

THE DISTRICT COUNCIL OF CHESTER-LE-STREET

Report of the meeting of Leisure and Neighbourhood Overview and Scrutiny Panel held in the Conference Room No.3, Civic Centre, Newcastle Road, Chester-le-Street, Co Durham, DH3 3UT on Wednesday, 9 April 2008 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor Geoffrey Armstrong (Chairman)

Councillors:

J W Barrett	D Thompson
W Laverick	F Wilkinson
M D May	

Officers:

I Forster (Director of Corporate Services), N Cummings (Scrutiny Officer) and S Marshall (Democratic Services Assistant)

62. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Sekowski.

63. MINUTES MEETING HELD 12 MARCH 2008

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

The Chairman proceeded to sign the minutes.

64. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

65. PUBLIC SPEAKING

Three members of the public were present at the meeting. The Chairman advised he would invite them to speak at the appropriate times during the meeting.

66. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT SUMMARY APRIL 2007 - DECEMBER 2007

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Corporate Services providing a summary of key areas of performance from achieving the corporate plan to complaints.

Reference was made to Appendix 1 of the report, which summarised the report and included full details of performance on Best Value Performance Indicators for the quarter.

Councillor Thompson entered the meeting at 6.07pm.

The Director of Corporate Services advised that it was important to maintain the direction of travel in the long-term approach to excellence.

He spoke in relation to the summary of the key issues of overall performance as detailed in paragraph 5.3 of the report and welcomed questions from those present.

The Chairman referred to Local Government Review and stated that it would be difficult to maintain high standards without staff in key posts. He also commented on the high numbers of staff who have left the authority.

The Director of Corporate Services advised that it would be difficult to guarantee performance being maintained due to a significant number of employees moving outside of the county. He stated that the loss of talent and expertise was worrying and may result in a recruitment drive for the new authority.

A member of the public referred to BVPI 82a(ii) and queried why there had not been any improvement in performance.

Discussion ensued in relation to the new recycling scheme introduced on 1 April 2008 and Members agreed that after initial teething problems the scheme would more than likely be a success.

In relation to the number of visits to the Council's website, the Chairman commented that the number of visits was phenomenal and Councillor Barrett queried the Benefit Fraud Referrals.

The Director of Corporate Services advised that the referrals were where people were reporting other people who they suspected of claiming benefits fraudulently.

The Chairman queried the issue of Member access to the intranet from home.

The Director of Corporate Services advised that if Members had a broadband connection at home they were able to access the intranet with the use of a

code available from the ICT department. He advised he would circulate access details to all Members.

Councillor Barrett made reference to the improved sickness levels and queried if it was thought that sickness levels would increase during the next year.

The Director of Corporate Services advised that there would be capacity issues as staff leave the authority which could increase stress levels along with other increased pressures that were foreseen for the coming year but that it was hoped that areas could be addressed where there were capacity issues.

RESOLVED: "That the content of the report and the comments made be noted."

67. FEEDBACK ON SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS

The Chairman advised that the Development and Building Control Manager had provided an update in relation to the commuted sum the Council received from Miller Homes as part of their development at Pelton Lane Ends.

He advised that the monies had been received by the Council and that in accordance with the resolution received from the Planning Committee, at its meeting in May 2003, the monies were available for use in the upgrading of existing recreational/community facilities within the locality of the application site.

RESOLVED: "That the comments made be noted."

68. FEEDBACK ON LEISURE SERVICES OVERVIEW

The Chairman advised that an update had been provided by the Leisure Services Manager in relation to a play area for Urpeth Grange and the attendance figures for the free swim scheme.

He advised that there was currently an old play area at Bradley Close within Urpeth Grange but that this was in a state of disrepair. He stated that discussions had taken place with the planning team about the possibility of a residential development on this area, which is County Council land, and should this occur a new play area would be installed as part of the development and this was identified within the play strategy action plan.

The Director of Corporate Services suggested that this matter be taken up as part of the new People and Place Corporate Priority.

RESOLVED: "That the comments made be noted."

69. FEEDBACK ON COUNTY WASTE STRATEGY

The Chairman advised that feedback had been received from the Environmental Strategy Co-ordinator in relation to the life expectancy of the landfill site at Coxhoe.

He advised that phase 1 of Coxhoe landfill site contains approximately 5 million meters cubed of waste and phase 2, which will commence in August 2008, has a capacity of 2,297,924 meters cubed, giving an approximate capacity of 7-8 years. He advised that the total capacity was yet to be calculated following the Panel's request.

RESOLVED: "That the comments made be noted."

At this point in the meeting the Director of Corporate Services stated that he would like to make 2 formal acknowledgements as follows:

- **Thanks to Shelley Marshall, Democratic Services Assistant, and the Democratic Services Team for their hard work in implementing the new electronic committee management system**
- **Thanks to staff at the Riverside and the volunteers who helped make the It's a Knockout competition a success.**

70. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED: "That the next meeting of the Panel be held on Wednesday 14 May 2008 at 6.00pm."

The meeting terminated at 7.05 pm