

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 June 2008 at 3.00 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor L Ebbatson (Leader of the Council)

Councillor S C L Westrip, (Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services)
Councillor L Armstrong, (Portfolio Holder for Resources and Value for Money)
Councillor M Sekowski, (Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Partnerships)

Officers: R Templeman (Chief Executive), I Forster (Director of Corporate Services), C Potter (Head of Legal and Democratic Services), T Galloway (Director of Development Services), N Tzamaras (Assistant Director of Development Services), J Elder (Acting Head of Resources), L Dawson (Acting Head of Regeneration), L Howley (Chief Environmental Health Officer), A Stephenson (Executive Assistant) and D Allinson (Democratic Services Assistant)

The Leader welcomed the new Portfolio Holders M Sekowski Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Partnerships and Councillor L Armstrong Portfolio Holder for Resources and Value for Money who had been appointed at the Annual Council Meeting on 29 May 2008. It was noted that Councillor Westrip had been appointed as Deputy Leader of the Council and would continue in his role as Portfolio Holder of Neighbourhood Services and Councillor C J Jukes would remain as Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Strategic Planning.

The Leader thanked the former Portfolio Holders Councillors S Henig, S Barr and M Potts for their contribution in their roles on the Executive and wished them well for the future.

182. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor C J Jukes.

183. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 12 MAY 2008

RESOLVED: "That the minutes of the meeting held 12 May 2008, copies of which had previously been circulated to Members be agreed as a correct record."

The Leader proceeded to sign the minutes.

184. PUBLIC SPEAKING

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

185. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received from Members.

186. FORWARD PLAN AND WORK PROGRAMME

The Leader introduced the Forward Plan and Work Programme and suggested that the Executive Members details on page 11 of the report be updated accordingly.

It was agreed that the date for the Communities Facilities Working Group item be amended to July 2008.

The Director of Development Services spoke in relation to the Enforcement Policy, which was listed within the Work Programme. It was agreed that this item be removed from the Executive Work Programme.

The Director of Development Services updated Members in relation to the Tender for the Big Lottery play areas, which was to be brought to the Executive in July 2008.

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

187. EXECUTIVE DECISION TRACKER

Members considered the Decision Tracker and were updated on the progress of a number of developments including: the Development Framework for the Heart of Pelton Fell, Review of Community Facilities, Community Resource Centre Sacriston, Implementing the Transition Plan, New Power to establish Parish Councils (including Town Councils)

Development Framework Principles for the Heart of Pelton Fell

The Head of Regeneration advised that tenders were due to go out this month for the heart of the village and work was ongoing on the Big Lottery funding application. It was agreed that this item be left on the decision tracker for an update in August.

Medium Term Financial Strategy

The Chief Executive spoke in relation to the preparations for the budget. He advised that discussions would need to be undertaken with the County Treasurer on the way forward and to ensure that our proposals were taken into consideration.

It was suggested that the Medium Term Financial Strategy be removed from the Decision Tracker and an update on the 2009/10 budget be given in October.

Review of Community Facilities –

The Chief Executive advised that discussions were being held with Durham County Council on the long-term financial support for these facilities. It was agreed that a new date be added for July 2008.

Updates Community Resources Centre at Sacriston

The Acting Head of Regeneration updated Members on the progress on the community resources centre and the revised scheme for the village square. The Chief Executive advised of recent discussions that had been held to move this scheme forward.

The Leader suggested that a further update on this item be received in August and the Executive be kept informed in relation to the official opening of the Centre.

Single Housing Investment Programme (SHIP)

It was agreed that the date for this item be amended to July 2008 on the decision tracker.

Implementing the Transition Plan: Developing 'People and Place'

The Director of Corporate Services spoke in relation to the progress that had been made in relation to developing the transition plan for 'People and Place'.

Discussion ensued in relation to the Scrutiny Committee's work programme. The Leader suggested that a schedule be included in the work programme for routine performance monitoring which should now include Cestria Housing Association and the Empty Property Strategy Action Plan.

It was agreed that this item be removed from the decision tracker as this would now become a standing item on the Executive Agenda.

New Power to establish Parish Councils (including Town Councils)

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services spoke in relation to developments on the new power to establish Parish Councils (including Town Councils) and advised that a formal response was still awaited from Durham County Council following the meeting with the Boundary Committee.

It was agreed that this item be left on the decision tracker and the community members who had shown an interest be notified of the awaited response from Durham County Council.

Department for Health Project

Councillor Westrip gave an update. The Executive Assistant is to be advised of the date of the next progress report for the decision tracker.

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

188. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT APRIL 2007 TO MARCH 2008

The Assistant Chief Executive advised that the report was largely positive with a very positive Annual Audit and Inspection Letter from the Audit Commission.

Particular discussion ensued in relation to the impact the new recycling scheme had on performance figures.

The Leader requested that the complaints and compliment statistics which were listed in section 11 of the report be provided in the same format in future reports.

The Director of Corporate Services advised of the capacity issues across the Authority due to the extra workload for Officers in light of the Local Government Review. It was noted that the Members were aware of this issue and that Management Team was monitoring the situation regularly.

The Leader thanked the Director of Corporate Services and the Officers involved in producing this report.

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

RESOLVED: "That Members considered and commented on the progress on improvements and the contents of the Performance Report in Appendix 1 of the report, address the learning and remedial measures identified and identify any other areas where improvements are required to corporate performance."

189. PRIVATE SECTOR EMPTY PROPERTY TRANSITIONAL POLICY

The Chief Environmental Health Officer spoke in relation to the report on the Private Sector Empty Property Transitional Policy and advised of the consultation process that had been undertaken and the Action Plan that had been produced.

The Leader referred to paragraph 3.1 of the report and asked that Members note that this policy could be useful when looking at the People and Place priority.

It was suggested that the report be amended to incorporate the monitoring of this Policy in the Scrutiny Committee's work programme.

Councillor L Armstrong queried the inconsistency on the wording relating to an empty home. It was agreed that this be amended to ensure that this was consistent throughout the report.

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

RESOLVED: "That it be recommended that the Empty Property Strategy attached at Appendix 1 of the report be approved by Council and be

monitored by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of their work programme.”

190. 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 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.”

191. LAND MATTERS

Consideration was given to a report from the Acting Head of Regeneration relating to various land matters.

Members discussed each disposal as outline within the report.

The following recommendations were proposed and seconded by Members.

1. Transfer of Land

RESOLVED: “That the land be transferred into the ownership of the homeowners by way of a Deed of Gift.”

2. Revised Offer for land

RESOLVED: “That having regard to the current depressed property market in which it is believed that there is a significant risk that a re-tendering exercise could result in a lower offer being made contrary to the public interest, contract standing orders are hereby waived in order to permit the Council to accept the revised figure set out in the exempt report and that the Council accepts that said revised figure for the said land because it is greater than the original valuation figure and is still higher than the nearest original tender offer.”

The meeting terminated at 4.26 pm

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