

THE DISTRICT COUNCIL OF CHESTER-LE-STREET

Report of the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held in the Conference Room No.3, Civic Centre, Chester-le-Street, Co Durham, DH3 3UT on Tuesday, 6 May 2008 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor Geoffrey Armstrong (Chairman)

Councillors:

J W Barrett D M Holding
L E W Brown

Officers:

N Cummings (Scrutiny Officer), R McMullen (Town Centre Development Manager) and S Marshall (Democratic Services Assistant)

55. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor A K Holden.

56. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 19 MARCH 2008

It was proposed and seconded that the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed.

RESOLVED: "That the minutes of the meeting held 19 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.

57. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

58. PUBLIC SPEAKING

No members of the public were present at the meeting.

59. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW

The Chairman welcomed the Leader, who was present to provide an update on the Local Government Review, to the meeting.

The Leader proceeded to provide the Board with an update on matters, including the following:

- The agenda from the last Implementation Executive meeting
- Transitional constitution
- Sustainable Community Strategy
- Local Area Agreement
- Agreed LSVT at Sedgefield Borough Council
- Overview and Scrutiny function
- The appointment of the Executive
- The appointment of the Chief Executive

Discussion ensued in relation to the above matters and the Leader advised as far as she was able.

RESOLVED: "That the comments made be noted."

The Chairman advised that Item No.13 on the agenda would be considered at this point in the meeting.

60. TOWN CENTRE UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed the Town Centre Development Manager to the meeting.

The Town Centre Development Manager proceeded to provide the Board with an update of the proposed plans for the town centre. He advised that a Town Centre Master Plan had been devised and discussions were underway with a developer for the former Co-operative building.

Discussion ensued in relation to the proposed use of the former Co-operative building and the Town Centre Development Manager advised he could not confirm any further details at present.

Councillor Harrison left the meeting at 6.40pm.

The Town Centre Development Manager went onto advise of plans to attract visitors to the town such as the recently successful dance event held in the civic heart.

He also advised of plans to develop a Business Improvement District, hopefully to improve the economy of the town.

Councillor Brown queried if locator boards was to be erected.

The Town Centre Development Manager advised that this had been ongoing for approximately 6 years but that work was being carried out on the project and planning permission wouldn't be an issue as the boards were for information purposes. He advised that the boards would be in Perspex cases

with locks top and bottom to enable the boards to be changed as and when needed.

Discussion ensued in relation to car parking and toilet facilities in the town.

RESOLVED: "That the comments made be noted."

61. VERBAL UPDATES FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANELS

a) Report of Chair of Leisure and Neighbourhood Overview and Scrutiny Panel

The Chairman advised that the Review of Local Watercourses was almost finished and that a meeting had been arranged with Natural England for 20 May.

b) Report of Chair of Partnership and Efficiency Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Councillor holding advised that the Review of Community Partnerships had been considered at the last Executive meeting.

c) Report of Chair of Regeneration and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel

There was no-one present from the Panel to provide an update.

RESOLVED: "That the comments made be noted."

62. SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

Consideration was given to the report of the Scrutiny Officer to present the Scrutiny Annual Report to Members for consideration and agreement prior to presentation to Council.

The Scrutiny Officer requested comments from the Board.

Councillor Holding stated that Paragraph 4.7 of the report needed amending from "Nexus Transport Company" to "Tyne and Wear passenger Transport Executive".

Members agreed the content of the report and recommended that it be referred to Council.

RESOLVED: "That the Board agreed the content of the Annual Scrutiny Report and that it be presented to Council."

63. SCRUTINY EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Consideration was given to the report of the Scrutiny Officer presenting the findings from a recent countrywide exercise conducted into scrutiny.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that the work was carried out by Durham County Council and the 7 District Council and the findings were collated and organised by a PhD student working within Durham County Council.

The Scrutiny referred to page 51 of the agenda, which provided general comments in relation to the work, and strength of scrutiny.

The Chairman commented that he found it staggering that, as detailed on page 51 under "Strengths – Work of Scrutiny", 100% of recommendations were accepted.

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

64. LOCAL PETITIONS, CALLS FOR ACTION AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

The Board considered a presentation relating to local petitions, calls for action and community empowerment.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that the County and Unitary Council Officer Overview and Scrutiny Network had formulated a response to the consultation questions.

Councillor Barrett queried if there could be a potential petition for a town council.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that this could be possible.

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

65. ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

There were no items suggested for the next agenda.

66. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The Chairman advised that the next meeting of the Board was scheduled for 3 June 2008 but he suggested that the meeting be arranged after the Scrutiny Workshop and Annual Council Meeting had taken place.

RESOLVED: "That the next meeting of the Board be arranged at a later date."

The Chairman advised that as this was the last meeting of the Board under the current scrutiny structure he would like to convey his thanks to all scrutiny members for their conscientious attendance and support.

The meeting terminated at 7.25 pm

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