

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At an **Ordinary Meeting** of the County Council held in the **Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham** on **Wednesday 23 March 2022** at **10.00 am**

Present:

Councillor W Stelling in the Chair

Councillors M Abley, R Adcock-Forster, V Andrews, J Atkinson, B Bainbridge (Vice-Chair), A Bell, C Bell, R Bell, G Binney, J Blakey, D Boyes, D Brown, L Brown, J Cairns, J Chaplow, I Cochrane, J Cosslett, B Coult, M Currah, S Deinali, K Earley, J Elmer, K Fantarrow, L Fenwick, C Fletcher, D Freeman, J Griffiths, O Gunn, C Hampson, A Hanson, K Hawley, P Heaviside, T Henderson, J Higgins, L A Holmes, C Hood, A Hopgood, L Hovvells, D Howarth, J Howey, C Hunt, G Hutchinson, M Johnson, N Jones, P Jopling, C Kay, B Kellett, C Lines, L Maddison, R Manchester, C Marshall, C Martin, E Mavin, L Mavin, S McDonnell, M McGaun, M McKeon, I McLean, S McMahan, J Miller, B Moist, P Molloy, D Mulholland, D Nicholls, J Nicholson, D Oliver, R Ormerod, E Peeke, R Potts, P Pringle, J Purvis, J Quinn, S Quinn, G Richardson, I Roberts, S Robinson, K Rooney, J Rowlandson, A Savory, E Scott, K Shaw, A Shield, J Shuttleworth, M Simmons, A Simpson, T Smith, M Stead, A Sterling, D Stoker, T Stubbs, A Surtees, D Sutton-Lloyd, F Tinsley, S Townsend, C Varty, E Waldock, M Walton, A Watson, M Wilkes, M Wilson, D Wood, R Yorke and S Zair

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E Adam, P Atkinson, A Batey, K Batey, R Charlton-Lainé, R Crute, T Duffy, D Hall, D Haney, S Henig, L Kennedy, B McAloon, D McKenna, A Reed, K Robson and P Taylor

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Chair thanked staff for their work in staging meetings of the County Council at Spennymoor Leisure Centre since May 2021.

1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2022 were confirmed by the Council as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest in relation to any items of business on the agenda.

3 Chair's Announcements

The Chair congratulated Councillor Curtis Bihari on his election to the Ferryhill Electoral Division.

The Chair informed Council that the easing of Covid restrictions had enabled him to attend some Civic events over the last month which included:

- World Day of Prayer Service in St Joseph's Church in Brooms;
- Durham High School for Girls production of Anything Goes at the Gala Theatre;
- St Cuthbert's Day Service in Durham Cathedral; and finally the
- High Sheriff Awards at Ushaw College in recognition of groups in the community who encouraged useful and beneficial pursuits for local young people. This year's awards recognised youth groups who worked with people affected by mental health issues and young offenders to help turn their lives around and also youth groups who worked with young people supporting them to be upstanding citizens and deterred from criminal activities.

4 Leader's Report

The Council noted a report from the Leader of the Council as follows:

The Leader welcomed Members back to the Council Chamber, particularly those new Members from last May and Councillor Curtis Bihari for his first meeting of full council.

Events in Ukraine had very much overshadowed all else that was happening in the world and the Leader was sure that all Members would share her horror and sadness at the situation. The Leader placed on record her thanks to all Members and everybody across the County who had supported the Ukrainian people in the past few weeks and for the support that would continue into the future.

County Durham had always been a welcoming and inclusive county, something which was evidenced by its successful involvement in schemes to resettle refugees from Syria and Afghanistan. The Leader knew that County Durham would once again be keen to extend the hand of friendship to those in need.

The government had recently announced two schemes to support Ukrainian refugees coming to this country. While some of the detail was awaited, local authorities would have a significant role to play.

The Leader undertook to keep Members updated as more was heard and assured Members that County Durham would be doing all it could to support Ukrainians forced to flee their homeland.

Last week, the Council was notified by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, that County Durham had been successful in being shortlisted for UK City of Culture 2025. This was a fantastic achievement, with County Durham being just one of four areas to make it to the final stage from an original list of 20 locations.

The impact of securing the title could not be underestimated. It would bring enormous social and economic benefits not just to the county but also to the wider region.

While the Leader was proud that County Durham had made it this far, she was also not surprised. County Durham had so much to offer, not just stunning landscapes, amazing heritage and vibrant cultural offer but also its ambition and tradition of coming together to achieve something incredible.

There were just a few weeks left to go until the final announcement on which area would take the title and the Leader encouraged all Members to show their support for County Durham.

The Leader congratulated the Neighbourhood Warden Team on winning the Litter Initiative of the Year honour at the Keep Britain Tidy Network Awards. The award was in recognition of a scheme developed by the Team to use education to tackle the problem of littering, with offenders being offered the opportunity to complete an online course as an alternative to a Fixed Penalty Notice.

The past month has also seen the launch of two important new facilities in the county which included a new hub in Sherburn Hill to provide support to young people who were leaving care. It would provide a safe, supportive community space where care leavers could go to seek advice and support and also meet with others who shared their experiences.

Next month saw the return of Bishop Auckland Food Festival, one of the highlights of the county's cultural calendar. This year, visitors could once again look forward to dozens of stalls selling local produce and freshly prepared goods, as well as family entertainment and cookery demonstrations by some famous faces. The festival would take place on Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 April and the Leader encouraged Members to attend if they could.

Councillor Gunn thanked the Leader for her wide-ranging report and referred to events in Ukraine. Councillor Gunn asked whether the Leader had written to the Ukrainian Ambassador to hold out the County Council's hand of

support and further asked whether there had been any requests to Ukrainian speaking residents to come forward for translation purposes if this became necessary when refugees were relocated within County Durham.

The Leader thanked Councillor Gunn for her questions. With reference to a letter to the Ukrainian Ambassador the protocol was for such a letter to be written by the Chair of the Council, adding that she was happy to do this if requested. Regarding interpreters and assistance to Ukrainian refugees the Leader informed Council that a Working Group had been tasked with this which included Councillor Alan Shield as Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Equality and Inclusion and Members would be provided with regular updates on the Ukrainian refugee situation.

Councillor Kay asked whether the Council was doing all it could to settle Ukrainian refugees within the County as soon as possible. The Leader replied that the Council was doing all it could to settle Ukrainian refugees but had to follow guidance it was given.

5 Questions from the Public

There were no questions from the public.

6 Petitions

There were no petitions for consideration.

7 Boundary Commission Review of Parliamentary Constituencies

The Council considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided an update on the progress of the Boundary Commission Review of Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England (for copy see file of Minutes).

Moved by Councillor R Bell, **Seconded** by Councillor Marshall and

Resolved:

- (i) That the letter attached at Appendix 12 of the report be approved;
- (ii) That the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be requested to submit the letter to the Boundary Commission before the consultation closed on 6 April 2022.

8 Ferryhill By-election

The Council noted a Statement of the Returning Officer following a by-election held on 24 February 2022 in the Ferryhill Electoral Division.

9 Motions on Notice

There were no Motions on Notice.

10 Questions from Members

There were no questions from Members.