

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Ordinary Meeting of the County Council held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Wednesday 23 March 2011 at 10.00 am**

Present:

Councillor M Williams (Chairman)

Councillors D Morgan (Vice-Chairman), J Armstrong, B Arthur, B Avery, A Bainbridge, B Bainbridge, A Barker, A Bell, E Bell, J Bell, R Bell, J Blakey, D Bowman, D Boyes, P Brookes, J Brown, D Burn, C Carr, P Charlton, A Cox, R Crooks, R Crute, K Davidson, M Dixon, N Foster, D Freeman, P Gittins, B Graham, J Gray, B Harrison, N Harrison, S Henig, M Hodgson, K Holroyd, A Hopgood, L Hovvels, S Hugill, J Hunter, E Huntington, S Iveson, O Johnson, P Jopling, A Laing, J Lee, J Lethbridge, R Liddle, D Maddison, C Magee, C Marshall, D Marshall, L Marshall, N Martin, E Murphy, B Myers, D Myers, A Napier, A Naylor, M Nicholls, J Nicholson, B Ord, R Ord, E Paylor, M Plews, C Potts, M Potts, G Richardson, S Robinson, C Robson, J Rowlandson, A Savory, A Shield, J Shiell, J Shuttleworth, M Simmons, B Sloan, D J Southwell, W Stelling, B Stephens, D Stoker, P Stradling, P Taylor, T Taylor, O Temple, L Thomson, R Todd, E Tomlinson, J Turnbull, Andy Turner, Allen Turner, C Vasey, C Walker, M Wilkes, J Wilkinson, A Willis, J Wilson, C Woods, A Wright, B Young, R Young and S Zair

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B Alderson, J Bailey, D Barnett, G Bleasdale, D Brown, B Brunskill, M Campbell, J Chaplow, J Cordon, J Docherty, D Farry, D Hancock, G Holland, G Huntington, J Maslin, E Mavin, P May, J Moran, L O'Donnell, J Robinson, G Tennant, K Thompson, B Wilson, M Wood and R Yorke

1 To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2011

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2011 were confirmed by the Council and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

2 To receive any declarations of interest from Members

Councillor O Temple declared an interest in relation to Item 17 (Committee Provisions applicable to Licensing and Highways) as a member of Consett Green Spaces Group.

Councillors B Avery, J Lee and M Potts all declared an interest in relation to Item 8 (Regulation of Taxis in County Durham) and left the Council Chamber whilst the item was under consideration.

3 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman informed the Council that the Chairman of the Audit Committee had an important announcement to make regarding related party transactions.

Councillor E Bell informed the Council that work had commenced on the closure of the 2010/2011 accounts. As part of this process, the Council's auditors would be looking closely at a number of areas, including related party transactions. This year's forms would be circulated on 1 April and it was imperative that all members complete and return the form by the required deadline. Drop-in sessions would be arranged for any member requiring help or assistance.

4 Leader's Report

Councillor Henig provided the Council with an update report which included the following:

- The government had announced that the Agility Trains Consortium were the preferred bidder for the resumption of Intercity Express programme. The consortium had already committed to build its assembly plant in Newton Aycliffe and would create hundreds of construction and engineering jobs in County Durham. The Leader praised the two years of hard work and massive effort by the County Council, County Durham Development Company and Merchant Place. Councillor Henig also placed on record his thanks to Phil Wilson MP, Trade Union Congress, Unite, Chamber of Commerce and the County Durham Development Company on their achievements, commenting that it was a huge vote of confidence in County Durham;
- The Council had been notified by the government that £100m would be made available nationally for pothole repairs. The County Council had submitted a bid and were awaiting the outcome;
- The Lumiere festival would take between 17-20 November 2011. The festival was an opportunity for local artists and companies to showcase their talents. Funding amounting to £200,000 had been secured from the European Cultural Fund. Seminars would be held to give Members a preview of events;
- There was an ongoing review of the Planning Committee structure;
- The North East Local Government Summit was taking place on Friday 25 March at Durham University;
- The Secretary of State for Department for Communities and Local Government had made a recent statement relating to distribution of business rates and formula grant which could result in the Council having to make further savings of up to £80m per year on top of the cuts already made. The Leader expressed his concern regarding the announcement and informed the Council that he had already spoken to local government ministers on this extremely serious issue which would impact hugely on all authorities in the North East. He encouraged all political groups on the Council to lobby for a proper equalisation system.

Councillor Martin responded to the Leader's report and welcomed the result relating to the Agility Trains contract. He added that all-party support and lobbying in

addition to the hard work carried out by all organisations concerned had delivered an excellent result. Councillor Martin also placed on record his congratulations to Phil Wilson MP who had secured the best deal for County Durham and spoke of the benefits and opportunities for jobs and training for the people of County Durham.

In relation to statement issued by the government relating to local government finance, Councillor Martin informed the Council that he had already made representation on the issue and agreed that a system which would generate monies to already affluent areas was simply not fair and would be lobbying further for the introduction of a proper equalisation system.

5 Questions from the Public

One question had been received from a member of public which asked the Council's Cabinet to reconsider its decision to include Deerness and Gymnastic Leisure World Class Centre of Excellence as a centre subject to possible closure on the recent sport and leisure consultation.

For the questioner in attendance, a response was provided by the Leader of the Council. The response would be detailed on the Council's website.

6 Petitions

There were no petitions received from the public.

7 Report from the Cabinet

The Council noted a report from the Cabinet which provided information on issues considered by the Cabinet at its meetings held on 2 and 9 March 2011.

Councillor Martin quoted from the Local Member Consultative Charter detailed within the Constitution that "the county council is committed to providing its elected members with accurate helpful and timely consultation advice and information in relation to any matters of any significance or sensitivity which relate to their particular electoral division and where circumstances render it appropriate to involve a local member."

He queried the two sports-related items dealt with by Cabinet on 2 March, and asked if the Leader of the Council agreed that:

- a) it was unacceptable for any local member to be made aware of proposals to close a sport centre in their area first through the front page of the Northern Echo?
- b) that it was unacceptable for some members to hear of such proposals well before other members, sometimes members within the same division?
- c) that it was unacceptable for members to learn of public meetings concerning the future of outdoor playing pitches and sports facilities from an e-mail sent out to parish council clerks, and for some Councillors who have no parish councils in their areas to find out purely by chance?

Councillor Martin expressed the opinion that the Local Member Consultative Charter was not being adhered to and asked what the Leader of the Council would do to ensure that the Charter was upheld, and that members were not treated as second class citizens of the County. Councillor Martin also sought a personal guarantee that when proposals came forward for other significant and sensitive matters, such as the future scope of Library provision across the County, that all members will be informed of the proposals being made at the same time in order that they had an equal opportunity to represent their constituents.

In response, Councillor Henig said that the local member consultative charter was approved by council because of the Council's commitment to provide all its members with the information referred to in the question. When proposals were formulated and ready for consultation, Corporate Directors and staff should ensure that they are discussed with local members. Such consultation should be done in an impartial and fair manner and as far as is practicable, members should be advised at the same time. The Leader commented that both he and his Cabinet colleagues supported the terms of the charter and expect chief officers and staff to adhere to it. The issue of member consultation was one carefully considered by the Corporate Directors.

Councillor Henig commented that it was unfortunate that reports had appeared in the press but advised the Council that the press reports were not as a result of any approved press release from the service grouping involved and the publication of the report in question pre-empted member and staff consultation which had been planned. This was clearly outside of the control of the officers involved in producing the report. Councillor Henig also stated that the reference to parish councils may have arisen from an exercise by the service to collect information on who currently provides playing pitches in the county. Information was requested from parish councils as part of this process.

Councillor Henig also clarified that no proposal relating to the closure of branch libraries had been drawn up and re-iterated that Members would be fully consulted once proposals had been formulated.

Councillor R Bell asked the Leader of the Council why the council had failed to negotiate the best deal available for County Durham in relation to the reclassification of County Durham as a Metropolitan PTE area. Councillor R Bell had written to the Transport Minister about the issue, and the reply he had received made it sound clear that the objective of the new Department for Transport guidelines was that councils should overall be "No Better, No Worse Off", and that councils may choose the classification of metropolitan/non metropolitan that best represented this position in their local area.

In response, Councillor Henig informed the Council that attempts had been made to negotiate with the Department for Transport over the classification of County Durham as having the characteristics of a metropolitan area, with regard to concessionary fares. In their response, the Department for Transport had made it clear that there was a choice for the Council in following the guidance, but it was not clear cut. Critically, it was the 'bus operators' rather than 'the Council' who were

required to be 'no better or no worse off', and the bus operators would have a right of appeal if they felt that they were not being adequately compensated for carrying concessionary passengers and the Department for Transport guidance would be used to inform the appeal process.

It became evident that bus operators had made it clear in the Council's negotiations with them that they would appeal, whilst stating that they would rather work on a negotiated solution recognising the financial pressures facing the public sector at this time. This was the approach the Council had adopted which had led to the Council securing a payment, through negotiation, which would be less than the amount which would be paid if the Council had followed the Department for Transport guidance.

Councillor B Ord praised the work done in relation to the 'Future Delivery of Waste Collection' services and hoped that the new arrangements would be more efficient and solve a lot of the issues raised by constituents within his electoral division.

In relation to a question from Councillor R Bell regarding time and charges relating to concessionary fares scheme, Councillor Henig commented that the scheme had been introduced in Lancashire and was seen as a scheme of good practice which would be rolled out to other areas. The charge had been set at a level which officers believed would make the necessary savings and once implemented, the savings would be monitored for effect.

Councillor A Hopgood asked the Leader of the Council if he would consider an extension to the sport and leisure consultation given that she had attended a user group meeting the previous evening which had just received consultation information, three weeks into the consultation. Councillor Henig commented that the front loaded cuts meant that the Council were losing money on almost a weekly basis. The Council had pleaded with all party support, along with other Council's and the Local Government Association for no front loaded cuts. The government sadly ignored those pleas, therefore the Cabinet had no other option but to make savings as soon as it could. The three months allocated for the leisure services consultation was adequate and he hoped that groups would come forward and forge proposals to run the complexes.

Councillor E Murphy asked who the hard to reach groups were in relation to sport and leisure strategy. The Assistant Chief Executive clarified that these groups would be older people, ethnic minorities, disabled groups and those with caring responsibilities.

8 Regulation of Taxis in County Durham (Public Consultation on Zoning, the Control of Hackney Carriage Numbers and Colour Policy) - Report of Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services

The Council considered a report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services which detailed the outcome of the consultation exercise held with stakeholders relating to the regulation of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles licensed by the County Council and sought approval for the revision of the hackney carriage

and private hire vehicle policy in relation to zoning, the regulation of hackney carriage numbers and colour policy (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services detailed the present situation with regard to zoning arrangements and highlighted some of the key areas of the phased major consultation process that had taken place relating to zoning, limitation of taxi numbers and colour policy. He also summarised the options that were available to the Council. A detailed summary of responses from the countywide public consultation on these aspects were detailed in appendices 3 to 6 of the report. The countywide response to the consultation process from individual members of the licensed hackney carriage and private hire trade had been very low, however, there had been good representation from the licensed trade through the County and Area working groups. Some of the key statistics appeared to be more representative of the trade across the County. This also included the views of Durham Constabulary who recommended and support the removal of the seven taxi zones and the implementation of one single taxi zone and the concurrent removal of the limitations on hackney carriage numbers in Durham City and Chester-le-Street. The Council's General Licensing Committee had also considered the report and had received representations by letter and in person and those views had all been taken into account and the policy had been amended in part as a result views received.

The Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services added that it was extremely important to take into account advice by governmental organisations such as the Department of Transport who advised that a limit on taxi numbers would be unlikely to be in the best interest of consumers and the Office of Fair Trading who considered that quantity regulation limits the number of taxis, reduces availability and lowers the quality of the service to the public. This had been one of the main focuses during the consultation and it was evident that there had been clear support to move to one zone.

In conclusion, the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services commented that everyone had been listened too and the Council would continue to work with the taxi trade. The Corporate Director informed the Council that there were issues with taxi ranks and stated that should the report be agreed it would not come into effect until 31 August, which would give the Council ample time to look at bus lanes and taxi ranks that would help transport people away from city centres at peak times.

Councillor Young commented that the consultation had been the most extensive consultation during his time with the Council and whilst there would always be an element of people who wouldn't agree, the views and comments of all groups had been taken into account and he was satisfied that the Council was acting in the best interests in the people of County Durham. Like all policies, the Council would listen and consider change if necessary.

Councillor Carr, Chairman of the Licensing Committee thanked all officers and licensing committee members for their valued input throughout the process.

Councillor Wilkes commented that the Council should be applauded on the exercise it had undertaken, commenting that there had a lot of Member involvement

throughout, in what had been a very difficult task. Councillor Wilkes also added his support behind the review of bus lanes and taxi ranks.

It was **Moved** by Councillor B Young, **Seconded** by Councillor C Carr and

Resolved

That the Council approve:

- (i) Option A as detailed in paragraph 13 - to remove the existing seven zones across the County and deregulation of existing hackney carriage licence limitations, to be effective from midnight on the 31st August 2011; and

The introduction of a colour requirement in respect of vehicles submitted for licensing as hackney carriage vehicles or private hire vehicles as follows:-

- (ii) hackney carriage vehicles shall be white;
- (iii) private hire vehicles shall be any colour other than white or a colour that could be mistaken for white, for example cream or ivory;
- (iv) that the colour requirement for hackney carriage and private hire vehicles shall apply from the 1st April 2011 to all new applications for a vehicle licence. It shall not apply on the renewal of an existing vehicle licence but only when that vehicle is replaced. Nor shall the colour policy apply to a vehicle licensed or provided for a maximum period of two months on a temporary basis to substitute for an owner's existing licensed vehicle that cannot be used as a result of an accident or breakdown; and
- (v) that this policy will apply to all licensed vehicles including purpose built vehicles and minibuses, but will not apply to any special vehicles as defined within the policy which will be exempt from any colour requirement.

9 Council Plan 2011-14 - Report of Assistant Chief Executive

The Council considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive which sought approval of the Council Plan for 2011-2014, an overarching high-level plan for the County Council detailing the visions and priority areas for improvement (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Assistant Chief Executive informed the Council that an additional theme of an 'Altogether Better Council' had been developed for the plan and would capture corporate improvements identified by the Council to enable achievement against the five priority themes.

In relation to a query regarding the risk management timetable contained in the report, the Assistant Chief Executive clarified that the Council had a statutory requirement under the Data Protection Act to ensure that information was not provided to people erroneously and the Council had to comply with this legislation. The Assistant Chief Executive added that the Information Commissioner would impose hefty fines for those organisations that breach such procedures.

Councillor Henig commented that a number of early retirement and/or voluntary redundancy applications were being considered through the system and highlighted the importance of getting everything right.

Councillor J Brown, Chairman of the Human Resources Committee confirmed that the Council had approved 138 ER/VR applications last week, resulting in £4m worth of savings.

Councillor D Southwell stated that one of the reasons for the creation of a Unitary Authority was to stop the duplication of services. He queried the timescales for the restructure of services and the timescales for those staff who had expressed an interest for ER/VR. Councillor Henig clarified that he would seek the information requested and provide a response to Councillor Southwell's request.

Moved by Councillor Henig, **Seconded** by Councillor Napier and

Resolved

That the Council Plan for the period 2011-2014 be approved, subject to any final minor amendments by the Assistant Chief Executive.

10 Local Transport Plan 3 - Joint Report of Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development and Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services

The Council considered a joint report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services and Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development which sought approval of a new local transport plan (LTP3) which would come into effect on 1 April 2011 for which the County Council has a statutory duty to produce and keep under review (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development informed the Council that the Local Transport Plan drawn up in two parts, strategy and delivery. Councillor Foster, the Cabinet Portfolio holder highlighted that the LTP was the first one undertaken as a unitary authority which looked at areas such as regeneration, planning, housing and transportation. The plan aligned strongly with local needs and other plans and provided the Council with a brief overview of the capital programme associated with the plan.

Moved by Councillor Foster, **Seconded** by Councillor B Young and

Resolved

- (i) That the County Council approve the third local transport plan (LTP3) comprising the transport strategy and the delivery plan including the capital programme for 2011/12;
- (ii) That the annual review and reporting regime to monitor and update outgoing performance and delivery of the plan's objectives be noted.

11 Shotley Papermill Footbridge - Joint Report of Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services and Corporate Director, Resources

The Council considered a report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services which sought approval to compulsory purchase an area of land for the Shotley Papermill Footbridge scheme (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services informed the Council that maintenance work to strengthen, paint and re-deck the existing footbridge had been planned to take place in 2008 but had been interrupted due to unprecedented flooding of the River Derwent. This had destroyed the existing footbridge which provided an important public rights of way crossing between County Durham and Northumberland.

In moving the recommendation contained in the report Councillor B Young placed on record his thanks to Sir Tom Cowie who had been instrumental in assisting the Council to move forward with progress and had assisted the Council in reaching agreement with local landowners.

Moved by Councillor B Young, **Seconded** by Councillor Napier and

Resolved

- (i) That the Council agree the use of compulsory purchase powers to acquire the land indicated in Appendix 3 of the report for Shotley Papermill Footbridge under the provisions of Section 239 of the Highways Act 1980 and other enabling powers; and

That the Corporate Director, Resources be authorised to:

- (ii) secure the making, confirmation and implementation of the compulsory purchase order (including the publication and service of all notices) and the presentation of the Council's case at any public inquiry;
- (iii) acquire interests in the land and new rights within the compulsory purchase order either by agreement or compulsorily;

- (iv) approve agreements with the landowners which set out the terms for the withdrawal of objections to the order (including where appropriate seeking exclusion of land or new rights from the order);
- (v) confirm the order (if unopposed), when referred to the authority by the Government Office for the North East, or its successor.

12 Houses in Multiple Occupation - Adopted Standards and Licence Conditions - Report of Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services

The Council considered a report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services which sought approval of a revised set of standards and licence conditions for houses in multiple occupation. The report also sought delegated authority to make minor amendments and legislative changes to update HMO standards and licence conditions as and when required.

The Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services informed the Council that adopting local HMO standards would provide landlords with detailed information on what is expected of them and provide the basis for enforcement standards.

Moved by Councillor B Young, **Seconded** by Councillor C Robson and

Resolved

- (i) That the Council adopt the revised standards and licence conditions contained in the report;
- (ii) That the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services and Head of Environment, Health and Consumer Protection be authorised to amend the standards and licence conditions to reflect changes in legislation as and when necessary in consultation with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services.

13 Members' Allowances - Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Independent Remuneration Panel

The Council considered a report from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and report of the Independent Remuneration Panel which provided the outcomes of a review by the Independent Remuneration Panel which took place between June to September 2010 and looked at allowances for cabinet support members, planning and licensing members, mileage allowances and basic allowances (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services informed the Council that the Independent Remuneration Panel would be meeting again to consider allowances from 2011 and the work would be carried out in advance of the financial year concerned in future years.

Councillor Henig, reiterated the personal view he expressed in 2009 that the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel would be better determined at national level and it was incorrect for a Council to vote on its own allowances scheme.

Moved by Councillor Henig, **Seconded** by Councillor Napier and

Resolved

That the Council accept the recommendations provided by the Independent Remuneration Panel and make no change to current Member allowances, no allowances for Cabinet support members and that the level of allowances allocated for regulatory committee's remain unchanged.

14 Local Code of Corporate Governance - Report of Corporate Director, Resources

The Council considered a report of the Corporate Director, Resources which recommended the inclusion of an updated Code of Corporate Governance in the revised constitution of the Council (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services informed the Council that the revised code was consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE framework and had been agreed by the Audit Committee and Constitution Working Group.

Moved by Councillor Henig, **Seconded** by Councillor Napier and

Resolved

That the Council approve the revised Code of Corporate Governance to replace the existing version in the constitution.

15 Scheme of Delegation relating to Housing matters - Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services

The Council considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which proposed a number of amendments in relation to the scheme of delegations relating to housing matters (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services informed the Council that the amendments would provide a more detailed set of delegations which would be clear and transparent.

Moved by Councillor C Robson, **Seconded** by Councillor N Foster and

Resolved

That the Council agree the revised delegations to replace paragraph 22, table 5 of the Officer Scheme of Delegations contained in the Constitution.

16 Contract Procedure Rules Annual Review - Report of Corporate Director, Resources

The Council considered a report of the Corporate Director, Resources regarding a number of proposed changes to the Council's contract procedure rules following the completion of an annual review process (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services informed the Council that contract procedures were a fast and developing area of Council business. A number of terms had been taken out of the rules which did not give any added value. Both the Audit Committee and Constitution Working Group had agreed the report prior to its consideration by County Council.

Councillor Napier commented that some Council's had fallen foul of non-compliance in relation to contract procedures, usually on technicalities. The review would ensure the County Council had fair, transparent contract procedures. Feedback had been sought from the Council's Strategic Procurement Network of members who had raised a number of suggestions.

Moved by Councillor Napier, **Seconded** by Councillor Henig and

Resolved

That the Council agree the proposed changes to the Contract Procedure Rules set out in Appendix 3 of the report and that these be included for inclusion in a revised version of the Constitution.

17 Committee provisions applicable to Licensing and Highways - Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services

The Council considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which sought a change to the current provisions in the Constitution relating to the Licensing and Highways and Committee structure which would enable a more efficient and economic provision of the service (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services informed the Council that the changes identified in the report had been constructed in the interests of efficiency. The removal of political balance on licensing sub-committees was proposed to avoid difficulties of obtaining a quorate sub-committee to do business.

Moved by Councillor B Young, **Seconded** by Councillor Carr and

Resolved

That the Council agree:

- (i) the provisions set out in Appendix 3 replace those in Appendix 2.
- (ii) that where it is in order and expedient to do so, for hearings required to be held for the business of the General Licensing and Registration Committee to be combined with hearings of the Statutory Committee and its members enabled to conduct the same - this is to reduce cost, have one meeting instead of two but only when appropriate

- (iii) all members of the General Licensing and Registration Committee receive the same training to ensure that each person understands the parameters within which all have to operate
- (iv) that the current provision for Common Land and Town and Village Greens be removed from the business of the General Licensing and Registration Committee and be dealt with by the Highways Committee adding to the Highways Committee's the function relating to the registration of common land and town and village greens
- (v) political balance on the sub-committees of the General Licensing and Registration Committee be removed

18 Access to Information Procedure Rules - Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services

The Council considered a report from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which proposed some minor changes to paragraphs 2 (Additional Rights to Information) and 18 (Record of Decisions) of the Access to Information Procedure Rules contained in the Council's Constitution. The content of the report had been discussed at meetings of the Constitution Working Group on 26 November 2010 and 9 March 2011.

Resolved

That the Council agree to update the Access to Information Procedure Rules as proposed in paragraphs 3 and 4 of the report.

19 Motions on Notice

There were no motions for consideration.

20 Questions from Members

In accordance with the Council Procedure Rules the following question was asked:

Councillor C Woods

Would the Leader please inform me at which meeting a vote was taken on the consultation for closure of the leisure centres? A Labour member who is not a cabinet member is quoted in the northern echo claiming to have voted against the council's consultation on closure and would vote against closure when the process ended.

Would the Leader let me know when there will be an opportunity to vote on the results of the consultation? Will that be a meeting when all members of this Council will be entitled to vote?

Councillor Henig replied as follows:

A decision to consult on the proposed closures had been taken by Cabinet on the 2 March where there had been consensus to accept the recommendations contained in the report. The fact that it was cabinet who made the decision reflects the constitution. The constitution is based upon the current legislation which required a decision like this to be made by the executive, which in turn could be called to account by scrutiny.

The results of the consultation would be brought back to cabinet and they would be considered in full before making any decision.

Councillor Woods commented that many constituents in her electoral division would like their elected members 'to stand up and be counted' therefore it was important that decisions such as proposed closure of sports centres were made at full Council.

Councillor Henig added that all members of the County Council were given the opportunity to submit amendments relating to savings proposals at the last meeting of the Council where the leisure services savings were identified and agreed. Whilst there were amendments to other areas of the medium term financial plan, not one of the amendments related to alternative proposals in relation to leisure services.