

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 February 2009 at 3.00 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor L Ebbatson (Leader of the Council)

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

Councillor C J Jukes, (Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Strategic Planning)

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), I Herberson (Head of Corporate Finance), J Elder (Acting Head of Resources), C Potter (Head of Legal and Democratic Services), L Dawson (Acting Head of Regeneration), R McMullen (Town Centre Development Manager), J Lulic (Community Development Manager), G Clark (ICT Manager), J Johns (Economic Development and Tourism Officer), J Underwood (Performance, Improvement and Equality Manager), E Golightly (Community Development and Health Worker), B Cruikshank (Anti-Social Behaviour Officer), C Chapman (Community Co-hesion), S Pearson (Personal Assistant), A Stephenson (Executive Assistant) and D Humble (Democratic Services Assistant)

78. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

79. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 1 DECEMBER 2008

RESOLVED: "That the minutes of the meeting held 1 December 2008, copies of which had previously been circulated to Members, be agreed as a correct record."

The Leader proceeded to sign the minutes.

80. PUBLIC SPEAKING

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

81. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received from Members.

82. FORWARD PLAN AND WORK PROGRAMME

The Leader advised that there were no updates or amendments to be made to the Forward Plan and Work Programme.

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

83. EXECUTIVE DECISION TRACKER

The Leader suggested that the update on the Community Resource Centre at Sacriston be given at the next Executive Meeting in March.

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

84. IMPLEMENTING THE TRANSITION PLAN: DEVELOPING 'PEOPLE AND PLACE'

Presentations were given by each of the Action Learning Sets on the overall achievements made on implementing the People and Place priority which are summarised as follows:

Strengthening Partnerships

- ICT support at Community Centres – Graeme Clark
- Youth Forum – Emma Golightly
- Community Cohesion – Julie Underwood and Carl Chapman
- What Wonderful Women Project – Julie Underwood
- Future of Unparished Areas – Ian Forster
- Sports Development (It's a Knockout) – Graeme Clark and Ian Forster

Investment in Town Centre (Rob McMullen)

- Christmas Lights and Celebrations
- Business Improvement District,
- Future of the Market
- Banners and Locator Boards

Partnerships for Futures

- Hanlon Skills Register – Jenny Johns
- Young Entrepreneurs Project – Jenny Johns and pupils from Roseberry School

Neighbourhoods

- Chester in Bloom – Mike Keenlyside
- Reducing Anti-Social Behaviour – Barbara Cruikshank
- Open Your Eyes – Paul Rutherford
- Increasing Local Democracy – Shelley Marshall

The Leader gave thanks and appreciation to everyone involved in the Action Learning Sets including Officers, Executive Members, Councillors, Partners and Members of the public who had worked closely together and gave up their time to be involved in the projects which would be included in the 'Handing Over the Baton Report' to the new Unitary Authority.

Ian Forster also conveyed his thanks to everyone for the significant amount of hard work and effort that had gone into the projects which had been extremely successful and of which he was very proud.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the progress made in implementing the Transition Plan be noted.
- 2) That the progress made in respect of individual progress as outlined in this report and comment on the issues raised be noted.
- 3) That the presentations by the Action Learning Sets on the progress made in implementing the 'People and Place Priority' be noted.
- 4) That the approach to the 'handing over the baton' report to the new authority be agreed."

85. 3RD QUARTER FINANCIAL MONITORING POSITION

The Head of Corporate Finance spoke to his report that summarised the half-year financial monitoring position and the changes made since his last report.

He spoke in relation to the financial position of Leisure Services, Environmental Health and Planning, Environmental Services, Revenues and Benefits, Regeneration, Corporate Development Unit, Legal and Democratic Services.

He raised two issues in particular including the Green Cycle contract that would continue to be monitored and the associated costs with the management of the Early Retirement/Voluntary Redundancy.

The Chief Executive gave clarification in relation to the ER/VR contract and the information he was still awaiting a response on from the County Treasurer.

The Head of Corporate Finance advised that he would need to closely monitor the income streams, supplies, services and vacancies. He would report back to the next Executive if necessary. It was noted that the external Auditors had been kept informed on the financial progress.

RESOLVED: "That the financial monitoring information detailed in section 5 of the report be noted."

86. REVIEW INTO THE FUTURE OF UNPARISHED AREAS OF CHESTER-LE-STREET

Councillor Holding the Task and Finish Group Lead Member for this Review spoke in relation to the report on the Future of the unparished areas of the District and gave a background to the review.

He advised of the options that were considered in the Review and detailed the methodology of the review including a sample resident's survey, a focus group that was held at the Civic Centre and visits to Town Councils.

He summarised the conclusions and findings of the review, which had included mixed views about whether Chester-le-Street ought to be fully parished that would be submitted for consideration to the new Unitary Council as part of the 'Handing Over the Baton Report'.

The Leader thanked everyone concerned for the work that had gone into this report. She felt that the evidence was inconclusive and gave mixed messages on how people felt about this issue.

Members made comments on the following issues:

- That the sample target used in the questionnaire did not reflect the true opinion of the District.
- That people had a lack of understanding about Parish/Town Councils
- Whether a community council had been explored
- Whether minority / hard to reach groups had been targeted
- Confusion over AAP's

Councillor Holding responded to the comments raised by Members and advised that there was a limited time and resources to undertake this review.

The Director of Corporate Services reassured Members that the scrutiny panel had also raised the same issues and would have done things differently if time and resources had allowed.

Members appreciated the work that was done under the circumstances and thanked the Review Panel for this report.

RESOLVED:

- "1. That the findings of the review and the proposals for the future are submitted for the consideration of the new Unitary Council as part of the 'Handing Over the Baton' Report.
- 2 That Durham County Council be requested to undertake an early 'community governance review' based on the whole area of the existing District and not just the unparished area of the District Council.
- 3 That Durham County Council be requested to consider how they might consider an interim arrangement for governance until the

outcome of a 'community governance review' is known and implemented."

87. REVIEW INTO THE FUTURE OF THE MARKET FINAL REPORT

Councillor G Armstrong the Lead Member for this Review spoke in relation to the report of the Review of the Future of the Market in Chester-le-Street.

He advised that this project ran alongside the Smart Speed Consulting Ltd who were also looking at the future of the market. The Task and Finish Group had visited several nearby markets and talked to market managers, customers, staff and traders.

A meeting had been held with the Chester-le-Street market traders that had proved to be very useful and which he hoped would continue. He outlined the findings of the review and the variety of approaches used by different authorities to alleviate the difficulties.

He also outlined the conclusions and recommendations of the Smart Speed Consultancy and ran through some of the problem areas suggested for improving.

The Leader spoke in relation to the report which she felt was slightly biased towards the traders. In her opinion the open space at the Civic Heart should continue to be used for events and that further work needed to be done to develop a realistic plan to take the market forward.

The Chief Executive spoke in relation to previous experience of dealing with a declining market. In his opinion Chester-le-Street market was missing the quality and presentation required to bring a different mix.

Councillor Westrip felt that this was a very comprehensive report, however in his opinion there were a number of diversity issues that needed to be considered in the future which were noted.

The Leader thanked the Review Team for the work that had gone into the report.

RESOLVED:

- "1) That the responsibility for the management of the market be retained by the local authority and subsequent local authority.
- 2) A phased improvement plan be developed in line with the recommendations in the consultants report and should the implementation of the improvement plan fail to achieve the intended outcomes then the County Council should seriously consider an outsourcing exercise.
- 3) The findings of the review and the proposals for the future be submitted for the consideration of the new Unitary Council as part of the Handing Over the Baton Report with a recommendation that the market ought to

be continued to be operated by the local authority unless the improvement plan fails to deliver the necessary change.”

88. REVIEW INTO THE MARKETING OF ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE FINAL REPORT

In the absence of Councillor T Smith the Lead Member of the Review, Councillor G Armstrong spoke to the report on the Review into the marketing of activities for young people and gave a brief account of the objectives of the review, the methodology, conclusions and recommendations.

The Leader felt there was a greater need of the understanding of the context within which Leisure services operated and the revenue demands. She also felt that the way they currently communicated with the young people was interesting, however it needed to be broadened.

She advised of a report that had been produced by the Audit Commission called ‘Tired of hanging around’ which reports that sport and leisure projects involving music, film making or football designed in consultation with young people can help them from drifting into anti-social behaviour which she felt would be useful.

Councillor Westrip was also of the opinion that the report needed to be more structured and focus more on consultation with young people. He would have liked to see more in the report on the services for young people such as those provided by Sunderland Council who promote more than just sport and gives young people ownership of activities.

The Chief Executive spoke on the report and suggested that the recommendations should specifically state that services needed to be designed with young people and ensure there was a link to the new youth forum.

The Leader suggested that the conclusions and recommendations needed to be rewritten to ensure that the points made on working with young people were incorporated and therefore requested that this report be deferred.

RESOLVED: “That this report be deferred and the recommendations be revised for consideration at the next Executive Meeting.”

89. 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 1,2 & 3 Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.”

90. COMMUNITY FACILITIES REPORT

Consideration was given to a report from the Community Development Manager on the updated Third Stage Report on the Review of the Community Facilities.

The Leader proposed amendments to paragraph 14.2 of the report and an additional sentence after section 14 to be carried out before the report was forwarded to the new Unitary Authority. Changes to the distribution of the report were also agreed.

The Leader thanked the Community Facilities Working Group and the Community Development Manager for the work they had done on this review.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the proposals that are referred to in the amended 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 subject to 1 (above), this report is submitted to the 'access work stream', and the Leader, the Portfolio Holders for Community Matters, and the Assistant Chief Executive of the County Council for their information and consideration to help inform the prioritisation work in which the County Council Cabinet is currently engaged. In addition the report be sent to all County Councillors representing divisions in the District of Chester-le-Street for information.
- 3) That the Community Facilities Review Working Group is 'wound down' and that Members of that group are informed of the decisions in relation to his report and thanked for their contributions in bringing this report forward."

91. WRITE-OFF IRRECOVERABLE DEBTS

Consideration was given to a report from the Head of Corporate Finance detailing the irrecoverable debts.

RESOLVED: "That authorisation be granted for the debts detailed in section 5.2 of the report to be written-off."

92. LAND MATTERS

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

RESOLVED:

60 Park Road North, Chester-le-Street

“RESOLVED: That the application to acquire the land identified in Appendix A be refused for the reason that the land had been identified for use as a designated play area in accordance with the Council’s adopted Play Strategy and as such is not surplus to the Council’s requirements.

Unit 20 and 23 Stella Gill Industrial Estate

RESOLVED: That the request to purchase the freehold interest be refused as the property is not surplus to the Councils requirements for the following reasons:-

- The premises are part of the councils industrial strategic property portfolio, providing expansion and employment opportunities and;
- The revenue generated helps to support commercial property sustainability, which in turn attracts employment opportunities to the area.

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

RESOLVED: That approval be granted to dedicate the land for highway purposes and that the District Council retains the sub soil.”

93. TENDERS FOR DELIVERY OF HEART OF THE VILLAGE PELTON FELL

Consideration was given to a report from the Acting Head of Regeneration to seek acceptance from the Executive on the lowest valid tender received in relation to the refurbishment of the existing Community Resources Centre and installation of a play area and Multi Use Games Area.

RESOLVED: “That the lowest valid tender submitted by Rok Building Limited be accepted and a contract be entered into accordingly to deliver the Village Heart, Pelton Fell.”

The meeting terminated at 6.05 pm