

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At an Ordinary Meeting of the County Council held in the Council Chamber - County Hall, Durham on **Wednesday 23 January 2019 at 10.00 a.m.**

Present:

Councillor J Lethbridge in the Chair

Councillors E Adam, J Allen, J Atkinson, P Atkinson, B Avery, A Bainbridge, B Bainbridge, A Batey, A Bell, D Bell, E Bell, J Bell, H Bennett, J Blakey, L Boyd, D Boyes, P Brookes, D Brown, J Brown, L Brown, C Carr, J Carr, J Chaplow, J Charlton, J Clare, J Clark, M Clarke, I Cochrane, J Considine, K Corrigan (Vice-Chairman), P Crathorne, R Crute, G Darkes, M Davinson, S Dunn, D Freeman, J Grant, O Gunn, D Hall, C Hampson, K Hawley, T Henderson, S Henig, D Hicks, A Hopgood, L Hovvets, P Howell, E Huntington, S Iveson, I Jewell, O Johnson, P Jopling, B Kellett, A Laing, H Liddle, L Maddison, J Maitland, J Makepeace, R Manchester, C Marshall, L Marshall, C Martin, E Mavin, L Mavin, S McDonnell, M McGaun, M McKeon, I McLean, O Milburn, S Morrison, A Napier, J Nicholson, P Oliver, R Ormerod, A Patterson, C Potts, L Pounder, S Quinn, A Reed, G Richardson, S Robinson, J Rowlandson, E Scott, P Sexton, K Shaw, A Shield, J Shuttleworth, M Simmons, A Simpson, H Smith, T Smith, B Stephens, D Stoker, A Surtees, O Temple, K Thompson, F Tinsley, T Tucker, J Turnbull, M Wilkes, A Willis, C Wilson, M Wilson, S Wilson, D Wood and R Yorke

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Bell, G Bleasdale, A Gardner, K Hopper, S Hugill, L Kennedy, K Liddell, H Nicholson, J Robinson, A Savory, P Taylor and A Watson

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

- Councillor Leo Taylor. Leo had served on Easington District Council from 2002 to 2009 and was the final Chairman of Easington District Council prior to LGR. Leo had also been a Councillor on Wingate Parish Council. He had been heavily involved with Wingate Community Centre, Wingate Juniors and Wingate Infants and had a deep affiliation with Castle Eden Cricket Club, which he had been involved with since 1965. Leo devoted the vast majority of his life to his community and this was recognised in 2013 when he received the British Empire Medal.
- Former Durham City Councillor and Alderman, Jeff Young and former Easington District Councillor, Stan Bishop. Jeff and Stan both served their respective District Council's for 22 years each.

1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2018 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 congratulated all those throughout County Durham who had been recognised in the Queen's New Year Honours.

The Chairman referred to the Salvation Army Toy Appeal which took place in December and was pleased to inform the Council that a letter had been received from the Salvation Army thanking staff and Councillors for their donations, which helped 560 children to have a happy Christmas. The Salvation Army was also able to provide 18 families with Christmas lunches.

The Chairman thanked staff and Members for their generosity.

The Chairman referred to events which were planned to mark Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January 2019 and hoped that all Members would wear the Holocaust Memorial Badge.

4 Leader's Report

The Leader paid tribute to Lord Foster, who passed away a few weeks ago. Lord Foster would be very much missed for all he did for County Durham and the north-east.

The Leader of the Council wished everyone a belated Happy New Year and thanked all Council staff who provided vital services over the festive period including social care staff, bin crews and road maintenance teams. Fortunately, the weather had been kind so there had not been too many issues. A video of one of the council's bin crews giving a local boy a Christmas present had gone viral and been watched nearly 250,000 times on social media, and Gala's pantomime, Snow White, was its most successful ever with more than 90% of available tickets being sold.

The Leader referred to #Durham19, the County's year of culture, which included openings, activities, festivals, events and anniversaries, which started with a performance of Handel's Messiah on Saturday. The first event of the third annual Durham Vocal Festival, which ran until 9 February, would feature the world famous Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment performing in the Cathedral. Planning was already underway for the ever-popular Bishop Auckland Food Festival in April, which would now be joined by a new Food Festival in Seaham in June.

Later in the year, highlights would include the tenth anniversary edition of Lumiere in November, which would bring back a number of installations as well as new installations. By that time the completion of The Auckland Project's cultural

regeneration projects, including reopening of Auckland Castle in the spring and the opening of the new Spanish Art Gallery would have taken place, as well as the Norman Cornish Centenary celebrations. In June and July the international Cricket World Cup would take place at Chester le Street with teams from England, New Zealand, South Africa, and the West Indies taking part.

Additionally, increasingly popular annual events such as Brass, the Miners Gala, the Durham Book Festival, Durham run and cycling's Tour Series were to take place.

#Durham19 was for everyone, not just to attract visitors and the Leader hoped that all AAPs would be involved in the programme and that by the end of 2019 every County Durham resident had had a chance to take part.

The Leader then turned to inward investment and raising the profile of the County. The work of the Council, Business Durham and partners had already attracted 40 multi-national investors into the County over the past three years.

The focus on inward investment activity continued with the Council's new 'Durham: Powered by the People' initiative which was launched in December. The new initiative supported the County's drive for inward investment, jobs and growth and used one of the great strengths of the County, its people, at its heart.

To support the initiative, and with the help of business, the Council had developed a brochure of success stories and a series of short films, a promotional film and a series of 10 case study films of different businesses from across the County.

Powered by People would feature as part of a regional business leader's summit at the end of January. The summit would cover the role of the North East in the UK economy, partnership working and a panel discussion on the future of Durham in the context of the local industrial strategy.

The theme of people also featured as part of a special Times supplement at the end of December. The supplement included a mix of business, technology, education and culture stories, which all showcased the county as a place to live, work, visit and do business. The Council was sponsoring a new quarterly business magazine for Durham produced by The Journal called D. The first issue of the magazine would coincide with the regional business summit and would include business news and features for and about Durham. There was also an article in this week's Municipal Journal about the Council's continued focus on regeneration, and the impact this had had, including a case study on Lumiere.

A new £10m railway station at Horden had been approved, with initial work due to start in the next few weeks and it expected to be open to passengers in spring 2020. The new station would significantly improve transport links in the east of the County, provide a boost to the economy and widen employment opportunities for local residents. Meanwhile, work on the £6m flood prevention scheme for Chester le Street would start before the end of the month following approval from government of £2.79m ERDF funding which added to the already committed funds

from the Council and the Environment Agency. As well as reducing the flood risk, the scheme would help reinvigorate the central market place area.

The Council was currently consulting on a new vision for the County Durham Partnership. The vision built upon the success of the Partnership's 'Altogether Better' themes and set out key ambitions for the future. Members of the public, businesses and partner organisations had commented on the proposed ambitions for the county up to 2030. The consultation closed on Monday and findings were being worked into a draft new vision for the County that would form the basis of a final stage of consultation at the end of February.

The latest consultation on the County Durham Plan would start shortly and last for six weeks. The draft plan would then go to Cabinet ahead of being submitted to the Government for independent examination. Everyone was encouraged to have their say on the plan as well as on the council's housing and homeless strategies that the Council would be consulting on in the coming weeks.

Next month decisions would be taken on the 2019/20 budget and in the meantime the Council would continue to lobby for fair funding for County Durham and the North East. Members would be aware of the huge pressures on children's services in particular and while some one-off funding had been announced by the government this would be nowhere enough to meet the demands being faced. Councils and schools needed sustainable funding to meet these demands in the long-term.

The Council continued to lobby the government regarding potential changes to public health funding which could see Durham County Council lose £19m of funding from 2020. The BBC Sunday Politics Show on 13 January ran a public health feature about these proposed changes to funding with health visitors, service users, NHS partners as well as the Leader interviewed as part of the piece.

The Council would continue to campaign for a better deal for all local authorities in the region, working with the Association of North East Councils, particularly in advance of the crucial Government fair funding review which was expected later in the year.

The Leader reminded Members of upcoming dates to note. Holocaust Memorial Day would take place on 27 January and events during that week would include an exhibition at Bishop Auckland Town Hall, a service at Durham Cathedral and at St Anne's Church, Bishop Auckland including a speech from holocaust survivor Eva Clark.

Chinese New Year took place on 6 February and a variety of activities and Lion Dance performances were planned in Durham City on 9 February.

The Council's Operation Spruce Up programme had celebrated its second birthday. In that time, 24 towns and villages had been visited to make them cleaner and greener. The campaign had also won a prestigious Keep Britain Tidy award. The annual Big Spring Clean would launch on 19 February and run for 7 weeks. Last year there were 272 litter picks with over 4,000 taking part.

This month the Councils fostering campaign would focus on fostering teenagers and sibling groups. Teens were the biggest age group in need of a foster carer. The campaign also focussed on potential foster carers who were prepared to offer a permanent home to a looked after child until the age where they could become independent. At December's Cabinet meeting it was agreed that Durham would bid to be the host council for the new regional adoption agency that would cover Cumbria, Durham and Sunderland local authority areas. Since then, and following consultation, the name for the new agency had been agreed as 'Adopt Coast to Coast'. Recruitment of the senior communications officer to support the new agency started last week.

The Joining the Dots cancer support service would launch tomorrow and the service, in partnership with MacMillan, offered a range of services to cancer sufferers and their families.

Lastly, the Leader informed Council that it was Time to Talk day on 7 February, which encouraged everyone to talk about mental health. As a Time to Change employer, the Council would be supporting this awareness day with reminders of the importance of having conversations around mental health.

5 Questions from Area Action Partnerships

Questions had been received from Chester le Street Area Action Partnership and East Durham Rural Corridor Area Action Partnership relating to the following:

- How could the current Chester-le-Street Master Plan be used to encourage more residential development within the Town Centre and whether the new 'Future High Street Fund', announced by central government in October 2018, could be used to support this type of investment;
- How the AAP could contribute to the Strategic Cycling and Walking Delivery Plan for County Durham 2019-29 and how this Plan could ensure that the routes the AAP had contributed to were utilised.

Councillor T Smith, Vice-Chair of the Chester-le-Street Area AAP and Jane Bellis, East Durham Rural Corridor AAP Coordinator were in attendance to ask their questions.

Councillor K Shaw, Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing and Assets thanked the Chester-le-Street Area AAP for their question and provided a response. Councillor C Marshall, Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration thanked the East Durham Rural Corridor AAP for their question and provided a response.

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 Leader of the Council provided the Council with an update of business discussed by the Cabinet on 12 December 2018 (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor L Maddison asked the following question on Item 2 of the Cabinet report:

‘The extra amount allocated for town and village regeneration of £2.5m each year for the next 3 years whilst welcomed is not sufficient to meet the needs of all towns and villages across County Durham where infrastructure has deteriorated due to lack of investment in previous years.

In particular, we have recognised in Spennymoor that opportunist developers have bought up land and buildings, taking little account of any social responsibility, and allowed their buildings or land to remain vacant for many years without adequate maintenance and consequential environmental problems for residents.

In determining how this funding will be allocated, what criteria will be adopted to ensure that areas that have had no investment over the years but a significant increase in housing developments generating significant extra income to the Council will be fairly allocated money from this pot to ensure their Masterplans are realised and that additional budget is also set aside to ensure enforcement measures are applied to bring vacant buildings and land within these areas up to a required standard.’

Councillor C Marshall, Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration thanked Councillor Maddison for her question and provided the following response:

‘The Town and Village programme provides new funding in addition to the existing town centre capital programme and the standalone projects which provide important investments into our towns and communities. While this additional money is important in itself, the report approved by Cabinet also highlighted our aspirations to improve the co-ordination and delivery of our current services and investments in towns and villages. Ensuring residents, businesses and visitors see maximum change and benefit from all our work.

In terms of priorities, Councillor Shaw and I have met with all Members, including yourself, as we intend this to be an inclusive process where local Members and the AAPs determine those things important in their areas. We appreciate that the funding we have identified, and therefore we will be looking to target those key issues that are identified locally, and also those where Council money can be a catalyst for bringing in other funding from partners and private sector. I think by working together we can make a positive contribution across the County and I look forward to working with all Members of the Council on projects in their areas.’

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

9 Members Allowance Scheme - Recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel

The Council considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which sought agreement to a Members Allowances Scheme for 2019/20 having due regard to the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel (for copy see file of Minutes).

In **moving** the report the Leader of the Council thanked the Independent Remuneration Panel for their work and recommendations, which had been considered by the Constitution Working Group on 11 January 2019. Although the Independent Remuneration Panel had recommended an increase in the Members' Basic Allowance of 1% for 2019/20, which would have been the first increase for 10 years, the Constitution Working Group was not minded to support any changes to the allowances scheme. In **seconding** the report, Councillor Hopgood thanked the Independent Remuneration Panel for their work and recommendations, however, given the current financial situation, the Constitution Working Group had considered it inappropriate for any increase to the Members Allowance Scheme.

Resolved:

That the Members Allowances Scheme remain unchanged for 2019/20.

10 Establishment of a Head of Corporate Property and Land

The Council considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services which sought approval to create a post of Head of Corporate Property and Land (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor Wilkes, while acknowledging that the better management of land was important, expressed concern that it may appear housing was not as important as there was no head of service, with management of housing being distributed between officers.

The Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services replied that while work on the detail was still taking place the proposal was an opportunity to place main development with housing under this post and create a comprehensive approach to working with land and property.

Councillor Shuttleworth asked how this newly created post would differ from the previous post of Head of Assets which had been deleted from the establishment. The Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services replied that the post was different in that it would provide a comprehensive view of the asset base and buildings, and he would discuss this further with Councillor Shuttleworth outside of the meeting.

Moved by Councillor Shaw, **seconded** by Councillor Marshall.

Upon a vote being taken it was

Resolved:

That the establishment of a Head of Corporate Property and Land within Regeneration and Local Services, at Head of Service Band 2 be approved.

11 Motions on Notice

There were no motions for consideration.

12 Questions from Members

There were no questions from Members.