

THE DISTRICT COUNCIL OF CHESTER-LE-STREET

Report of the meeting of People and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Newcastle Road, Chester-le-Street, Co Durham, DH3 3UT on Wednesday, 30 July 2008 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor Geoffrey Armstrong (Chairman)

Councillors:

D M Holding	P H May
J W Barrett	P B Nathan
L E W Brown	D L Robson
M Gollan	J Shiell
S Greatwich	T J Smith
R Harrison	D Thompson
W Laverick	F Wilkinson
M D May	S Barr

Officers:

I Forster (Director of Corporate Services), I Herberson (Head of Corporate Finance), Symmonds (Interim Revenues and Benefits Manager), N Tzamarias (Assistant Director of Development Services), R McMullen (Town Centre Development Manager), S Reed (Development and Building Control Manager), L Howley (Chief Environmental Health Officer), J Underwood (Performance, Improvement and Equality Manager), C Turnbull (Democratic Services Officer), M Fell (Democratic Services Assistant) and D Humble (Democratic Services Assistant)

17. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors L Armstrong, R Court, A Humes, M Potts, K Potts, J M Proud, A Turner and A Willis.

18. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 18 JUNE 2008

RESOLVED: "That the minutes of the meeting of the People and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 30 July 2008 be agreed as a correct record."

The Chairman proceeded to sign the minutes.

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received from Members.

20. PUBLIC SPEAKING

Two Members of Public were present at the Meeting. The Chairman advised that he would ask them to speak at the appropriate time.

The Director of Corporate Services introduced Christopher Carr an undergraduate from York University who was currently working within the Legal and Democratic Services Team through the summer period. He also introduced Mark Symmonds the Interim Revenues and Benefits Manager.

21. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT SUMMARY - APRIL 2007 TO MARCH 2008

Consideration was given to a report from the Director of Corporate Services to provide a summary of key areas of performance from achieving the corporate plan to complaints. The Director of Corporate Services summarised the overall performance of the Council over the last year, which was listed on page 49 of the Agenda. He advised that this had been another significantly positive year for the Council at a time of significant change and outlined the progress and achievements that had been made.

Discussion ensued in relation to the performance on Best Value Performance Indicators. Members proceeded to ask questions and provide comments in relation to a number of issues contained within the report, which were addressed by the Director of Corporate Services.

Councillor D Thompson entered the Meeting at 6.30pm.

RESOLVED: "That the progress on improvements and the contents of the Performance Report in Appendix 1 of the report be noted and the learning and remedial measures identified as well as other areas where improvements are required be addressed."

22. EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN AND WORK PROGRAMME

The content of the Executive Forward Plan and Work Programme was considered by the Committee enabling Members to identify any issues that may require to be reviewed prior to a decision being made.

It was noted that the date for the Communities Facilities Working Group Report had been revised so that this could be taken in conjunction with the outcomes of consultations with the public around the area arrangements for the District as part of the new unitary proposals and the government White Paper on local communities.

RESOLVED: "That the contents of the Executive Forward Plan and Work Programme were considered by the Committee."

23. HOMELESSNESS PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Consideration was given to a report from the Housing Options Manager on the Homelessness Performance Indicators.

RESOLVED: "That the Homelessness Performance Indicators as set out in the report be noted."

24. REVIEW INTO THE FUTURE OF THE UNPARISHED AREA OF CHESTER-LE-STREET – SCOPING REPORT

Consideration was given to a report from the Director of Corporate Services on the Review into a Town Council for Chester-le-Street.

The Director of Corporate Services advised that since the meeting of the Task and Finish Group, work had commenced and progress was being made. Research had been undertaken and visits had been arranged to other Town Councils.

The Democratic Services Officer referred to a briefing note that was circulated to Members at the Meeting and gave an update on the work that had been undertaken for this review.

He spoke in relation to the information provided in the briefing note on the unparished areas within the District. It was suggested by Steve Ragg, the Secretary of the Association that Members should visit the two largest Town Councils in the county, which were Aycliffe Town Council, and Peterlee Town Council. He outlined the schedule of visits which also included two areas where Town Councils were currently in the process of being created or had just recently been created including Durham City Council (Durham Town Council) and Derwentside District Council (Stanley Town Council).

He recommended that Members approve the schedule of visits and appoint representatives for each visit.

The Chairman spoke in relation to Birtley Town Council, which was no longer in existence and suggested that it would be beneficial for the group to investigate why this Town Council ceased to be.

Councillor Gollan suggested that within the consultation exercise it would be useful to highlight other options available in addition to Parish Councils and referred in particular to Development Trusts that have a similar role to Parish Councils.

Councillor P May suggested that one of the questions to the Town Councils should include 'what they would do differently if they had the chance to start again?'

Discussion ensued by Members in relation to the means of the consultation process. Councillor Holding advised that should there be a consultation exercise then the views of the residents living outside the Town Centre needed be taken into account.

Councillor Barr agreed with the comments expressed by Councillor Gollan that we should look at other models of governance that relate to the new County Council's views on its area arrangements as well as what the links are between the different community groups and the potential for a Chester-le-Street Community Partnership.

The Chairman suggested that these comments needed to be built into the scoping report.

RESOLVED:

- "1 That the report on the Review into the future of the unparished area of Chester-le-Street be noted.
- 2 That the outlined work programme for the review and witnesses to be used for consultation purposes during the review was agreed.
- 3 That the schedule of visits arranged in August be approved and that Members be appointed to attend the visits as follows:

14 August 2008	Councillors W Laverick, J W Barrett, F Wilkinson, R Harrison and P B Nathan
27 August 2008	Councillors G Armstrong, S Barr, R Harrison and W Laverick
28 August 2008	Councillors D Holding, G Armstrong, R Harrison, T J Smith, J Shiell and M D May."

25. POSSIBLE TASK AND FINISH GROUP - SPORTS MARKETING

The Chairman briefed Members on a Task and Finish Group to look at the Marketing of Activities for Young People, which was set up at the request of Councillor Smith who wished to lead on this. He advised that Member representatives were required to put themselves forward to take part in this Task and Finish Group.

Councillor Smith spoke in relation to a report on the review, which was circulated, to Members at the Meeting. She had been inspired to form this task and finish group following concerns from residents that there was not much for Young People to do in the District. In Councillor Smith's opinion there were plenty of activities to do however these were not marketed and publicised enough to ensure that people were made aware of them.

The Director of Corporate Services suggested that the review should be agreed in principle and arrangements be made to move this forward. He advised that he had been in contact with Simon High the Leisure Services Manager in relation to this Task and Finish Group who advised that he had been working with Durham County Council on activities for Young People in the County, which he felt this group could feed into.

Councillor P May suggested that the Review Of Leisure Services for Young People that was undertaken by the Regeneration and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Overview and Scrutiny Panel and was reported to Executive on 4 June 2007 should be taken into consideration as part of this review.

It was agreed that Councillors F Wilkinson, S Barr and G Armstrong be nominated onto this Task and Finish Group.

RESOLVED:

- “1 That the report on the Review of Marketing of Activities for Young People be agreed in principle.
- 2 That Councillors F Wilkinson, S Barr and G Armstrong be nominated as representatives onto this Task and Finish Group.”

At this point Councillors T J Smith and J Shiell left the Meeting at 7.25pm.

26. REVIEW INTO TOWN CENTRE MARKET PLACES - SCOPING REPORT

Consideration was given to a report from the Director of Corporate Services to provide a proposed scope for a scrutiny review into town centre market places. A copy of a research paper from Smartspeed Consulting was circulated to Members at the Meeting.

The Director of Corporate Services gave a background to the report that came about following the development of the new People and Place priority delivery plan. He advised that part of the agreed plan was to get some specialist consultancy advice, which was set out in the progress report from Smartspeed. Members were requested to give consideration to a list of potential comparative markets for Members to visit, which were listed in the report.

The Town Centre Development Manager, whose role was to lead on this review, spoke in relation to the report and gave an update on the progress that had been made to date. He advised of the consultation that had been undertaken with the market traders which was summarised in the report and spoke in relation to the decline and sustainability of the market. He spoke in relation to the recommended list of markets to visit and suggested that Members choose four from this list.

He made particular reference to Blyth Council who were undergoing a Regeneration process similar to what this Authority had undertaken in their

Town Centre and market area and how this would be useful to compare. He also felt it would be useful to look at privately run markets.

Members expressed their comments in relation to the market and options for the future. Discussion ensued in relation to the markets that Members felt should be visited. The Town Centre Development Manager recommended that Hexham and Stockton should be included in the list of markets to visit.

Suggestions were put forward by Members, which were noted by the Town Centre Development Manager such as visiting markets where free car parking facilities were available and including our market traders in the arranged visits.

It was suggested that the Town Centre Development Manager and the Consultants agree a list of markets to visit, which they felt Members would gain the most benefit from and make the necessary arrangements for these visits.

RESOLVED:

- “1 That the report on the Review into the Future of the Market be noted.
- 2 That the aims and objectives of the review be agreed.
- 3 That the methodology work programme and witnesses to be used for consultation purposes be agreed.
- 4 That the Town Centre Development Manager selects the markets to visit and make the necessary arrangements.”

27. ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

The Chairman advised that Cestria Housing Association would be attending the next Meeting. The Chairman suggested that Members give consideration to any particular issues they wished to raise with Cestria.

Councillor Barr suggested that Cestria be asked the following questions:

- How Cestria sees itself using its role to develop the communities within housing estates in the future?
- How Cestria is relating to other Housing Associations who operate in the District?
- What is happening with Neighbourhood walkabouts and can Members be involved in these in the future?

Councillor P May suggested that an updated schedule of home improvements be provided.

The Chairman advised that Housing had made a number of promises on improvements to the service once it transferred to Cestria Housing Association and that he wished to investigate if these were now being fulfilled.

The Chairman suggested that an update on Greencycle be given at the next Meeting and a representative from Greencycle be asked to attend to take questions in relation to their service.

RESOLVED: "That the following items be included on the agenda for the next Meeting on 10 September 2008:

1. Cestria Housing Association
2. Greencycle."

28. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED: "That the next Meeting be held on 10 September 2008 at 6.00pm."

The meeting terminated at 7.58 pm