

## **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

At an **Ordinary Meeting** of the County Council held in the **Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham** on **Wednesday 7 December 2022** at **10.00 am**

**Present:**

### **Councillor B Bainbridge in the Chair**

Councillors M Abley, E Adam, R Adcock-Forster, V Andrews, J Atkinson, A Batey, A Bell, C Bell, R Bell, C Bihari, G Binney, J Blakey, D Boyes, D Brown, L Brown, R Charlton-Lainé, J Charlton, I Cochrane, J Cosslett, B Coult, R Crute, M Currah, S Deinali, T Duffy, K Earley, J Elmer, K Fantarrow, L Fenwick, C Fletcher, D Freeman, J Griffiths, O Gunn, D Hall, C Hampson, D Haney, A Hanson, K Hawley, P Heaviside, T Henderson, S Henig, J Higgins, L A Holmes, C Hood, A Hoppood, L Hovvels, D Howarth, J Howey, G Hutchinson, A Jackson, M Johnson, N Jones, P Jopling, C Kay, B Kellett, L Kennedy, C Lines, L Maddison, C Marshall, C Martin, E Mavin, L Mavin, B McAloon, S McDonnell, M McGaun, D McKenna, M McKeon, I McLean, S McMahan, J Miller, B Moist, P Molloy, D Mulholland, D Nicholls, J Nicholson (Vice-Chair), D Oliver, R Ormerod, E Peeke, R Potts, P Pringle, J Purvis, J Quinn, S Quinn, A Reed, G Richardson, I Roberts, S Robinson, K Robson, K Rooney, J Rowlandson, A Savory, E Scott, P Sexton, K Shaw, A Shield, J Shuttleworth, M Simmons, A Simpson, G Smith, T Smith, M Stead, W Stelling, 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, S Wilson, D Wood, R Yorke and S Zair

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Atkinson, J Chaplow and C Hunt

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Chair reported with regret the death of the former Councillor and Alderman Terry McDonnell. Terry represented the Coxhoe Ward on Durham City Council between 1987 and 2009 and was also Mayor of Durham in 1995/96. Members stood to stand for a moments silence out of respect to Terry.

### **1 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 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 reported that since the last Council meeting she had attended several events, including attending the Durham University international student welcome hosted at Durham Town Hall, the Festival of Remembrance Concert held at Durham Cathedral and the Remembrance Sunday Service and Parade, again held at Durham Cathedral.

The Chair then informed Council of some recent County Council successes.

A community rail partnership based in Darlington and South Durham had achieved success at the national Community Rail Awards.

Bishop Line Community Rail Partnership, of which Durham County Council was a partner, was recognised for its innovative work engaging communities with their local railway line.

It was a finalist in three categories at the awards, coming in second place for Most Effective Communications Campaign with its Pass on a Smile campaign; third place in the Involving Diverse Groups category with its Our Line Connections; and finalist in the Involving Children and Young People category with Creative Journeys.

A council team had won a national award for its work to help residents save money on their heating and energy bills.

The warm homes team received the National Heating Project of the Year accolade at the 2022 National Energy Efficiency Awards. The accolade recognised the achievements of the team's warm homes campaign which supported low income and fuel poor households by providing grants for new boilers and insulation measures to help lower their energy bills and give them a warmer home.

A member of staff of the Council had claimed a national award for helping to put data at the heart of the digital transformation of adult social care.

Marion Ingleby, Strategic Manager in Adult Social Care, won the Leadership Award category at this year's NHS England Digital and Data Awards.

The Awards recognised the achievements, particularly over the last two years, of individuals who worked within a digital, data, technology or informatics role within health and social care.

Finally, the Council had been recognised for its social work at a national award.

Durham claimed a gold and silver at the Social Worker of the Year Awards, which celebrated individual excellence and outstanding practice among social workers.

Durham won a gold award for Supportive Social Work Employer of the Year, which recognised organisations delivering excellent practice as an employer while also inspiring employees to achieve their best.

Judges commented on the Council's success in terms of staff training, including its innovative Leadership Academy and academy for newly qualified social workers. They also praised the Council's commitment to developing an open and supportive culture, staff wellbeing and peer support.

Meanwhile, a silver award for Social Worker of the Year was given to one of Durham's social work consultants, Nathan Head, who had been described as determined and inspirational.

Having started his career with the Council six years ago as a student social worker, Nathan was recognised for his hugely positive impact on children and young people across County Durham.

The Chair and Council congratulated all staff involved in the achievement of the awards.

## **4 Leader's Report**

Councillor A Hopgood. Leader of the Council looked back at what had been an exceptionally busy and successful year for the Council, with a great deal being achieved across all services during the past 12 months including:

- children's services had been rated as good with outstanding features by Ofsted and the Council had been recognised at the national Social Worker of the Year Awards.
- a revised Climate Emergency Response Plan had been launched with an ambitious new target of achieving net zero by 2030 and the Council had also been awarded green status by Investors in Environment, the highest possible rating within the scheme. This was alongside receiving the award for Overall Outstanding Achiever for a large organisation at the IIE Awards.

- Durham reached the finals of the City of Culture 2025 competition, generating significant publicity and interest in the county.
- the Council was one of only two local authorities to be featured in this year's list of the UK's top 100 Apprenticeship Employers.

All of these achievements significantly contributed to making County Durham a great place to live, work, visit and invest.

The Leader concluded by wishing all Members a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and hoped they would all be able to spend some time with family and friends over the festive season. The Leader looked forward to what she was sure would be a very busy new year.

## **5 Questions from the Public**

A question had been received from Mr Forbes. The questioner was unable to attend the meeting and had requested that the Chair put his question to Council. The Chair put the following question:

'Considering the cost of new vehicles and the councils need to save money and reduce their carbon footprint, has the council considered using technology to reduce emissions, like the Atmos 1 system, which can reduce emissions and could be a green cost-effective way forward in the current financial crisis?'

Councillor J Shuttleworth, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Rural Communities and Highways provided the following response:

*The use of the equipment referred to by Mr Forbes was raised during the consultation on the taxi policy and was considered by officers and by the Energy Saving Trust (EST) who provided the Council with their opinion on the subject.*

*The subject raised by trade respondents and the final response can be found in Appendix 4 of the report.*

A copy of the response would be sent to Mr Forbes and 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 12 October and 16 November 2022 (for copy see file of Minutes).

## **8 2022/23 Treasury Management Half Year Update**

The Council noted a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided information on the treasury management mid-year position for 2022/23 and provided a summary of the Council's treasury position, borrowing activity, investment activity, treasury management and prudential indicators as at 30 September 2022 (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor R Bell, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance thanked the Corporate Director and his team for the comprehensive update on the Council's treasury management activity during the first half of the financial year. It was pleasing to note that the Council had continued to fully comply with all the requirements of the treasury management policy and strategy agreed by Council in February 2022.

## **9 Director of Public Health Annual Report**

The Council received the 2022 Annual Report of the Director of Public Health for County Durham (for copy see file of Minutes).

Under the Health and Social Care Act 2012, one of the statutory requirements of the Director of Public Health was to produce an annual report about the health of the local population. In addition the local authority had a duty to publish the report. The government had not specified what the annual report should contain and had made it clear that this was a decision for individual Directors of Public Health to determine.

The Director of Public Health annual report for 2022 focused on the following:

- Foreword by the Director of Public Health
- Health and wellbeing across County Durham
- Living with COVID-19
- Making smoking history
- Priorities (covering Healthier, Fairer and Protected)
- Update on recommendations from 2021
- Conclusion

Councillor C Hood, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Adult and Health Services thanked the Director of Public Health for the presentation of the Annual Report which ensured that the health and wellbeing of residents remained a top priority for the Council. The report reflected what the Council was doing

to support people to live longer, and healthier lives and Councillor Hood placed on record his thanks to the Director and her team for their hard work and effort that underpinned the report.

Councillor J Howey asked whether work took place in schools to discuss the effects of smoking. The Director of Public Health replied that a lot of work which took place under the Tobacco Alliance focussed predominantly on adults because the best way to stop young people from starting to smoke was to reduce smoking in adults.

Councillor D Boyes referred to the life expectancy figures which seemed to have stalled and expressed concern that the gap in the healthy life expectancy between residents of County Durham and the rest of the country now stood at approximately 4 and a half years. Although the number of people who smoked was lower than ever Councillor Boyes asked whether the use of vapes was a health concern. The Director of Public Health replied that nationally the increase in life expectancy had started to stall. Work was carried out with partners to focus on the priorities which would address the gap in life expectancy and healthy life expectancy.

Councillor R Charlton-Lainé considered that education on the effects of vaping should take place as well as the work which took place around smoking, and the use of nitrous oxide by young people also needed to be addressed.

The Director of Public Health referred to the use of nitrous oxide and replied that the Police and Crime Commissioner had chaired the first Combatting Drugs Partnership which considered the use of drugs and alcohol in County Durham and Darlington. With reference to vaping there was strong evidence that vaping was much less harmful than smoking and there was a misperception among smokers that it was not less harmful. While young people should be discouraged from starting to vape, where young people were already smoking then it was preferable if they vaped instead. A statement about vaping had recently been sent to all schools and the Director of Public Health agreed to share this with all Members.

Councillor L Hovvels thanked the Director of Public Health and her team for the prevention work they undertook. Councillor Hovvels looked forwards to the results of research being undertaken on the long-term effects of Covid. Referring to the Warm Hubs Councillor Hovvels asked what was being done towards the hard-to-reach people.

Councillor C Kay asked what was being done to simplify access to mental health services. Councillor Kay also referred to ManHealth and asked what the Council could do to support such organisations. The Director of Public Health replied that mental health was a priority for both the Council and

partners including the Tees, Esk and Wear Valley Trust and she would provide more details of the specific work which was being done in relation to mental health.

## **10 Review of Hackney Carriage and Private Licensing Policy**

The Council considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which sought approval of the revised Durham County Council's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy, referred to as the "taxi policy" (for copy see file of Minutes).

Council was asked to consider further changes to the revised taxi policy made by General Licensing and Registration Committee (GLRC) resulting from a second, 4-week consultation that took place between Monday 20 June and Sunday 17 July 2022. The final version of the taxi policy, as modified by GLRC was shown in Appendix 2 to the report.

In **Moving** the report Councillor J Shuttleworth, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Rural Communities and Highways informed Council that the revised Policy had been developed over a considerable period of time and incorporated national best practice and updated government guidance. **Seconded** by Councillor D Stoker.

Councillor C Marshall referred to an email some Members had received from a group representing taxi drivers in County Durham which contained a lot of detailed information and Councillor Marshall asked whether the Cabinet Member would agree to meet with the taxi driver association to discuss the issues which had been raised.

Councillor J Shuttleworth replied that the Policy had been agreed by the General Licensing and Registration Committee prior to it being brought to Council for approval and no dissent had been made at that meeting.

Councillor N Jones informed the Council that he did not agree to further restrictions being placed on taxi drivers as proposed in the Policy and would not be supporting the Policy.

Councillor J Blakey informed the Council that she had chaired the meeting of the General Licensing and Registration Committee which gave unanimous approval of the Policy. Members of the taxi association were present at that meeting, including the sender of the email which had been received by Members this morning. One of the recommendations made at the meeting was that taxi licensing committees attend working group meetings with taxi drivers.

Councillor K Fantarrow informed Council that she did not support the new Policy and wished this to be noted.

Councillor R Crute **moved** that the report be deferred to allow the Cabinet Member and Councillor C Marshall to meet with Durham Taxi Drivers and Private Hire Association. **Seconded** by Councillor C Marshall.

Upon a vote being taken it was

**Resolved:**

That the report be deferred to allow the Cabinet Member and Councillor C Marshall to meet with Durham Taxi Drivers and Private Hire Association

## **11 Creation of the Head of Corporate Affairs**

The Council noted a report of the Chief Executive regarding the decision of the Chief Officer Appointments Committee to create a new Head of Service role, Head of Corporate Affairs, which would report directly to the Chief Executive (for copy see file of Minutes)

The report also set out for information the deletion of two existing Head of Service posts which were directly related to the creation of the new post and the associated savings arising from the structural changes that were agreed as part of the establishment of the post.

## **12 Request to Change Name of Parish Council Hutton Henry**

The Council considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services regarding a request submitted by Hutton Henry Parish Council proposing a name change of the Parish Council to Hutton Henry and Station Town Parish Council (for copy see file of Minutes).

**Moved** by Councillor A Hopgood, Leader of the Council, **Seconded** by Councillor S Deinali.

**Resolved:**

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

## **13 Motions on Notice**

**Moved** by Councillor R Adcock-Forster, **Seconded** by Councillor L Fenwick

Council acknowledges the vital role played by kinship carers in offering care to children when they most need it. In recognition of the immense value of care they provide and the enormous personal sacrifices they make, Council will write to Government in support of the recommendations of the



Independent Review of Children's Social Care and its focus on restoring early help to families, supporting kinship carers and ensuring children can build lifelong links with extended family members.

Councillors O Gunn, T Henderson, M Simmons, D Sutton-Lloyd and J Howey all spoke in support of the Motion.

The Motion was **carried** by consent of the Council.

**Moved** by Councillor A Surtees, **Seconded** by Councillor O Gunn

This council agrees that all our primary school children in County Durham should have access to nutritious and balanced free school meals and will write to the Government to urge them to extend free school meal provision to every primary school child in England.

Councillors M Wilkes, A Shield, J Elmer, D Boyes and S Quinn all spoke in support of the Motion.

Councillor Molloy informed Council he could not support the Motion because it would provide free school meals to all primary school children, regardless of how affluent their parents might be.

Upon a vote being the Motion was **carried**.

## **14 Questions from Members**

There were no questions from Members.