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17 February 2009

Dear Councillor

A meeting of the People and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be held in the **Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Newcastle Road, Chester-le-Street, Co Durham, DH3 3UT on Wednesday, 25th February, 2009 at 6.00 pm**

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roy Templeman', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

R TEMPLEMAN

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of Meeting held 14 January 2009 (Pages 1 - 8)
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Public Speaking

Policy Development

5. No Items

Call-In

6. No Items

Improvement Management

7. Cestria Community Housing - Update

Scrutiny Reviews

8. People and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report (Pages 9 - 16)
Report Of Ian Forster
9. Recycling - Update

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, 14 January 2009 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor Geoffrey Armstrong (Chairman)

Councillors:

D M Holding	M D May
J W Barrett	M Potts
L E W Brown	J Shiell
G K Davidson	T J Smith
M Gollan	D Thompson
S Greatwich	F Wilkinson
W Laverick	

Officers:

I Forster (Director of Corporate Services), T Galloway (Director of Development Services), I Herberson (Head of Corporate Finance), J Elder (Acting Head of Resources), J Taylor (Senior Planning Officer) and S Marshall (Democratic Services Assistant)

Also in attendance: Two members of the public.

60. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors S Barr, R Harrison, P May, J Proud, D Robson and A Turner.

61. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 3 DECEMBER 2008

RESOLVED; "That the minutes of the meeting of the People & Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee held 3 December 2008, copies of which had previously been circulated to each Member, be agreed as a correct record."

62. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

63. PUBLIC SPEAKING

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

The Chairman advised that Item Nos. 8 and 11 would be considered prior to the remainder of the agenda.

64. BONFIRE POLICY UPDATE

The Director of Development Services provided Members with a verbal update on this year's bonfire night activity within the district and advised that he could provide written confirmation of information provided if required.

He advised that the Bonfire Policy was introduced in 2005 due to the number of illegal bonfires throughout the district. He stated that since the introduction of the policy, bonfires were not allowed in the district and any found would be removed.

He also advised that a Firework/Halloween Sub-Group had been formed with the purpose of providing a co-ordinated multi-agency approach to Halloween and Bonfire activities throughout the district during the period from 22 October 2008 to 6 November 2008, and that the following were invited to attend:

Inspector Anderson – Durham Constabulary
Keith Wanley – Fire & Rescue
Paul Duffy – Youth Engagement Service
Fiona Parker – Partnership Liaison Officer
Ann Hall – ASB Officer, Cestria Community Housing
James Ritson – Refuge & Street Care, CLS DC
Barbara Cruikshank – ASB Officer, CLS DC

He went on to advise that the aim of the sub-group was to raise awareness in relation to personal and community safety, produce a cross tenure advisory booklet, agree target areas, consider enforcement action if necessary and deliver reassurance.

Councillor M Gollan entered the meeting at 6.08pm.

The Director of Development Services advised that he had been supplied with statistical information from the Fire and Rescue Service, which hi-lighted the following:

Total No of Secondary Fires in Chester-le-Street	Oct 15th – Nov 7th 2007	Oct 15th – Nov 7th 2008	Change
	59	32	-45%

Total No of Deliberate Secondary Fires in Chester-le-Street	Oct 15th – Nov 7th 2007	Oct 15th – Nov 7th 2008	Change
	44	9	-56%

He advised that this information proved a significant reduction in the number of deliberate fires in the district. He also reported that there were no attacks on fire crews in Chester-le-Street during the bonfire period and there were no bonfires reported or removed on bonfire night in 2008.

In relation to costs to the Council, the Director of Development Services reported that the costs in the initial year were £11,000, reducing to £7,000 in 2006, £3,500 in 2007 and £1,200 in 2008.

The Chairman queried a reported bonfire in the Bournmoor area, commenting that he had been advised that the matter was now being investigated by the police and arrests were imminent.

The Director of Development Services advised that that particular bonfire had not been reported to the Environmental Services Team.

Discussion ensued in relation to the success of the policy.

RESOLVED: "That the comments made be noted."

65. REVIEW INTO SPORTS MARKETING

The Director of Corporate Services issued a draft final report for the Review into the Marketing of Activities for Young People to Members at the meeting.

Councillor Smith advised that in carrying out the review evidence had been gathered from Wear Valley District Council, Sunderland City Council and North County Leisure (a leisure trust covering the districts of Tynedale, Alnwick and Copeland). She commented that it had been extremely beneficial to visit other local authorities and share best practise.

The Acting Leisure Services Manager advised that it was important to promote and market activities in an attractive way for young people and also

to look at the types of activities available, ensuring that current trends, such as dance, were made available.

He went on to advise that the report was a draft and that he welcomed questions and comments from Members.

The Director of Corporate Services advised that the report was to be submitted to the Executive and comments would be required by the following Monday to enable them to be incorporated into the report. He also requested that the Committee agree to give delegated powers to himself, the Chairman, the Acting Leisure Services Manager and Councillor Smith to finalise the report.

RESOLVED: "That the Committee agreed to give delegated powers to the Director of Corporate Services, the Chairman, the Acting Leisure Services Manager and Councillor Smith to finalise the report and that the Final Report be submitted to the Executive."

66. SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS - UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report of the Development and Building Control Manager advising Members of the present position in relation to financial contributions held by the Authority that have been secured through Section 106 Agreements entered in to as part of decisions taken to grant planning permission.

The Senior Planning Officer spoke in relation to the report, advising Members of the sums received and spent to date. He went on to welcome questions from the Committee.

Councillor Barrett requested clarification of the money spent by Durham County Council from the monies secured by the Drum Industrial Estate agreement.

The Senior Planning Officer advised that Durham County Council had drawn down on some of the monies and the Head of Corporate Finance confirmed that there had been payments made for design fees in relation to the scheme.

Councillor Gollan queried if the new authority would be bound by the decisions made by Chester-le-Street District Council and if other authorities were successful in pursuing defaulted payments.

The Senior Planning Officer advised that the new authority would be bound by the agreements made by Chester-le-Street District Council and that in his experience other authorities did not have problems recovering defaulted payments.

The Acting Leisure Services Manager advised that the Council's Legal Services Team had recently been instructed to pursue matters against three

developers who had defaulted on payment of Section 106 monies to the Authority.

The Chairman thanked the Senior Planning Officer for the report.

RESOLVED: "That the comments made be noted."

The Senior Planning Officer and the Acting Leisure Services Manager left the meeting at 6.40pm.

67. REVIEW INTO THE FUTURE OF THE MARKET - FINAL REPORT

The Director of Corporate Services issued Members with a Draft Final Report of the Review of the Future of the Market in Chester-le-Street and advised that a foreword was still to be added. He asked that Members agree for delegated powers to be given to himself and the Chairman to finalise the report prior to it being submitted to the Executive.

The Chairman queried if Members had any questions or comments.

Councillor Gollan referred to Paragraph 9.2 of the report in relation to a phased improvement plan for the market place and suggested that the recommendation be re-written to avoid any misinterpretation.

The Director of Corporate Services advised he would make the recommendations clearer in the final report.

Discussion ensued in relation to the rental costs of the market stalls and the difference in prices between Fridays and Saturdays.

Councillor Thompson queried why the market was closed between the Christmas and New Year holidays.

The Head of Corporate Finance advised that traditionally the market traders took annual leave after Christmas and hence the market remained closed.

RESOLVED: "That the comments made be noted and delegated powers be given to the Chairman and Director of Corporate Services to finalise the report."

68. REVIEW INTO THE FUTURE OF THE UNPARISHED AREA OF CHESTER-LE-STREET - FINAL REPORT

The Director of Corporate Services issued the draft final report to Members present and requested that delegated powers be given to himself, the Chairman and Councillor Holding to finalise the report prior to it being submitted to the Executive.

Councillor Holding outlined the process which the review had taken and the Director of Corporate Services outlined the main changes that had already been made to the report following a meeting with the Chairman and Councillor Holding.

RESOLVED: "That the Committee accept the report and give delegated powers to the Director of Corporate Services, the Chairman and Councillor Holding to make any final amendments to the report prior to it being submitted to the Executive."

The Director of Corporate Services commented that Scrutiny at Chester-le-Street had progressed from being underdeveloped to being effective due to Member and officer engagement making reviews successful. He added that this had often been carried out under difficult circumstances but that a lot of evidence had been gathered in the three reviews to support the recommendations and that once the recommendations had been agreed by the Executive they would be included in the "Handing Over the Baton" report.

He also advised that a summarised version of the "Handing Over the Baton" report would be included in the final edition of District News.

In relation to the review of the market place, the Director of Corporate Services advised that both himself and the Town Centre Manager had been invite to Seaham Town Council, who were looking to develop a market in the town, to discuss the findings of the review.

The Chairman expressed his personal thanks to the Director of Corporate Services and the Democratic Services Assistant for taking on the extra responsibility of carrying out the reviews alongside their other responsibilities.

69. ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

The Chairman suggested that Cestria Community Housing be invited to the final meeting of the Committee and that if Members had any particular issues to be raised that they be forwarded to the Democratic Services Assistant within the next week in order for Cestria Community Housing to be able to investigate the issues in question and provide Members with answers.

A member of the public referred to recycling and suggested that this could also be discussed at the final meeting.

The Chairman agreed that the Environmental Services Manager and Environmental Strategy Co-ordinator be invited to attend the final meeting to answer questions in relation to recycling.

RESOLVED: "That Cestria Community Housing and Recycling be items for the agenda of the next meeting of the Committee."

70. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED: "That the next meeting of the Committee be held on Wednesday 25 February 2009 at 6.00pm."

The meeting terminated at 7.14 pm

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Overview and Scrutiny Committee



People & Place

**People and Place Overview and Scrutiny
Committee**

Annual Report 2008/2009

February 2009

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People and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2008/2009

Foreword of the Chair and Lead Member

In April 2008 Chester-le-Street District Council will no longer exist. A new unitary authority known as Durham County Council will be created.

It is therefore fast approaching the end of the world as we know it. At least it is the end of the scrutiny world as we know. It is with some sadness that I present this final Annual Overview and Scrutiny Report. However this sadness is eclipsed by the pride I feel about the work we have undertaken over the last five or so years in delivering a challenge to the services our council provides.

There is no doubt that we have helped bring the customer voice to service delivery. Implementation of our recommendations has seen service improve and attitudes change.

During the current year we reshaped and refocused to help the council deliver its single priority of *'People and Place'*. Through our Task and Finish Group approach we have undertaken three important reviews which we hope will effect improvement of the futures. This has been done in difficult circumstances.

As this is our final Annual Report I would like to thank those people who have contributed. Firstly I would like to thank the officers of this council who have supported scrutiny directly and those who have presented evidence to us. Secondly I wish to than the Executive for listening to us and for their consideration of our recommendations. Thirdly I would like to thank Scrutiny members for all their hard work and efforts which have resulted in us being able to develop those recommendations. Finally and most importantly, those members of the community who have provided evidence or challenged our witnesses. Without their contribution we would not have made the progress we have achieved.

Cllr Geoff Armstrong

Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Panel Committee

People and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2008/2009

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is principally to provide a summary of the work undertaken by the People and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee between April 2008 and March 2009. It is the Committee's final Annual report and in view of this it is considered appropriate to trace a brief history of Scrutiny over the last 5 or so years to mark the progress of this important part of governance.
- 1.2 The report starts with that history. It then summarises the three key Scrutiny reviews over the last year and concludes by identifying the other work it has undertaken.

2 The Background – Our Scrutiny Journey

- 2.1 In March 2004 the Audit Commission published their first Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) judgement for the council. It considered that the council was a 'poor' council, the worst categorisation possible. There were a number of reasons for this and they were largely to do with senior management and lack of a performance management framework which led to capacity issues which were not managed. Scrutiny, they felt, was 'under-developed'.
- 2.2 This spurred the Council to undergo a clear transformational programme through an Improvement and Recovery Plan. Improvement to the scrutiny function was a key part of the improvement programme. For the first time the council appointed a dedicated Scrutiny support officer, Kelly Brook, who developed a clear work and improvement programme. By engaging with the I&DeA and securing Member peer support, scrutiny embarked on a journey of sustained change. The foundation was set for Members to become experienced scrutineers. Engagement with the I&DeA helped the council go on to be the first District in the region to achieve the Members Charter in July 2006.
- 2.3 Unfortunately Kelly moved on to another role in another organisation and it took time to secure a replacement. Members felt a little undervalued in that time but a new officer, Nigel Cummings restored Member's confidence following his arrival. During the intervening period the opportunity was taken to restructure Overview and Scrutiny. A series of workshops were held which resulted in a shift in the nature of committees to panels which directly supported the then new council priorities.

- 2.4 Nigel Cummings brought real meaning to the phrase 'getting out more'. Members began and sustained the habit of getting out, visiting other providers and service deliverers as well as customers. The quality of reporting improved further. The council's improvement began to be acknowledged nationally and the Centre for Public Scrutiny took an interest in our progress. The council has since appeared in a series of their documents and officers have presented at their national conferences.
- 2.5 In March 2007, the Audit Commission inspected the council to consider their second CPA judgement. Members of Scrutiny were themselves scrutinised by the Inspectors during that process. The result was that in June 2007 the council became the first in the country to become a 'good' council and make the shift from a 'poor' one. Scrutiny was now judged by the Audit commission to be 'effective'.
- 2.6 A month later the government announced that the District Council would cease to exist on 31st March 2009. The council had to then consider its focus for what was to be its final year. In October 2008 the Executive and Corporate Management Team started work on considering the council's exit strategy. In February 2008 the council's budget was set, based on a single priority of '**People and Place**'. In March 2008 the Council agreed its Transition plan which replaced the Corporate Plan and set out what was meant by the new single priority. In the following months the delivery plan for '**People and Place**' was developed. It was felt that in order to focus on the final year it was agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny process needed to change. Following a joint officer and Member workshop in April 2008 the Council, at its meeting in May 2009, agreed to alter its Constitution to move towards a single '**People and Place**' Scrutiny Committee to replace the previous three Scrutiny Panels.
- 2.7 The first meeting was held in June 2008. At that meeting members agreed their work programme for the year. That work programme has been successfully delivered. This has been against a background of reduced officer capacity. Nigel Cummings left the council in June 2009 and Colin Turnbull was seconded to the County Council in December. Shelley Marshall has made a major contribution to supporting the Committee during the course of the year.
- 2.8 It is considered that Overview and Scrutiny at Chester-le-Street has been on a significant journey of change and improvement. It has been a significant feature in the overall improvement of the council.

3 Scrutiny Reviews 2008/2009

3.1 In support of the single priority of **'People and Place'** the Overview Committee has delivered three formal reviews. These were delivered only slightly behind target. All reviews were agreed by the Executive on 2nd February 2009. The reviews were:

- Review into the Future of the Market
- Review of the Future of the Unparished Areas of the Chester-le-Street
- Review into the marketing of activities for young people.

Review into the Future of the Market

3.2 This review supported the work of the 'Investing in the Town Centre' component of **'People and Place'**. The review was led by Councillor Geoff Armstrong with the support of Rob McMullen, Town Centre Development Manager. The council engaged a consultant to undertake research, visit and reporting work. Members visited a range of different markets in the region. A focus group of traders helped ensure the community were involved in the review. The recommendations put forward proposals for an improvement plan for the market as a first phase. It further recommended that should the implementation of this plan not secure the necessary change then consideration ought to be given to outsourcing. The recommendations within the review are to be incorporated into the handing over the Baton Report.

Review of the Future of the unparished areas of Chester-le-Street.

3.3 This review supported the work of the 'Strengthening Partnerships' component of the **'People and Place'** priority. It actually carried out a piece of work the Action Learning Set originally proposed to do. The review was led by Councillor David Holding and was supported by Ian Forster, Director of Corporate Services. The review involved visiting a range of developing and existing Town and Parish Councils including some with 'Quality' status. The community were engaged through a sample questionnaire extending to 1,000 homes in the unparished areas of the District. The questionnaire was also provided to existing parish councils and residents and community associations throughout the district. There was a 12% return rate. In addition a focus group of interested residents and members was undertaken.

3.4 The results showed that whilst there were more people who felt the district ought to be parished than not there was no significant majority. Cost was clearly an issue for individuals. The community engagement proved that there was sufficient interest in the community for the County Council to consider a 'Community Governance Review ' and the final report made

recommendations to this effect. Again these recommendations will be incorporated into the 'Handing over the Baton' Report.

Review into the Marketing of activities for Young People

- 3.5 This review resulted from direct feedback to the member Champion for Sport that parents did not understand what activities were available for young people. The review supported both the 'Strengthening Partnerships' and 'Neighbourhoods' components of the **'People and Place'** priority. It was led by councillor Tracey Smith, Member Champion for Sport and supported by Simon High, Acting Head of Leisure Services. The review secured evidence by visiting a number of different providers in the region. The Final Report made recommendations based on the learning from these visits and will be built into the 'Handing Over the Baton Report'.

4 Other Work 2008/2009

- 4.1 Due to limited capacity and workload in the last year there was not a significant amount of work undertaken. However the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- Scrutinised Executive Decisions;
- reviewed the annual corporate performance of the Council for 2007/2008;
- received evidence from Cestria Community Housing on their performance since their creation;
- scrutinised the performance of the council's recycling contract;
- scrutinised the council's use of Section 106 monies; and
- received updates on the implementation of the council's Bonfire Policy

- 4.2 There were no 'call ins' during the year.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 It is considered that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has effectively delivered its work programme during 2008/2009. This has been due to the hard work and commitment of Members and officers working to achieve the council's single priority of **'People and Place'**.

- 5.2 This is Chester-le-Street's final Annual Scrutiny Report.

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