

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At an **Ordinary Meeting** of the County Council held in the **Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham** on **Wednesday 22 January 2020** at **10.00 a.m.**

Present:

Councillor K Corrigan in the Chair

Councillors E Adam, J Allen, J Atkinson, P Atkinson, B Avery, A Bainbridge, B Bainbridge, A Batey, A Bell, D Bell, R Bell, H Bennett, J Blakey, G Bleasdale, L Boyd, P Brookes, D Brown, L Brown, C Carr, J Carr, J Chaplow, J Charlton, J Clare, J Clark, M Clarke, I Cochrane, J Considine, B Coult, P Crathorne, R Crute, M Davinson, D Freeman, J Grant, O Gunn, D Hall, C Hampson, T Henderson, S Henig, A Hopgood, K Hopper, L Hovvels, E Huntington, G Huntington, S Iveson, I Jewell, O Johnson (Vice-Chair), P Jopling, C Kay, B Kellett, L Kennedy, J Lethbridge, K Liddell, L Maddison, J Maitland, J Makepeace, R Manchester, C Marshall, L Marshall, C Martin, E Mavin, S McDonnell, M McKeon, I McLean, S Morrison, A Napier, J Nicholson, R Ormerod, A Patterson, C Potts, L Pounder, S Quinn, A Reed, G Richardson, J Robinson, J Rowlandson, A Savory, E Scott, P Sexton, K Shaw, A Shield, J Shuttleworth, M Simmons, A Simpson, H Smith, T Smith, J Stephenson, B Stephens, D Stoker, A Surtees, P Taylor, O Temple, K Thompson, F Tinsley, T Tucker, J Turnbull, A Watson, M Wilkes, C Wilson, M Wilson, S Wilson, D Wood, R Yorke and S Zair

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Brown, S Dunn, I Geldard, K Hawley, D Hicks, J Higgins, S Hugill, A Laing, H Liddle, L Mavin, O Milburn, S Robinson and A Willis

Prior to the commencement of the meeting it was with great sadness that the Chair formally reported the death of the Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner, Ron Hogg. Ron was elected as the first Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner for County Durham and Darlington and was re-elected in 2016 with 63% of the votes cast. The Durham force was rated outstanding four times by the police inspectorate and Ron was at the forefront of pioneering innovative schemes to tackle reoffending and keep people out of prison.

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

1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2019 were confirmed by the Council as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2 To receive any declarations of interest from Members

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

3 Chair's Announcements

The Chair congratulated everyone from County Durham who had been acknowledged in the Queens New Year Honours.

The Chair was also pleased to announce that Durham County Council had been awarded the status of Level 3 Disability Confident Leader.

Awarded by the Department for Work and Pensions, it acknowledged the inclusive approach the County Council had with its recruitment approaches and support for employees who had a disability or health condition.

The Council's Equalities Team, working with the Disability Partnership the validating body, People and Talent Management and Durham Works, voluntarily submitted an assessment for the award and were successful.

The award was for three years and during this time the Council would champion Disability Confident with the local business community by encouraging and supporting them to become disability confident.

Representatives from Durham Constabulary's Digital Investigations and Intelligence Team were present in the Foyer. The team was on hand to provide cyber security advice and awareness and the Chair encouraged Members to visit them afterwards in the Council Chamber Foyer.

This was the last Council meeting for the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services before he left the Council. The Corporate Director was leaving Durham County Council after eleven years to take up a new Corporate Director post at Buckinghamshire County Council.

Councillor S Henig (Leader of the Council), Councillor A Hopgood (Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group), Councillor J Shuttleworth (Leader of the Durham County Council Independent Group), Councillor R Bell (Leader of the Conservative Group), Councillor A Shield (Leader of the Durham Independent Group), Councillor L Maddison (Leader of the Spennymoor

Independent Group) and Councillor S McDonnell (on behalf of the North East Party) thanked the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services for his service to the Council and wished him the best for his future.

Councillor C Marshall, Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration paid tribute to the work of the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services and thanked him for his enthusiasm and commitment. His leaving would be a big loss to the Council.

4 Leader's Report

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

- The Leader thanked all Council staff who provided vital services over the festive period including social care staff, bin crews and road maintenance teams.
- The Leader also recognised the efforts of staff, Members, partners and residents for their support for Christmas charity collections. More than 500 advent calendars were donated at council offices and then distributed by foodbanks across the county to children. Traditional food donations were also collected and delivered to local foodbanks. As well as providing emergency food parcels to families throughout the year the foodbanks also helped celebrate Christmas by supplying special festive hampers. Meanwhile, hundreds of new toys for children and gifts for teenagers were donated to the Salvation Army and staff raised almost £1,000 for the Chairman's charity, Age UK County Durham by taking part in the Council's Christmas Jumper Day. The Leader thanked everyone who contributed to help those in need.
- Following the success of last year's Year of Culture, 2020 had been designated the Year of Pilgrimage. More details of the activities as part of the year would be unveiled over the coming weeks.
- 2020 looked to be another great year for the Council's culture programme. The dates for this year's Food Festivals had been announced as 18-19 April for Bishop Auckland and 13-14 June for Seaham. Durham City Run, which would take place on 16-18 July had been launched.
- The Leader referred to consultations which were currently taking place. A public consultation on plans to replace Durham Bus Station started on 17 January and ran until 9 February. The Council was keen to hear the views of residents and commuters on the plans which would see the existing North Road Bus Station demolished and replaced with a modern transport hub. Once the consultation closed the design would be reviewed ahead of a final planning application being submitted. If planning permission was approved, it was anticipated the new bus station could be completed and open to the public in late 2021.

- In the east of the County residents were being asked for their views on the future of the former Easington Colliery Primary School in Seaside Lane which had stood empty since 1997. Due to the lack of interest from developers and the continued failure to find a viable use for it the authority was considering demolition of the buildings and looking at temporary solutions for the site such as a pocket park until a permanent use for the land was found. Consultation concluded on 29 January.
- Castleside Cemetery had been awarded silver in the National Cemetery of the Year Awards 2019, granted by The Memorial Awareness Board which campaigned for compassionate and sympathetic services. In deciding the awards cemeteries were judged on how staff created environments and services which were safer, more welcoming for those visiting their loved ones and which complied with current legislation. The award added to the recent success of Castleside Cemetery being presented a Green Flag Award, the benchmark for national standards for parks and green spaces in the UK.
- Mountsett Crematorium had launched a new website which enabled people to view inscriptions online and pay their respects to their loved ones. It included images of its book of remembrance as well as information about the venue and services.
- A blue plaque had been unveiled at The Citadel in Sherburn Terrace, Consett the home of the world's first Salvation Army band. Consett Citadel Band was formed in 1879. The building was the latest to receive the honour which the Council was promoting as a way for applicants around the county to commemorate historic links between a location and a famous person or event.
- Holocaust Memorial Day would take place on 27 January and this year marked 75 years since the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau and the 25th anniversary of the genocide in Bosnia. Organised events during the week would include an exhibition at Peterlee's East Durham College with an event on Monday evening. There would also be an educational event during the day at Durham Cathedral for secondary school pupils from across the county which the Leader would introduce and which would feature a talk by holocaust survivor Tomi Komoly.
- The Council's community arts team had launched a special visual arts commission to celebrate the reopening of Bishop Auckland Town Hall this spring following a £1.5 million refurbishment. The competition would give artists the opportunity to exhibit their work at the gallery over the summer.
- Last month, just over a year since it opened to visitors on Saturdays, Durham Town Hall received its 11,000th visitor. The Town Hall enabled the public to visit for free and to discover the building's rich past, treasures and tales housed within the impressive structure.

- A Swedish delegation recently visited a number of Council sites to see first-hand the innovative software employed to reduce energy use and were now planning to roll out some of what they learned back home. The visit was arranged through the European Union's Interreg Europe LOCARBO project, a partnership programme which sought to improve the energy efficiency of businesses not just in County Durham but Italy, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania and Portugal by exchanging best practice and experience.
- The Gala Theatre had reduced its environmental impact thanks to newly installed eco-friendlier LED lighting, saving 20 tonnes CO₂ per year and contributing to the Council's wider aim to reduce carbon emissions following the Council's declaration of a climate emergency.
- The former Spennymoor Day Centre in Dundas Street was being refurbished with support from the council's property team and would re-open as an Irish dance studio and headquarters of a family business. The building has been vacant since 2012 and was planned to open in March.
- District Nurses and Social Workers had relocated to the Richardson Centre in Barnard Castle to ensure closer working between health and social care. The move was part of a continuing commitment by County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust, the Council and NHS commissioners to strengthen the role of the hospital. By basing the teams at the hospital they were closer to the community wards allowing them to liaise with ward staff to ensure patients could return home quickly and safely and help avoid unnecessary admissions to hospital.
- As had previously been reported Ian Thompson, Corporate Director for Regeneration and Local Services would leave the Council on 25 January to take up a position with the new unitary Buckinghamshire County Council. Steve Howell, Head of Culture, Leisure and Sport retired on 17 January. The Leader thanked them both for their service to the Council and wished them well for their future.
- Following approval by Council, recruitment was taking place for Corporate Directors for Regeneration, Economy and Growth and for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change with assessments and interviews taking place in February. The Council was also in the final stages of recruiting a new Head of Leisure, Culture and Sport.
- The annual Guide to Council Services would be delivered to all households across County Durham from the end of January.
- Durham Vocal Festival would take place from 25 January to 2 February. As well as performances from world class artists such as Orchestra for the Age of Enlightenment and Sir Thomas Allen the festival would premier an opera written by young people from Wolsingham School and the OAE featuring over 250 performers. The event was supported by Arts Council England, the Department for Education, the Council and Darlington Borough Council.

- Time to Talk day would take place on 6 February and 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.

Councillor Shuttleworth referred to the consultation on the former Easington Colliery Primary School which the Council had previously sold for £1 and asked how much the Council had bought the site back for. The Leader replied that he would provide this information to Councillor Shuttleworth after the meeting.

5 Presentation from Area Action Partnership

The Council received a presentation from Councillor M McKeon, Chair of the East Durham Rural Corridor AAP and Jane Bellis, AAP Coordinator (for presentation see file of Minutes).

The Council were informed that the AAP operated a joint priorities task group to develop projects around the themes of Activities for Children, Young People and Families, Older People and Health and Wellbeing.

The AAP was a geographically diverse area made up of a number of settlements, including Bowburn, Tursdale, Quarrington Hill, Cassop, Kelloe, the Trimdons, Fishburn, Sedgfield, Bradbury and Mordon. It aimed to spread funding to ensure that area-wide projects were funded, or pilots were carried out which could be rolled out to other parts of the area in future years.

Details of Projects the AAP had recently been involved with were then provided.

Participatory Budgeting

The AAP had carried out a Participatory Budgeting scheme in partnership with Investing in Children. This involved a school roadshow where only children and young people were allowed to vote on projects, and all of the projects benefitted that age group.

Youth Forum and Cyber Crime Project

The importance of children and young people having a voice was recognised and the AAP continued to engage with them through its Youth Forum led by Investing in Children. Members of the Youth Forum from Trimdon Station along with Sergeant Alex Clarke had recently attended a Board meeting. The members of the Youth Forum were full of questions and indicated they would like to be involved with some work with the police. From this work the Youth Forum had been encouraged to work in partnership with the police to develop the Youth Forum and Cyber Crime Project.

The project had been specifically designed for the area on the back of the Youth Forums interest in working with the police. Although it had been agreed, the application is yet to be processed as it was held up due to Purdah and the Christmas break.

ATOMS Education Project

The ATOMS Education project was in the process of being appraised. Neighbourhood Budget from Councillors within the East Durham AAP had helped with the initial set up of resources and equipment and this was match funded via different methods including parent contributions and in kind for the provision of various sessions such as after school and holiday clubs, a walking bus, and a healthy breakfast café at Hesleden Methodist Church. Following the success of this it had been agreed within the Rural Corridor and would be tailored to meet the needs of it's community.

Mixed Fitness with Bowburn Youth Club.

The aim of the project was to increase confidence in young people, get more young people engaged in fitness, for young people to become confident in mixed age fitness and provide issue based sessions.

The group met once a week to attend a structured fitness session delivered by a qualified instructor. Each session started with registration followed by a group warm up game, and then a Bootcamp Style fitness class. The session ended with a group discussion focusing on health and wellbeing, and an evaluation and each young person was then offered a piece of fruit. Every session was well structured and planned, based on the ability of the group, taking into account individual needs.

The evaluation carried out with young people helped to shape future sessions taking into account their views.

Social Isolation

The AAP had carried out work in relation to social isolation and older people. Having previously funded the Social Car Scheme the Board felt there was a need to fund it again this year. Targets had been exceeded on the previous scheme. The target for the the number of voluntary and community groups supported was 1, but 7 were actually supported. There was a target of 20 people to be engaged in voluntary work, but the actual was 24. There were 484 journeys, for 22 clients; the majority of which used the service on a weekly basis to get to activities at community centres, lunch clubs, and visit family in care homes. This project supported others such as the Helping Hands project by ensuring people had a means of transport to activities.

The project did not just benefit those needing transport, it also had a positive impact on the volunteer drivers.

The Cornforth Partnership had worked with families and partner organisations to develop a programme of initiatives designed to combat isolation and improve the health and wellbeing of the most vulnerable.

Other Projects

The AAP had been involved in many other projects. Projects with schools such as Tunnel of Light led by Durham Cathedral into Lumiere, Plastic Fantastic which promoted the reduction of single use plastic and fitted with the Councils policy on this, as well as including intergenerational work as well as many Neighbourhood Budget projects that helped to improve the quality of life of people living within the AAP area.

The Chair thanked the AAP Chair and Coordinator for their presentation.

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 considered by Cabinet at its meeting held on 11 December 2019 (for copy see file of Minutes).

9 Members Allowance Scheme - Recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel

The Council considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources regarding the outcome of the review of the Members Allowances Scheme by the Independent Remuneration Panel and sought agreement to a scheme of allowances for 2020/21 taking into account the views of the Panel (for copy see file of Minutes).

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

Resolved:

That the Members Allowances Scheme remain unchanged for 2020/21.

10 Review of Polling Districts and Places

The Council considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services regarding proposed changes to the County Council's polling districts following a review (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised of an error in the report relating to the Aycliffe West Sedgfield Constituency - SFA - West No. 1 SFA as the polling station should have been listed as The Turbinia, Parsons Centre and not the Methodist Church.

Councillor Turnbull referred to the full list of the polling stations and places by Constituency and electoral division at Appendix 4 of the report and reported that the polling station for Polling District DRA2 should read St Andrew's Methodist Church and not Murray Independent Methodist Church. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services replied that this would be amended.

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

Resolved:

That

- (a) the proposed changes to the Council's polling districts and polling places as detailed in Appendix 3 to the report be approved.
- (b) the Head of Legal and Democratic Services in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader, and local members as appropriate, be granted delegated authority to make changes that may be required before the next review.

11 Standards Committee Annual Report 2019/20

The Council noted a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which presented the Annual Report of the Standards Committee for 2018/19 and set out the future direction the Committee intended to take during 2019/20 (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor Kellett, Chair of the Standards Committee informed the Council that the Standards Committee had continued to promote the principles and values of good governance within the Council and across the County. The Members of the Standards Committee were committed and dedicated to ensuring that high standards of conduct were maintained by all local elected Members.

Councillor Kellett thanked the Monitoring Officer, staff and Independent Persons for their support during the year.

12 Appointment of Chair of Corporate Parenting Panel

Moved by Councillor Shuttleworth, **Seconded** by Councillor Reed that Councillor P Brookes be appointed Chair of Corporate Parenting Panel.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised Council that this could not be a valid nomination because Councillor Brookes was not a member of any Political Group and as such was not entitled to a seat on the Corporate Parenting Panel. Councillor Hopgood informed the Council that the Liberal Democrat Group would be willing to cede one of their seats on the Corporate Parenting Panel to Councillor Brookes.

Councillor Wilkes **moved** that the appointment be deferred until a seat could be ceded to Councillor Brookes so that he had a seat on the Panel. **Seconded** by Councillor Temple.

Upon a vote being taken the motion was **lost**.

Moved by Councillor L Marshall, **Seconded** by Councillor J Robinson that Councillor I Jewell be appointed Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Upon a vote being taken it was

Resolved:

That Councillor I Jewell be appointed Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

13 Motions on Notice

The Chairman informed Council that the first motion on the Agenda had been withdrawn following discussions between the Cabinet Portfolio Holder and Councillor McDonnell.

In accordance with a Notice of Motion it was **Moved** by Councillor E Scott and **Seconded** by Councillor A Hopgood:

This Council notes with dismay the inevitable future loss of European funding for our County. It resolves to write to all recently elected MP's in County Durham and ask that they:

- i. ensure that County Durham is fairly and reasonably compensated for the loss; and
- ii. are ambitious on our behalf and seek to promote significant investment and economic growth throughout the County.

Councillor C Marshall, Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration **Moved** the following amendment, **Seconded** by K Shaw:

This Council notes with dismay the inevitable future loss of European funding for our County. It resolves to write to all recently elected MP's in County Durham and ask that they:

(a) ensure that County Durham is fairly and reasonably compensated for the loss; ~~and~~

(b) are ambitious on our behalf and seek to promote significant investment and economic growth throughout the County;

(c) ensure that the UKSPF is allocated on a needs-basis and tangibly helps places to bridge the performance gap with other regions and national performance;

(d) ensure that County Durham does not receive less funding than under the current ESIF programme, that funding at least matches the £13 billion that the UK regions would have received under the next EU programme, and that UKSPF contributions are not offset by financial cuts or commitments elsewhere;

(e) ensure that County Durham has a status that is equivalent to an EU Transition region and receives a ring-fenced budget with delivery mechanisms that are appropriate to the County's economic and organisational conditions and economic opportunities;

(f) ensure that the UKSPF is more flexible than ESIF arrangements, is tailored to local priorities, delivered with less bureaucracy, and designed to secure funding from other sources;

(g) ensure that the UKSPF is in place before the end of the current ESIF programme to ensure the long-term continuity of effective tailored programmes and projects in County Durham; and

(h) promote County Durham both inside and outside of Parliament as a pro-growth area with a clear ambition and commitment to deliver further economic growth.

Councillors E Scott and A Hopgood accepted the Amendment to the Motion and the Amendment then became the Substantive Motion.

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

14 Questions from Members

Councillor A Hopgood

In the first 2 weeks of this year we have already had 3 high profile issues promoted in press releases without local members firstly being briefed. Can the Leader of the Council please advise what he is going to do to ensure that this does not continue.

Councillor Henig, Leader of the Council thanked Councillor Hopgood for her question and provided the following response.

Durham was a very large council with many communications and press releases being issued on daily basis. Whilst there may occasionally be circumstances beyond our control which mean our communication plans can be affected, we have in the past, and will continue to, make every effort to ensure appropriate communications take place with local communities, and of course with local members.