

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, 1 September 2008 at 3.00 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor L Ebbatson, (Leader of the Council)
Councillor S C L Westrip, (Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services)
Councillor M Sekowski, (Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Partnerships)

Officers: R Templeman (Chief Executive), I Forster (Director of Corporate Services), T Galloway (Director of Development Services), C Potter (Head of Legal and Democratic Services), J Elder (Acting Head of Resources), N Tzamarias (Assistant Director of Development Services), J Lulic (Community Development Manager), J Smerdon (Regeneration and Strategy Co-ordinator), Lunn (External Funding and Regeneration Officer), A Stephenson (Executive Assistant) and D Humble (Democratic Services Assistant)

Also in attendance: Councillors G Armstrong and R Harrison.

25. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for Absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors L Armstrong and C Jukes.

26. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 4 AUGUST 2008

RESOLVED: "That the minutes of the meeting held 4 August 2008, copies of which had previously been circulated to Members, be agreed as a correct record."

The Leader proceeded to sign the minutes.

27. PUBLIC SPEAKING

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

28. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received from Members.

It was agreed that Item No.13 be considered prior to the other items listed on the Agenda due to the fact that Councillors G Armstrong and R Harrison were present in relation to this item.

29. REVIEW INTO LOCAL WATERCOURSES

Councillor G Armstrong, Chairman of the former Leisure and Neighbourhood Overview and Scrutiny Panel who conducted the review into Local Watercourses gave a background to the report. He advised that the review had commenced in July 2007 following issues raised by local residents, parish council and the local conservation group in Bournmoor over the quality of the local waterway at Lumley Park Burn.

He outlined the scrutiny review process including the evidence gathered, the various organisations involved and the findings of the review.

Discussion ensued in relation to the potential of reedbeds as a resolution to the problem, however Councillor Armstrong pointed out that these schemes were costly. He advised however that the Coal Authority were currently looking into alternative options to divert pumping away from Lumley Park Burn.

The Chief Executive spoke in relation to joint working in relation to local planning issues and how we look at bio-diversity and environmental improvements. He felt that environmental enhancements to critical watercourses could be considered as part of the core strategy of the Local Development Framework as a way to look at potential source of funding from major developments through 106 contributions.

The Leader queried whether this report would be sent to various participants or external bodies. The Director of Corporate Services confirmed that he would ensure that this was carried out.

The Leader suggested that an additional recommendation be added to the recommendations to suggest that this report should be treated as a background paper for the Local Development Framework in relation to the issues outlined by the Chief Executive.

The Leader advised that this was a very interesting report and conveyed thanks to all those involved in producing it.

RESOLVED:

- “1 That Members note the review and agree to the recommendations contained within.
- 2 That the Executive agree that the report be forwarded to Durham County Council for consideration.
- 3 That the report be used as a background paper for the Local Development Framework in relation to the issues raised by the Chief Executive.”

30. FORWARD PLAN AND WORK PROGRAMME

The Leader introduced the Forward Plan and Work Programme. It was recommended that the Key Decisions highlighted for inclusion within the Forward Plan be agreed.

It was agreed that the Review of Local Watercourses, Tenders for the Heart of the Village, Corporate Performance Report, Communities for health – Mental Health Project, Local Development Framework be deleted from the Work Programme.

It was recommended that the non-key decisions highlighted for inclusion within the Forward Plan be agreed.

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

31. EXECUTIVE DECISION TRACKER

Members considered the Decision Tracker. The Chief Executive gave a brief update in relation to the tenders in relation to the Development Framework Principles for the Heart of Pelton Fell, that would be considered further in the in the private part of the Agenda.

The Leader suggested that the Review of Community Facilities be deleted from the Decision Tracker.

A verbal update was given by the Chief Executive on the Community Resource Centre at Sacriston which was now being effectively used by clubs and classes. He advised that work was expected to start soon on the demolition of the old Community Centre and the planned environmental improvement works.

The Leader advised that the Strengthening Partnerships Action Learning Set had been asked to support a feasibility study with Sport Durham on behalf of the Community Trust at Sacriston to look into sporting provision and requested that they take into consideration the Area Development Framework.

Councillor Harrison referred to the relocation of the War Memorial and gave an update on the progress that had been made to date.

The Leader requested that the Department for Health Project be deleted from the Decision Tracker.

RESOLVED: “That the Decision Tracker and the amendments be noted.”

32. IMPLEMENTING THE TRANSITION PLAN; DEVELOPING 'PEOPLE AND PLACE'

Consideration was given to a report from the Director of Corporate Services to update members on progress made on developing the 'People and Place' Delivery Plan and the key issues on the four Action Learning Sets.

The Director of Corporate Services outlined the progress to date in the four Action Learning Sets and highlighted in particular the progress made in relation to Young People and Place where a full series of events had been organised as set out on the Council's web-site to help engage with young people.

He also referred to a project that had been added to the Neighbourhoods Action Learning Set which was a video that had been designed and delivered by Environmental Services Enforcement Team to increase Environmental awareness raising for areas of their work.

The Leader expressed concern that local Councillors were not being involved in and made aware of the projects that were in hand. The Director of Corporate Services advised that he would work with the Action Learning Set leads to move this forward and raise the awareness of these projects both internally and externally.

It was agreed that that the Environmental Services Enforcement Team's video be show prior to the Special Council Meeting which was scheduled to be held on 30 September 2008.

Councillor Westrip advised as a point of information that powers were to be invested in the new Unitary Authority so that long standing Councillors could be nominated Aldermen in advance of the new Unitary being formed which was noted by Members.

The Leader referred to page 28 of the report on Neighbourhoods Action Learning Set with reference to the booking of community centre rooms and clarified that this was a shared online facility which does not relate solely to Sacriston Community Centre.

RESOLVED:

- “1 That the progress to date on implementing the Transition Plan be noted;
- 2 That the progress made in respect of individual progress be noted.”

33. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT APRIL 2008 TO JUNE 2008

The Director of Corporate Services advised of the need for the Council to retain a high level of performance management and direction of travel for its final year. He advised of the positive progress made so far on performance and spoke in relation to new sections introduced to the report such as health and safety, complaints - dealing with telephone enquiries and new national indicator set performance.

The Leader advised that she was pleased to see the changes taking place particularly in relation to the handling of complaints and congratulated the Officers involved in this.

It was noted that Councillor L Armstrong had requested that comparisons be made with other Authorities in relation to the number of complaints about the recycling scheme.

Councillor Westrip raised a number of queries in relation to the new local indicators, the improvements made to sickness indicators performance and the number of health and safety incidences in respect of Leisure, which were addressed by the Director of Corporate Services.

RESOLVED: "That the progress on improvements and the contents of the Performance Report in Appendix 1 of the Report be noted."

34. AUDIT AND INSPECTION PLAN

The Acting Director of Resources advised that this item was for Members information and would be considered at the Audit Committee on 16 September 2008. It was noted that if any Members wished to direct any questions in relation to this report they could do so through the Audit Committee.

Particular discussion ensued in relation to moving towards Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) next year, which was explained by the Director of Corporate Services.

RESOLVED: "That the Audit and Inspection Plan from the Audit Commission which would be considered at the Audit Committee on 16 September 2008 be noted."

35. COMMUNITIES FOR HEALTH - MENTAL HEALTH PROJECT EVALUATION

Councillor Westrip spoke in relation to the project delivered by MIND on behalf of the Council, which he felt had exceeded expectations.

He advised that MIND had moved ahead on all targets set in the project and that the feedback had been very encouraging. It had been an extremely successful project and that MIND had excelled themselves in delivering it. He reported that progress on this project would continue to be reviewed.

Thanks were conveyed to the sub-group of the LSP who had been working on this project alongside the PCT.

The Leader advised that this was an excellent example of partnership working and gave particular thanks and appreciation to Councillor Westrip for his involvement in this project and his commitment and expertise in making this so successful.

RESOLVED: "That the contents of the report be noted and responsibility be delegated to the Communities for Health Sub-group to oversee the full evaluation of the first year of the Mental Health project."

36. EARLY INTEGRATION OF THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK FUNCTION

The Regeneration and Strategic Planning Manager introduced the report and gave an update on progress that had been made on the Local Development Framework on how we would integrate work done so far.

The Chief Executive requested that the Regeneration and Strategic Planning Manager produce a report in November on how we are proceeding with the Town Centre Master Plan and how this could be incorporated as a key priority under the LDF in the new Unitary Authority. The Chief Executive also suggested that the Regeneration and Strategic Planning Manager incorporate some of his early ideas in terms of visioning work so that Members could give some support to this and so this could also be adopted as part of the core strategy.

The Leader advised that this is one of the key investments that she wished to see recognised at County level and hopefully promoted and that it would be useful to see a draft version of his preferred options. She felt it would be useful to have CMT/Executive joint session or away day to look at these issues. The Chief Executive suggested that this session should also include discussion of the 'handing over the baton' work.

The Chief Executive also suggested that this report should be referred to Council.

The Leader suggested that an additional recommendation be added so that Parish Councils be notified by letter of the functions that will continue to be undertaken by District Councils until vesting day and that this be distributed with the weekly planning list.

RESOLVED:

- "1 That the Executive recommends that Full Council agrees the formal cessation of work on the Chester-le-Street Local Development Framework.
- 2 That the Executive notes and supports the early integration of the Local Development Framework (LDF) function and the creation of an Interim Team and the interim appointment of a Strategic Planning Manager.
- 3 That a letter be sent to all Parish Councils to advise of the functions that will continue to be undertaken by District Councils until vesting day."

37. 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 of the Local Government Act 1972."

38. TENDERS FOR PELTON FELL HEART OF THE VILLAGE

The Chief Executive gave a verbal update on the progress that had been made in relation to the Tenders for Pelton Fell Heart of the Village Community Centre.

It was noted that three tenders had been received for Pelton Fell Heart of the Village and that a Meeting would be held with the consultants Capita to go through the tender evaluation process. He gave an update in relation to the timetable for works to the Community Centre and the Environmental Improvements.

RESOLVED: "That the verbal update on the progress with the Tenders for Pelton Fell Heart of the Village be noted."

39. LAND MATTERS

Consideration was given to a report from the Acting Head of Regeneration on Land Matters requests.

It was noted that Councillor L Armstrong had raised comments in relation to the request at Fell Road, Pelton Fell that were noted by the Executive.

Members felt that notwithstanding the comments expressed by Councillor L Armstrong that it would be premature to sell off the land at this time and therefore they agreed with the Officer's recommendation not to approve the request.

Members raised a number of issues in relation to the request for grazing land at New Lambton. It was therefore agreed that this item be deferred pending further information.

RESOLVED:

Premise at Fell Road, Pelton Fell

- 1) "That the request be not approved at this time and that the application is held in abeyance until such time as further economic regeneration opportunities are explored.

Grazing Land at New Lambton

- 2) That this item be deferred so that further information can be considered in relation to this request."

40. REVIEW IN TO COMMUNITY FACILITIES - THIRD STAGE REPORT

The Community Development Manager gave a background on a Review of Community Facilities and gave an update on model for community appraisal,

strengths and weaknesses associated with community facilities, models of delivery, steps to community hubs and the proposals for the new Unitary Authority regarding management of facilities.

An amended copy of Appendix 2 on the current status of community facilities was circulated to Members and the changes were highlighted for information.

The Leader advised that this was a very useful and interesting report and thanked the Community Development Manager. Particular discussion ensued in relation to the work and resources that would be required to establish community hubs.

The Leader highlighted a number of issues in relation to the community hub model, that she felt needed to be established further, which were noted by the Community Development Manager.

She requested that thanks be conveyed to the Communities Facilities Review Working Group for the work that they had undertaken on this review.

RESOLVED:

- “1 That the proposals referred to in paragraph 14.2 are referred to the County Council (and hence the new Unitary Authority) as a recommended approach to the further development of community facilities in Chester-le-Street.
- 2 That an amended report together with the views of Members be submitted in due course to the ‘access workstream’ and the Leader of the County Council for information and consideration to help inform the prioritisation work in which the County Council Cabinet is currently engaged.
- 3 That the Community Facilities Review Working Group is ‘wound down’ and that Members of that group be informed of the decisions in relation to his report and thanked for their contributions in bringing this report forward.”

The meeting terminated at 5.05 pm