

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 on Wednesday, 10 September 2008 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor Geoffrey Armstrong (Chairman)

Councillors:

D M Holding	W Laverick
S Barr	M D May
L E W Brown	P B Nathan
G K Davidson	J Shiell
M Gollan	T J Smith
S Greatwich	D Thompson
R Harrison	F Wilkinson
S A Henig	A Willis
A Humes	

Officers:

I Forster (Director of Corporate Services), C Turnbull (Democratic Services Officer), G MacCallam (Environmental Services Manager), M Keenlyside (Environmental Strategy Co-ordinator), I Herberson (Head of Corporate Finance), S High (Leisure Services Manager) and S Marshall (Democratic Services Assistant)

Also in attendance: Neil Rippon and Phil Bainbridge (Greencycle), Ian Broughton and Paul Tinnion (Cestria Community Housing Association) and 5 members of the public.

29. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J W Barrett, R Court, P H May, K Potts, M Potts, D Robson and A Turner.

30. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 30 JULY 2008

Councillor Holding referred to Item 24 of the Minutes of the meeting held 30 July 2008 and suggested that the fourth paragraph be amended from "the Association" to "the County Durham Association of Local Councils".

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, subject to the following amendment:

“It was suggested by Steve Ragg, the Secretary of the County Durham Association of Local Council that Members should...”

The Chairman proceeded to sign the minutes.

31. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Willis declared a personal interest in Item No.8 on the agenda.

32. PUBLIC SPEAKING

Five members of the public were present at the meeting and the Chairman advised he would invite them to speak at the appropriate times throughout the meeting.

33. 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.

No comments were made by the Committee.

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

34. CESTRIA COMMUNITY HOUSING ASSOCIATION - PERFORMANCE UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed Mr Ian Broughton (Chief Executive, Cestria Community Housing Association) and Mr Paul Tinnion (Chairman of the Board, Cestria Community Housing Association) to the meeting.

Mr Broughton advised that the purpose of the report was to provide information to the Committee in relation to:

1. progress made by Cestria in delivering Offer Document Promises,
2. progress made by Cestria in delivering on the Staff Pledge,
3. general performance update covering the whole range of service issues, including comparative information with other housing associations
4. how Cestria plans to develop its community role, and
5. what plans Cestria has and the timetable for the improvement programme.

Councillor M May entered the meeting at 6.08pm.

Mr Broughton spoke in relation to the report and invited questions from Members.

Councillor Holding referred to the communal rooms due to be transferred from the district council to Cestria and queried how Cestria planned to develop these.

Mr Broughton advised that detailed consultation would be carried out with local communities around the future use and management of these communal rooms.

Councillor Barr made reference to the partnership initiative with Sunderland AFC Foundation and queried if there would be more “grass root” consultations on estates in relation to family learning and active citizenship.

Mr Broughton advised that Cestria planned to develop its community role through such initiatives, promoting citizenship and junior leadership and that talks were being held with Jobcentre Plus in relation to worklessness.

Councillor Barr also queried if estate walkabouts in conjunction with the Environmental Health Enforcement Team and the police, would continue in the future.

Mr Broughton advised that 42 estate visits had been carried out but that key partners had not been invited to these. He advised that the next round of inspections was due to be carried out during October and November and that he would ensure that district councillors were invited to attend these.

In relation to customer care and staff development, Councillor Gollan stated that had received numerous complaints from tenants who were disappointed with the response given by staff to complaints made and queried what action was being taken to rectify this.

Mr Broughton advised that an Organisational Development Plan had been developed and a learning and development assessment was about to be rolled out. He also stated that the “One Stop Shop” had also alleviated some of the problems relating to complaints.

Cllr Harrison queried if any self-evaluation had been carried out on how the stock transfer was carried out and if they considered that there were areas where things could have been done better.

Mr Broughton stated that every service would be subject to a detailed audit over the next couple of years and that Cestria had come a long way in such a short period of time.

Mr Tinnion advised that he felt tenants could have been better advised of the rent increase in April and of the reasons for the increase.

The Chairman thanked Mr Broughton and Mr Tinnion for attending the meeting .

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

Mr Broughton and Mr Tinnion left the meeting at 6.34pm.

35. GREENCYCLE UPDATE

The Environmental Services Manager introduced Mr Neil Rippon and Mr Phil Bainbridge of Greencycle Plc to the Committee.

Mr Rippon proceeded to give Members an update of the services provided to the authority and welcomed questions from the Committee.

The Chairman commented that he had noticed that the contents of the green recycling bags, which used to be sorted at the kerbside, were now being emptied in to the vehicles and queried where the sorting was being done.

Mr Rippon advised that the contents of the recycling bags were now sorted at the recycling plant at Tursdale as kerbside sorting had proved to be too time consuming.

One member of the public left the meeting at 6.40pm.

The Chairman advised that he had received a number of calls from residents in Bournmoor who had seen a man with a clipboard checking the contents of their wheelie bins and recycling receptacles and questioned who this person was.

Mr Bainbridge advised that it was himself who had been in Bournmoor and that he was working ahead of the collection vehicle monitoring the contents of bins and recycling bags and boxes in order to ascertain the levels of participation in that area. He commented that in some streets the participation level was as high as 90% and that the majority of streets had a participation level over 50%.

Mr Rippon advised that the purpose of carrying out such monitoring was to try and educate residents with a view to increasing participation in every street to 80%.

Two members of the public left the meeting at 6.50pm.

Discussion ensued in relation to the types of receptacles used, problems with rats and plans to improve the quality of service.

Councillors Shiell and Willis left the meeting at 6.54pm.

Councillor Humes left the meeting at 7.02pm.

Councillor Wilkinson left the meeting at 7.18pm.

Councillor Nathan left the meeting at 7.20pm.

Councillor Henig advised that once the unitary authority came in to being on 1 April 2009, recycling wouldn't be dealt with as one single operation but would be dealt with in local areas and there would be a need to advise people that things would carry on as normal for the foreseeable future.

Councillor Gollan referred to collections over the Christmas holiday period and queried if there were to be any extra collections.

Mr Rippon advised that historically the first two weeks in January are very busy and that extra collections have been provided for other authorities where one vehicle would collect the contents of the green boxes and another vehicle would collect the contents of the green bags. He advised that he was expecting the amounts collected in January to be double that of any other month.

The Chairman thanked Mr Rippon and Mr Bainbridge for attending the meeting and answering Members questions.

RESOLVED: "That the comment made be noted."

Mr Rippon and Mr Bainbridge left the meeting at 7.36pm.

The Chairman advised that Items 10, 11 and 12 of the agenda would be considered together.

36. REVIEWS IN TO THE FUTURE OF THE UN-PARISHED AREA OF CHESTER-LE-STREET, TOWN CENTRE MARKET PLACES AND SPORTS MARKETING

The Director of Corporate Services provided Members with an update of the activities of the Task and Finish Groups.

He advised that the Council's website had been updated to provided pages in relation to the reviews being carried out and that general consultation was to be carried out within the next six weeks through a mixture of sample surveys, public meetings and web surveys.

In relation to the un-parished area of Chester-le-Street, the Director of Corporate Services advised that a number of visits to other town councils had been carried out and research in to other methods of local governance would also be fed in to the update report.

He advised that visits to other local market places were currently being arranged and that he was to meet with Councillor Smith and the Head of

Leisure Services very shortly with a view to beginning the Sports Marketing Review.

The Chairman thanked the Director of Corporate Services, the Democratic Services Officer and the Democratic Services Assistant for their time, effort and hard work put in to carrying out the reviews in the absence of a Scrutiny Officer.

RESOLVED: "That the comments made be noted."

37. ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

The Chairman requested that any items for the next agenda be forwarded to the Democratic Services Assistant.

38. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED: "That the next meeting of the People and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee be held on Wednesday 22 October 2008 at 6.00pm."

The meeting terminated at 7.43 pm