this decision and suggested that a number of them be deleted. It was noted that a report was due to come to Executive next month on this item.

She advised that several of the issues would link to the single priority and would be considered under the 'Strengthening Partnerships' project or possibly the scrutiny work programme.

In relation to the last bullet point under this decision the Chief Executive confirmed that it had been agreed to extend the lease terms to give CVS and Bullion Hall greater security of tenure.

**Item 14 - Review into public toilet provision in Town Centre**

It was agreed that this item be deleted from the tracker as this would be incorporated into the action plan for single priority around Town Centre Development.

**Item 15 - Sacriston Area Development Framework**

It was agreed that this item be deleted from the tracker but that updates continue to be provided to Members through the Land Matters reports.

**Item 16 - Updates Community Resource Centre at Sacriston**

The Chief Executive gave a verbal update in relation to Item No. 16 – Community Resource Centre at Sacriston which despite a problem in relation to the demolition process was still scheduled to be completed by the end of May.

**Item 17 - Corporate Governance Framework Action Plan**

It was agreed that this item be deleted from the tracker.

**RESOLVED:** "That the Decision Tracker and the amendments be noted."

**162. REVIEW INTO ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT IN RELATION TO THE CLEAN NEIGHBOURHOODS AND ENVIRONMENTS ACT 2005 - COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS REPORT**

The Director of Development Services referred to the report on Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 a copy of which was circulated at the Meeting.

He made reference to Appendix 2, which listed an Action Plan to address the recommendations suggested by the Leisure and Neighbourhood OSP following the detailed investigation into the new powers available under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. The report also highlighted the implications of this work in relation to the Local Government Review and the resulting work stream on Neighbourhood Services, which has representation from Officers of the Council.

The Director of Development Services referred to Appendix 3 of the report, which showed a table comparing the current charging rates with the Scrutiny Panels recommendations. It was agreed that the current charging rates should be retained.

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

**RESOLVED:**

- “1. That the progress made in implementing the action plan from the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel be noted.
2. That the Executive approve the use of the baseline information and recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel to be fed into the Local Government Review process and
3. subject to approving the outcomes and recommendations of the Enforcement Action Learning Set, agree for those recommendations to be used to inform the Local Government Review work stream on Neighbourhood Services in preparing for the new Unitary Authority.”

**163. HOUSING STRATEGY**

Consideration was given to a report from the Acting Head of Regeneration to seek approval of the Housing Strategy.

The Housing Strategy Officer proceeded to give a background on the report, which had been reviewed and amended following the transfer of stock to Cestria Community Housing. An updated copy of the Housing Strategy document was circulated to Members.

The Housing Strategy Officer spoke in relation to the revised Housing Strategy and how this would set the overall direction for improving the quality and choice of housing in Chester-le-Street and ensure the housing needs and aspirations of the district were identified. He also outlined the four Strategic

Objectives, which had been set to achieve real outcomes for local residents. Particular reference was made to the affordable housing requirement.

The Leader referred to the Housing Strategy document, which she felt, had been very well researched. She suggested that the Executive go through this document page by page and raise comments where necessary.

Comments and amendments were put forward by Members and discussion ensued on a number of issues all which were addressed and noted by the Housing Strategy Officer.

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

RESOLVED: “That the Executive approve the Housing Strategy, subject to the amendments made at the Meeting and agree that this be taken forward to the Council Meeting for approval.”

#### **164. REFERRALS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANELS**

Review into Community Partnerships

Consideration was given to the findings of the Partnership and Efficiency Overview Scrutiny Panel following the review into Community Partnerships as set out in appendix 1 of the report.

The Chairman of the Partnership and Efficiency Overview and Scrutiny Panel, Councillor David Holding presented the report to the Executive and gave a background to the review, which was undertaken to investigate the value of Community Partnerships and future challenges to community engagement. He highlighted the key issues within the report for information and drew Members attention to the recommendations, which were set out in Section 10 of the report.

The Leader made reference in particular to the visit to Gateshead and the knowledge that was obtained from them on community partnerships. Councillor Holding explained that although they had better resources their Community Partnerships operated in a similar way to ours. He advised that it would have been useful to have been able to look at other Authorities however this was not possible due to the timescales of the review.

The Leader advised that the Local Strategic Partnership was currently looking at Leicester’s experience in community participation and referred to the challenges ahead. She advised that this review contained useful information and gave an opportunity to learn about the Local Strategic Partnership and Community Partnerships.

Councillor Holding addressed queries from Councillor Westrip on whether this investigation had included strong and prosperous communities, community

call for action and Neighbourhood Management. He also spoke in response to his query on how training would work in practice and the role for Members.

The Leader suggested that the recommendations which were set out in Section 10 of the report should be taken forward through the 'Strengthening Partnerships' single priority Action Learning Sets.

She referred to the Action Learning Sets and scrutiny arrangements that were currently being looked at which would be closely linked to the transition action plan and would include links for Councillors to become involved in.

The Leader gave thanks to Councillor Holding and Nigel Cummings the Scrutiny Officer for the work they had put into this review.

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

RESOLVED: "That the contents of the Review into Community Partnerships report be noted and the recommendations contained in section 10 of the report be taken forward through the 'Strengthening Partnerships' single priority Action Learning Set."

#### **165. 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 200, 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 to the Local Government Act 1972."

#### **166. WRITE-OFF IRRECOVERABLE DEBTS**

Consideration was given to a report from the Head of Corporate Finance to seek the Executive's approval to write-off irrecoverable debts.

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

RESOLVED: "That the Executive authorise the write-off of the debts detailed in section 5.2 of the report."

## **167. PROVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES TO EXTERNAL PARTNERS**

Consideration was given to a report from the Environmental Services Manager to seek the Executive's approval to deliver goods and services to external partners as set out in the Local Government Act 2003. The Director of Development Services gave a background to the report and highlighted in particular the estimated services to external partners, which were listed in Section 5 of the report.

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

RESOLVED:

- “1. That approval be granted for the provision of the delivery of services to external partners as set out in Section 5.1 of the report.
2. That authority be granted to the Director of Development Service to approve the delivery of goods and services to the external partners listed in 5.1 of this report.”

## **168. REGENERATION QUARTERLY REPORT**

Consideration was given to a report from the Acting Head of Regeneration to provide the Executive with a regular quarterly report on progress on the delivery of the regeneration strategy, and specifically capital projects that contribute to it.

The Acting Head of Regeneration spoke in relation to the report and highlighted some of the main achievements and issues that had arisen in the last quarter. She drew Members attention in relation to Appendix 1 of the report, which showed progress on capital schemes, and Appendix 2, which showed progress towards the wider Regeneration Strategy.

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

RESOLVED: “That the Executive notes the progress on the regeneration projects as set out in the Regeneration Projects Quarterly Report, as set out at Appendix 1 (capital projects), and Appendix 2 (regeneration strategy).”

## **169. LAND MATTERS**

Consideration was given to a report from the Acting Head of Regeneration who briefed the Executive in relation to various land matters.

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

RESOLVED:

**“Easement at Lingey House Farm, Sacriston**

- 1) That an Easement be granted subject to the applicant being responsible for all the Council’s costs associated with the disposal of land in accordance with the Council adopted Land Disposal Policy and procedures.

**Dedication of land at Fenton Close, Chester-le-Street for highway purposes**

- 2) That approval be granted to dedicate the land for footway link purposes and that the District Council retains the sub soil.”

The meeting terminated at 5.35 pm