

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At an **Ordinary Meeting** of the County Council held in the **Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham** on **Wednesday 22 June 2022** at **10.00 am**

Present:

Councillor B Bainbridge in the Chair

Councillors E Adam, R Adcock-Forster, V Andrews, J Atkinson, A Batey, K Batey, A Bell, C Bell, R Bell, C Bihari, G Binney, D Brown, J Cairns, J Charlton, J Cosslett, B Coult, R Crute, 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, S Henig, J Higgins, L A Holmes, C Hood, A Hopgood, L Hovvels, D Howarth, C Hunt, G Hutchinson, A Jackson, M Johnson, N Jones, P Jopling, C Kay, B Kellett, L Kennedy, C Lines, L Maddison, R Manchester, C Martin, L Mavin, B McAloon, S McDonnell, M McGaun, D McKenna, M McKeon, I McLean, S McMahan, J Miller, D Nicholls, J Nicholson (Vice-Chair), D Oliver, R Ormerod, E Peeke, R Potts, P Pringle, J Purvis, J Quinn, S Quinn, G Richardson, I Roberts, S Robinson, K Robson, K Rooney, J Rowlandson, E Scott, P Sexton, K Shaw, A Shield, A Simpson, T Smith, W Stelling, A Sterling, D Stoker, T Stubbs, A Surtees, D Sutton-Lloyd, F Tinsley, S Townsend, E Waldock, M Walton, A Watson, M Wilkes, M Wilson, D Wood, R Yorke and S Zair

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Abley, P Atkinson, J Blakey, D Boyes, L Brown, J Chaplow, R Charlton-Lainé, I Cochrane, T Duffy, D Hall, D Haney, J Howey, C Marshall, E Mavin, B Moist, P Molloy, D Mulholland, A Reed, A Savory, J Shuttleworth, M Simmons, M Stead, P Taylor, C Varty and S Wilson

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Chair reported with regret the death of former Councillor and Honorary Alderman Bob Alderson. Bob was a Derwentside District Councillor from 1991 to 2009 and a Durham County Councillor from 2008 to 2014 representing the Burnopfield and Dipton Electoral Division. Members stood for a moments silence out of respect to Bob.

1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2022 were confirmed by the Council as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Councillor Wilkes referred to page 12 of the minutes and informed Council that it was he who raised the point of order regarding a Member leaving the Chamber during a vote. The Council agreed that the minutes would be amended to reflect this.

Resolved:

That the Minutes, as amended, be approved.

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 outlined the following procedural points before the meeting continued:

- Members should be respectful to each other during the meeting;
- While robust debate was part of the democratic process, Members should respect the views of others and not point fingers during debate;
- Points of order could be made by individual Members if it was felt there had been an alleged breach of the Council Procedure Rules or the law, but once a point of order had been dealt with the decision was final and the matter would not be revisited;
- If there was to be a vote Members should be present in the Chamber to cast their vote.

Since elected as Chair of the Council the Chair had attended a number of events including a special Cathedral Evensong for Venerable Bede and visits to schools.

The Chair had attended events to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee, including the unveiling of a wonderful display on Gilesgate Roundabout created by the County Council's Clean and Green and Civic Pride Teams, with help from children from Gilesgate Primary School.

The Chair had also been joined by the Council's Armed Forces Champion Councillor Paul Sexton to raise the Armed Forces Day flag outside of County Hall, which symbolised Durham's unwavering support for forces personnel to mark Armed Forces Day on Saturday 25 June and Reserves Day which was 22 June.

4 Leader's Report

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

The Leader thanked everyone involved in the bid to be named UK City of Culture 2025 for all their hard work and for their enthusiasm, commitment and belief. Everyone did an amazing job and should be incredibly proud of themselves.

Sadly, Durham was not named as UK City of Culture 2025 and Bradford was awarded the title. The Leader congratulated them on their success.

While it was disappointing not to have been chosen, Durham should take great pride in having made it to the final four from an initial longlist of 20 bidding areas. That was a fantastic achievement in itself and the exposure County Durham received had been phenomenal, with significant regional and national media interest and support. Earlier this month, the Leader attended the launch of North East Screen, a prestigious event with leading industry figures from across the UK. Everybody the Leader spoke to knew about County Durham and about its City of Culture bid, demonstrating how participation in the award process had raised awareness of Durham regionally and nationally.

There was now a need to seize the moment and build on the enormous wave of public support which had been created, to make the most of the connections and relationships which had been built and harness the innovation and creativity that had come to the fore during the 10 months of the campaign.

Working with Durham University and Culture Durham, Durham was determined to deliver on the ambitious plans within the bid, creating a county of culture that attracted tourists from across the UK and beyond, delivered thousands of new jobs and improved wellbeing.

It was vital that culture remained at the heart of efforts to drive economic growth and level up the region.

With that in mind, it was the perfect time to look ahead at the many cultural events taking place across the county during the coming weeks.

Following the Platinum Jubilee weekend, Durham continued to celebrate Her Majesty the Queen's 70-year reign with a picnic and concert at Wharton Park. Durham would also be welcoming the Queen's Baton Relay on 14 July, ahead of the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham.

Durham had a packed programme of events, from live street music to sell-out performances by world-renowned artists, as part of the annual Brass Festival, which once again coincided with the ever-popular Durham City Run.

With so much to look forward even in the short time before the next Council meeting, it was not hard to see that Durham truly was the UK's County of culture.

5 Questions from the Public

Two public questions had been received from members of the public.

The first question was asked in person by Dr L Welch on behalf of 'Keep our NHS Public North East' and asked what Durham County Council is doing to promote local participation and scrutiny regarding decision-making by Integrated Care Boards. Councillor P Sexton, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Adult and Health Services provided a response to the question, which would be posted on the Council's website.

The second question was from Mr N Kasch and related to the Tees Valley Energy Recovery Facility as a future source of liability for the Council. Mr Kasch was unable to attend the meeting to ask his question, but Councillor M Wilkes, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change noted that he would respond to the question in writing following the meeting, and the response would be posted on the Council's website.

6 Petitions

There were no petitions for consideration.

7 Report from the Cabinet

The Council noted a report from the Cabinet which provided information on issues considered at its meetings held on 16 March, 6 April, 27 April and 18 May 2022 (for copy see file of Minutes).

8 Council Plan 2022-2026

The Council considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which sought approval of the Council Plan covering the period 2022-2026 (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor C Martin, Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board informed Council that the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board had welcomed the opportunity to consider the draft Council Plan at its meeting on 17 June 2022.

The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board was keen to understand how performance against the objectives would be measured and

welcomed the opportunity to be involved in the developing and monitoring of the performance framework.

The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board also welcomed the inclusion of key performance indicators in the Plan which set out what success looked like and how it would be measured.

Members expressed the view that the cultural offer and actions outlined in the Plan should be built on and stressed the need to promote every aspect of the County's heritage.

In particular, it was important that the heritage and culture of all towns and villages was reflected within the Plan including The Story at Mount Oswald project which would bring together five collections for the first time at a flagship facility which would transform the way the history of County Durham was told.

The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board welcomed the inclusion of a fifth objective for the Council on the Environment and the parity given to the Ecological Emergency.

The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board considered and endorsed the change in approach to previous plans from appending the Council's equality policy to embedding the objectives within the Plan itself. It was suggested that the next iteration of the Plan include a link to the policy for completeness.

The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board understood that going forwards the Plan was to be refreshed every year and welcomed the opportunity to help shape the future of County Durham.

The opening date for The Story at Mount Oswald noted in the Plan was queried.

Moved by Councillor A Hopgood, **Seconded** by Councillor R Bell and

Resolved:

That the Council Plan 2022-2026 attached at Appendix 2 of the report be approved.

9 Motions on Notice

The Chair informed Council that Councillor M Stead had requested his motion be deferred to the next Council meeting.

Councillor A Batey informed Council that she wished to alter her motion and **Moved** the following with the additional wording shown in italics:

I propose that the allocation of £125,000 awarded to the Council as runners up of the city of culture bid is topped up from the general reserve by £15,000 to a total of £140,000.

Subject to the grant conditions confirming this is an appropriate use of the £125,000 grant awarded, this money can then be distributed equally to each of the 14 area action partnerships across our county to ensure that the whole county benefits and is able to celebrate from the City of Culture runners up award.

Council **agreed** the alteration to the motion.

The Motion was **Seconded** by Councillor A Surtees.

A named vote on the Motion was requested.

For the Motion

E Adam, R Adcock-Forster, V Andrews, J Atkinson, A Batey, K Batey, C Bihari, G Binney, R Crute, S Deinali, K Earley, L Fenwick, C Fletcher, J Griffiths, O Gunn, C Hampson, A Hanson, K Hawley, S Henig, J Higgins, L Hovvels, D Howarth, M Johnson, C Kay, B Kellett, L Kennedy, L Maddison, R Manchester, B McAloon, D McKenna, M McKeon, I McLean, S McMahon, J Miller, D Nicholls, P Pringle, J Purvis, S Quinn, I Roberts, K Shaw, G Smith, T Smith, A Surtees, F Tinsley, S Townsend, E Waldock, M Wilson, D Wood and R Yorke,

Against the Motion

B Bainbridge, A Bell, C Bell, R Bell, D Brown, J Cairns, J Charlton, J Cosslett, B Coult, M Currah, J Elmer, R Fantarrow-Darby, D Freeman, Heaviside, T Henderson, L Holmes, C Hood, A Hopgood, C Hunt, G Hutchinson, A Jackson, N Jones, P Jopling, C Lines, C Martin, L Mavin, S McDonnell, M McGaun, J Nicholson, D Oliver, R Ormerod, E Peeke, R Potts, J Quinn, G Richardson, S Robinson, K Robson, K Rooney, J Rowlandson, E Scott, P Sexton, A Shield, A Simpson, W Stelling, A Sterling, D Stoker, T Stubbs, D Sutton-Lloyd, M Walton, A Watson, M Wilkes and S Zair.

The Motion was **Lost**.

10 Questions from Members

Councillor C Marshall

Further to a previous question to full council and a letter in which I referenced the Sniperley development sent to the Leader, could the relevant cabinet member please provide an update on the planning application for the strategic housing site at Sniperley? Is the Council at risk of non-determination? What costs are the Council exposed to and what is the risk of the extensive community benefits from the scheme being scrapped by the delays in bringing forward the planning application to committee?

Councillor C Marshall was not in attendance and therefore it was noted that a written response to his question would be provided.

Councillor J Miller

Can the Cabinet member for Equality and Inclusion explain how the Poverty Action Plan addresses the concerns raised in the Food Action Plan Motion put forward to Full Council in September 2021?

Councillor A Shield, Portfolio Holder for Equality and Inclusion thanked Councillor Miller for his question and provided the following response:

Rising food, fuel and energy costs caused by geo political economic factors driving up inflation is undoubtedly having a significant impact on all households across our county, impacting most acutely on those more financially vulnerable households.

There are several mechanisms already in place to support those who face food insecurity across County Durham – some are Government funded, some are Council funded initiatives, some are being delivered by key partners and we also have the Welfare Assistance Scheme in place to support those without access to enough money to provide basic household essentials, including food.

One of the key actions in the Child Poverty Strategy is to increase take up of free school meals plus other pupil premium based benefits for those who are eligible, and we also work closely with the Foodbanks across County Durham plus charities such as That Bread and Butter Thing. The Chief Executive of that organisation will be attending the Poverty Action Steering Group next month to update us on the work they are doing at a national level to inform our local approach.

There is also a food partnership, Food Durham, which brings together key organisations within Durham, with the aim of reducing food waste, improving

access to healthy, fresh food and to ensure that those struggling financially have access to food. They have a network of organisations that deliver projects and initiatives around food and are developing a strategy which we need to align with as part of our partnership approach.

The current consultation exercises for both the refresh of the Council's overarching Poverty Strategy and Action Plan and the child poverty plan include actions which specifically address food security – however, the consultation process is designed to understand what more needs to be done to use the resources we have as a Council and through our partners, to go further. We have been keen to ensure that we engage with all our Area Action Partnerships to gain that vital local information and intelligence and build on local initiatives already in place to inform our strategy refresh.

The consultation responses will be brought back to cabinet in November with an updated strategy and action plan; this will include a specific food strategy to underpin the wider actions to address poverty.

I would urge all Members to put forward their views as part of the consultation process and to encourage the local community groups you work with, to do the same.

I also want to give some assurance that we are also looking at what we can do, using our Welfare Assistance Reserve, in line with our Poverty Strategy and Action Plan refresh, to provide more ongoing support to those residents that are struggling financially due to the current situation.

Councillor L Hovvels

Can the Cabinet Member for Resources Investment and Assets, please explain what the council strategy is to regenerate our ex-mining villages, by redeveloping or demolishing vacant buildings such as Blue Bell School in Trimdon Grange instead of leaving them to become a target for anti-social behaviour?

Councillor J Rowlandson, Portfolio Holder for Resources, Investment and Assets thanked Councillor Hovvels for her question and provided the following response:

The council will be aware that we are currently in the middle of a process of developing the first Inclusive Economic Strategy for the county and as part of that process we been undertaking a four-month conversation with key stakeholders, residents and communities.

Over 1500 people completed the questionnaire and a further 1500 people engaged in structured events during the consultation process. One of the

key issues which has come out is the importance of creating attractive and sustainable communities and this includes a number of former mining villages.

Members will be able to contribute to the next stage of development of the strategy in advance of Cabinet being asked to agree the final version in the autumn and I would expect Councillor Hovvels and other members will actively engage in the strategy process.

The issue of specific vacant properties across the county is one that we need to deal with on an individual basis and the relevant officers will contact Councillor Hovvels to discuss the issue in Trimdon Grange.