

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At an **Ordinary Meeting** of the County Council held in the **Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham** on **Wednesday 29 March 2023** at **10.00 am**

Present:

Councillors E Adam, R Adcock-Forster, V Andrews, J Atkinson, P Atkinson, A Batey, A Bell, C Bell, R Bell, C Bihari, G Binney, J Blakey, D Brown, L Brown, J Charlton, J Cosslett, B Coult, R Crute, M Currah, S Deinali, T Duffy, K Earley, J Elmer, C Fletcher, D Freeman, J Griffiths, O Gunn, D Hall, C Hampson, D Haney, A Hanson, P Heaviside, T Henderson, S Henig, J Higgins, L A Holmes, C Hood, A Hopgood, L Hovvels, J Howey, C Hunt, A Jackson, M Johnson, N Jones, P Jopling, C Kay, B Kellett, L Kennedy, C Lines, L Maddison, R Manchester, C Martin, E Mavin, L Mavin, B McAloon, S McDonnell, D McKenna, I McLean, S McMahan, B Moist, D Mulholland, 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, K Robson, K Rooney, J Rowlandson, 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 I Cochrane, L Fenwick and S Robinson

1 Election of Chair

Moved by Councillor A Hopgood, **Seconded** by Councillor A Shield that Councillor J Nicholson be elected Chair.

Resolved:

That Councillor J Nicholson be elected to the Office of Chair of the Council.

Councillor J Nicholson subscribed the Statutory Declaration accepting the Office.

In accepting the Office of Chair of the Council Councillor Nicholson paid tribute Councillor Bainbridge who had been a very close friend and was held in the highest esteem. Her service to County Durham and to her constituents was impeccable and she would be a great miss to Durham County Council and to those who knew her as a friend.

Councillor P Jopling on behalf of the Conservative Group, Councillor A Hopgood, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor A Shield, Leader of the Durham Group, Councillor J Shuttleworth, Leader of the Durham County Council Independent Group, Councillor R Crute, Deputy Leader of the Labour Group, Councillor L Maddison, Leader of the Spennymoor and Tudhoe Independent Group and Councillor J Charlton paid tribute to Councillor Bainbridge.

Members stood for a moments silence out of respect to Councillor Bainbridge.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2023 were confirmed by the Council as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 Declarations of Interest

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

4 Chair's Announcements

The Chair informed Council she had no announcements to make at the meeting.

5 Leader's Report

The Council noted a report from Councillor A Hopgood, Leader of the Council as follows:

Last week saw the official start of spring which would bring lighter nights and, hopefully, an improvement in the weather. The change of season also marked the start of the festival programme in County Durham.

Over the coming weeks and months, there was much to look forward to, with an exciting line-up of events and activities for all ages and interests.

Firstly, the Bishop Auckland Food Festival would take place next month. The festival was always a great day out which offered a fantastic boost to local businesses by attracting tens of thousands of visitors to the town.

In May, the country would celebrate King Charles III's coronation and events would be taking place around the county.

Later in May Durham City would come to life to mark the 10th annual Durham Pride.

The summer would bring further fun with BRASS, Durham City Run and Seaham Food Festival before moving into the autumn, with Durham Book Festival and Lumiere.

The Leader hoped all Members would join her in making the most of the fantastic cultural offer across the County.

6 Questions from the Public

There were no questions from the public.

7 Petitions

There were no petitions for consideration.

8 Report from the Cabinet

The Council noted a report from the Cabinet which provided information on issues considered at its meetings held on 8 February and 15 March 2023 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Chair informed Council that no questions had been received on the report from Cabinet.

9 Appointment of non-voting co-opted Members to the Standards Committee

The Council considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which sought agreement to the appointment of the Town and Parish Council co-opted representatives to the Standards Committee (for copy see file of Minutes).

Moved by Councillor A Hopgood, Leader of the Council, **Seconded** by Councillor A Shield, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Equality and Inclusion and

Resolved:

That Councillors Alan Doig and Chris Foote-Wood be appointed as non-voting co-opted Parish Council representatives on the Standards Committee.

10 Motions on Notice

The Chair informed Council that Councillor M Stead had agreed his Motion be deferred and placed on the agenda for the Council meeting in June 2023.

11 Questions from Members

Councillor K Shaw

Blyth County Council submitted a bid which was successful at Stage 2 Levelling up and when commenting upon the bid Michael Gove said

“Blyth Council was successful in its bid and has just secured £20 m in levelling up funding which the Government has said would transform empty homes support jobs and tackle crime and through revitalising dilapidated housing upskilling the next generation and cracking down on crime this town is finally getting the attention and investment it deserves to ensure everyone thrives”

Why was the bid for Blyth successful whilst the bid for Horden was not and what now will be plan C for Horden?

Councillor J Rowlandson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Resources, Investment and Assets thanked Councillor Shaw for his question and provided the following response:

The Council cannot provide an answer of how government decisions were made in relation to Blyth, but we understand that the funding for Blyth was allocated outside of the Round 2 Levelling up process and announced as part of the Spring Statement.

The government decision and outcome of the Round 2 Levelling Up process was disappointing for our area and we have raised this with government. I would however put on record my thanks to the Council officers who worked above and beyond to put forward five bids, of high standard into this process, in the limited timescales available and seeking to deliver over £100m of additional investment into our area.

I would also like to thank our communities, businesses, local members and MP's who supported our bids into government. I assure all here today, that whilst this was a hugely disappointing outcome for County Durham and indeed the many areas that did not benefit from this round of funding, that our commitment and hard work in this process, does mean we have a pipeline of projects that can be considered by the Council for further external funding opportunities in the future.

The Council cannot comment on the comparative merits of Levelling Up bids from other local authorities, however we understand that no authority that was successful in round one had a successful bid in round two and that County Durham was one of these areas along with a number of others.

As a supplementary question Councillor Shaw asked whether the Leader of the Council would call for a Judicial Review into the government's decision to change the criteria preventing any authority successful in Round 1 of Levelling Up of accessing funding in Round 2, which was a decision taken after the Round 2 bids had been submitted, in order to recover the costs incurred by council tax payers of County Durham.

Councillor Rowlandson replied that any possible method of Judicial Review would be discussed by the Cabinet.