

## **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

At an Ordinary Meeting of the County Council held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Wednesday 25 January 2017 at 10.00 am**

### **Present:**

#### **Councillor E Bell (Chairman)**

Councillors E Adam, B Armstrong, J Armstrong, B Avery, A Batey, A Bell, D Bell, R Bell, H Bennett, J Blakey, A Bonner, D Boyes, P Brookes, J Brown, C Carr, J Carr, J Chaplow, J Charlton, J Clare, J Clark, P Conway, K Corrigan, P Crathorne, R Crute, K Davidson, M Davinson, M Dixon (Vice-Chairman), S Forster, N Foster, D Freeman, I Geldard, B Glass, B Graham, J Gray, O Gunn, C Hampson, J Hart, K Henig, S Henig, J Hillary, G Holland, A Hopgood, K Hopper, L Hovvels, E Huntington, S Iveson, I Jewell, O Johnson, B Kellett, A Laing, P Lawton, J Lethbridge, H Liddle, J Lindsay, A Liversidge, J Maitland, C Marshall, N Martin, P May, O Milburn, B Moir, S Morrison, A Napier, T Nearney, H Nicholson, R Ormerod, A Patterson, T Pemberton, M Plews, C Potts, L Pounder, G Richardson, J Robinson, S Robinson, J Rowlandson, A Savory, K Shaw, A Shield, J Shuttleworth, M Simmons, H Smith, W Stelling, B Stephens, D Stoker, A Surtees, L Taylor, P Taylor, O Temple, K Thompson, F Tinsley, E Tomlinson, J Turnbull, A Watson, A Willis, S Wilson, R Young and S Zair

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Alvey, J Bell, G Bleasdale, D Hicks, J Lee, J Maslin, M Nicholls, P Oliver, T Smith, M Stanton, A Turner, C Wilson and R Yorke

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Chairman of the Council with great sadness reported the following deaths:

- Former Member of Parliament for the Easington Constituency, and District of Easington Councillor John Cummings. John was one of the youngest ever Councillors elected to the District Council in 1970 and was Chairman in 1975-1976. He went on to become Leader of the Council in 1979 until he stepped down in 1987 to become elected Member of Parliament for the Easington Constituency which he went on to serve for 23 years. He was elected as an MP with one of the highest majorities, 24,639, and served his Constituency through some extremely difficult times. His contribution to the Easington Constituency and beyond would never be forgotten;
- Former Teesdale District Councillor and Evenwood and Barony Parish Councillor Raymond Gibson who had served local government for in excess of 25 years; and
- Former Chester-le-Street District Councillor and Alderman, Peter Hopkins.

The Council stood for a moments silence as a mark of respect.

## **1 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2016 were confirmed by the Council as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **2 Declarations of Interest**

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

## **3 Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman informed Council of a number of events which were taking place from 25 to 27 January 2017 at County Hall to coincide with Holocaust Memorial Day.

A thought provoking Porrajmos Exhibition which recounted the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Gypsies during the Second World War was located in the Durham Room.

A community engagement stall was also present and included information from many of the Council's partner organisations including the Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner Team who would be promoting the reporting of hate crime related incidents.

Visitors could light LED candles of remembrance, view authentic Roma recipes, provide pictures, poetry and thoughts for inclusion on the event's 'Wall of Commemoration' which would be shared on the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust's online 'Wall of Life' as part of this year's theme 'How can life go on?'

The inside of the County Hall Foyer, Help Desk area and Durham Room had been lit in purple lighting to reflect the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust colour theme and tied in with Durham's Place of Light status.

The Chairman hoped that Members would afford the time to view the exhibition over the next few days and engage with the agencies and representatives at the event.

## **4 Leader's Report**

The Leader of the Council wished all Members and Officers a happy new year and highlighted that, despite ongoing austerity cuts, there was much to look forward to in the year ahead.

Against the backdrop of Brexit uncertainty and ongoing austerity, the council would continue to be fiercely ambitious despite having already faced budget cuts of £200 million.

The Council would continue focus on the key priorities of encouraging continued growth of the economy, making Durham a safe, clean and green place to live and promoting a thriving visitor economy and cultural sphere.

The Leader informed the Council that in December he had visited the Hitachi plant at Newton Aycliffe where the first train, assembled on the production line, was unveiled.

Many companies from the county supplied components for the trains and this was a great example of how working together could bring huge benefits to the county, which justified the many years of hard work that brought Hitachi to County Durham, beating off competition from more than 40 other sites across the UK.

Hitachi was just one of several success stories the county had to celebrate, including the creation of 1,200 jobs by ResQ in Seaham following support from Business Durham, the council's business arm. The County was looking forward to more good economic news in 2017, including the start of the next phase of expansion at NETPark in Sedgefield and a new facility to expand GlaxoSmithKline in Barnard Castle.

Redevelopments were underway on the riverbanks in Durham City which would enhance retail and cinema offers; and would mean more job opportunities for local people and these were key to the Council's plans for a brighter future for County Durham.

Those plans included updated masterplans for Durham City and major towns throughout the county, which would go to Area Action Partnerships locally following consideration by Cabinet. Each was unique and detailed the work undertaken so far, and what was still to come.

Operation Spruce Up was also to take place within each of the 14 AAP's as the Council continued its programme of spring cleans across County Durham so that the county was seen in its best possible light.

Additionally, the Council worked to support some of the UK's most popular and ground breaking events. Kynren, which had been described as the country's largest outdoor performance since the London Olympics, was to return in the summer and last year attracted 100,000 visitors.

Beamish, already the UK's most popular living museum would commence its expansion to encompass a reconstructed 1950's town this year. The project to improve Seaham marina would continue as well as a new activity centre set to offer water and land sports. The popular annual festivals which included Bishop Auckland Food Festival, Brass and the Durham Book Festival would again entertain locals and bring in many thousands of visitors.

Finally, Lumiere would return to Durham for a fifth time in November. Lumiere was now the UK's largest light festival and this year would be accompanied by a major international lighting conference which last year took place in Seoul in South Korea.

## **5 Questions from Area Action Partnerships**

Questions had been received from Great Aycliffe and Middridge Area Action Partnership and 4-Together Area Action Partnership relating to the following:

- The Council's business development plans for Newton Aycliffe.
- The Council's plans for targeted work to tackle issues of underage drinking, reducing the level of anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime in the Ferryhill area.

Brain Riley, Great Aycliffe and Middridge AAP Coordinator and Lee Copeland, 4-Together AAP Coordinator were in attendance to ask their questions.

Councillor N Foster, Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration thanked the Great Aycliffe and Middridge AAP for their question and provided a response. Councillor B Stephens, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Local Partnerships and Councillor O Johnson, Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services thanked the 4-Together AAP for their question and provided a response.

## **6 Questions from the Public**

Two questions had been received from Members of the Public regarding the following:

- The practice followed by the crematoria operated in partnership by the Council for funerals of non-viable foetuses.
- Evidence of improvements to traffic flow through Durham City following the installation of the SCOOT system.

In the absence of the questioners, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services informed the Council that a copy of the questions, together with the responses would be placed on the Council's website and a copy of the responses would also be sent direct to the questioners.

## **7 Petitions**

There were no petitions for consideration.

## **8 Report from the Cabinet**

The Leader of the Council provided the Council with an update of business discussed by Cabinet at its meeting held on 14 December 2016 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Chairman informed the Council that one question on the Cabinet report had been submitted in advance and requested Councillor Thompson to ask his question.

Before asking his question, Councillor Thompson informed the Council that Spennymoor's Festival Walk was deteriorating and looking more derelict with each

passing day. He had held meetings with Officers and Members of the Council and had been asked to be patient and understanding of the problems involved. However, there came a point when the concerns of constituents needed to be restated and Councillor Thompson asked the following:

Due to lack of progress, in regards to the regeneration of Festival Walk Shopping Centre in Spennymoor, does Durham County Council need to seek a new approach?

Councillor N Foster, Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration thanked Councillor Thompson for his question.

The Cabinet report presented to Council highlighted the Masterplans for six communities in County Durham and referenced that several further reports had been presented in January. This was done and included the revised Masterplan for Spennymoor. As a Board Member of Spennymoor AAP Councillor Thompson was well aware that Councillor Foster regularly reported on economic regeneration issues for the area, including proposals for Festival Walk. Councillor Foster had endeavoured to keep all local Members apprised of the situation and had promptly addressed all issues raised.

Whilst it was taking longer than hoped for this project to be brought forward, Councillor Foster was reassured by the private sector partners that matters were moving in the right direction.

The private sector owned and were behind this development and it was excellent to see a multi-million pound private investment being brought forward in Spennymoor town centre after so many years when this was not achievable. However, the Council also had its own plans for a new car park and took the bold step of being the first party to announce their plans to invest £600,000 into the Festival Walk area. This was part of the Council's ongoing commitment to improving town centres across County Durham in partnership with private sector developers.

Councillor Foster remained very hopeful that the private parties would come forward with their plans which offered significant investment for Spennymoor and a positive way forward.

## **9 Teaching Assistants - Review of Terms and Conditions Update**

The Council noted a joint report of the Corporate Director of Resources and Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services regarding a decision made by Chief Officers under urgency provisions contained in the Council's Constitution (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor R Bell asked what the position was of teaching assistants who had already accepted new terms and conditions. The Corporate Director of Resources replied that an update on the position of these teaching assistants would be provided shortly.

Councillor Watson asked whether the joint review of the role, functions, job descriptions and activity of teaching assistants was a re-opening of Job Evaluation. The Corporate Director of Resources replied that the joint review would be within the parameters of not reopening the single status agreement and therefore was not Job Evaluation.

Councillor Temple welcomed the report and asked what plans there were to keep Members informed of movements and changes. The Corporate Director of Resources replied that the Project Board had met three times to date and consideration was being given to how to keep members updated.

## **10 Community Governance Review - Central Unparished areas of Durham**

The Council considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which presented the draft terms of reference and the consultation document which had been prepared for the Community Governance Review of the central unparished areas of Durham (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services informed the Council that an amendment was proposed to the consultation document to show the number of Councillors per Ward would be 8 for Neville's Cross, 6 for Elvet and Gilesgate and 1 for Durham South.

Upon **moving** the report, as amended, Councillor Henig informed the Council that he was pleased the consultation was to take place by a consultative poll. Consultation would commence early February 2017 and close 6 March 2017, with any new Council coming into operation from the spring of 2018.

Upon **seconding** approval of the report, as amended, Councillor Hopgood informed the Council that she welcomed the consultation would take place on an individual elector basis rather than a household basis.

### **Resolved:**

That the report, as amended, be approved.

## **11 Amendment to the Taxi Licensing Policy regarding the DVSA testing requirement**

The Council considered a report of the Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services regarding proposals, recommended by the General Licensing and Registration Committee, for the revision of the Council's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy in connection with the existing requirement for new applicants to pass the DVSA hackney carriage and private hire (taxi) driver assessment (for copy see file of Minutes).

In **moving** the report Councillor Carr informed the Council that the revision of the policy had been recommended by the General Licensing and Registration Committee at its meeting held on 12 January 2017. Newly licensed drivers that were authorised during the suspension of the existing requirement would need to pass the alternative assessment by 25 April 2017.

In **seconding** the report Councillor Stephens, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Local Partnerships thanked Officers and the General Licensing and Registration Committee for the work which had been undertaken in a short period of time.

**Resolved:**

That the report be approved.

**12 Updated Local Code of Corporate Governance**

The Council considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources regarding the inclusion of the updated Local Code of Corporate Governance in the revised Constitution (for copy see file of Minutes).

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

**Resolved:**

That the report be approved.

**13 Motions on Notice**

There were no motions for consideration.

**14 Questions from Members**

No questions had been received from Members.