

**17 September 2014**

**Report from the Cabinet**



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**Purpose of the Report**

To provide information to the Council on issues considered by the Cabinet on 16 July 2014 to enable Members to ask related questions.

Members are asked to table any questions on items in this report by 2 pm on 16 September 2014 in order for them to be displayed on the screens in the Council Chamber.

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**1.    Housing Stock Transfer – Outcomes of Formal Consultation Stage  
Key Decision R&ED/07/14  
Cabinet Portfolio Holders – Councillors Alan Napier, Neil Foster  
and Eddie Tomlinson  
Contact – Marie Roe 03000 261 864**

We have considered a report of the Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development concerning the outcome of the first stage of formal consultation on the council's proposal to transfer ownership and management of its homes to its existing housing management organisations via the County Durham Housing Group Limited.

Under Schedule 3A of the Housing Act 1985, the council is required to consider representations made by its tenants during Stage 1 of formal consultation on its proposal to transfer ownership and management of its homes. The Act requires the council to use the outcomes of the first stage of consultation to decide if any changes are required to the offers it has made to tenants as part of the transfer proposal; and whether to move to a ballot of all secure and introductory tenants.

The council applied to the Government for agreement and financial support to transfer ownership of its homes to a new group structure of its existing housing management organisations in December 2012. The council's application to transfer its homes was approved by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in March 2014. Following this approval, the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) confirmed that the Council was able to proceed with formal consultation with all of its secure and introductory tenants on its transfer proposal throughout the summer of 2014.

Statutory guidance outlining the process the council should follow to consult with all of its tenants on its transfer proposal is provided in the Government's publication "Statutory Guidance: The Housing Act 1985 - Schedule 3A". The

guidance sets out a formal two stage consultation process that the council must demonstrate it has followed if the Secretary of State is to grant final consent to the transfer by the end of March 2015.

The key requirements of consultation are that tenants should be fully involved in all plans and decision making over the future ownership of their homes. The council must provide all affected tenants with sufficient information for each to express a fully informed opinion about the proposal in a statutory ballot on the proposal.

During the first stage of the consultation the council must serve a notice on its secure tenants and those with an introductory tenancy setting out:

- The details of the transfer proposal including the identity of the prospective new landlord.
- The likely consequences of the transfer for the tenants.
- The effect of the provisions of Schedule 3A (i.e. the consultation requirements and the period over which tenants can make their representations to the council).
- The provisions relevant to the Preserved Right to Buy.

The notice is usually referred to as the Stage 1 notice of formal consultation or the Offer Document. The notice and Offer Document must invite representations within a reasonable period (usually 28 days). Once the representation period has ended, the council must consider any representations received and may then wish to revise its transfer proposals and offers accordingly.

Durham County Council's Offer Document was prepared in partnership with a Customer Working Group (a group of thirty tenants from across the County); the Boards of the proposed new Group of landlords including the County Durham Housing Group Limited, Dale & Valley Homes, Durham City Homes and East Durham Homes. Staff members and other key partners were also included in the development of the Offer Document. The Offer Document was endorsed by all proposed Boards and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and was finally agreed by us at our meeting on the 7 May 2014.

Under Section 3A of the Housing Act 1985 Cabinet is required to consider the representations made by its tenants during the first stage of consultation on its transfer proposal. Cabinet should review the outcomes of consultation and decide if any changes are required to the offers it has made to tenants and whether to move to a ballot.

The council developed its transfer proposals in partnership with tenants, staff, Board members, Councillors and other key partners. All key groups endorsed the Offer Document.

The first stage of formal consultation began in early June 2014 when the Offer Document and a package of supporting information (including a DVD, an easy read guide and a covering letter) were hand delivered to tenants by staff

members. Tenants then had a 28 day period to make their representations to the council on the transfer proposal and the offers made.

Leaseholders were provided with an Offer Document and a pack of information. The HCA also asked the council to ensure that leaseholders are made aware of a condition on the availability of Government financial support for the transfer which requires that service charges for leaseholders for the capital works enabled by the transfer are capped over any five year period at £10,000. Leaseholders had a 28 day representation period during which they could make their views known to the council. Two leaseholders acknowledged receipt of the information and one made comment on the proposal.

Over a thousand (1374) representations were received from tenants with over 87% in support of the transfer proposals. The comments expressed by tenants indicate that the council's transfer proposal and offers made in the offer document should not be changed or amended. The number of representations and support of respondents should not be regarded as a clear indication of the potential outcome of the ballot. The formal consultation process followed by the council meets the criteria set out in Schedule 3A Housing Act 1985 and has been endorsed by Open Communities (Independent Tenant Adviser).

As a result the council is in a position to proceed to the second stage of formal consultation and issue a Stage 2 Notice to secure and introductory tenants, followed by a ballot in summer 2014, which would be managed by Electoral Reform Services.

## **Decision**

We have:

- Considered the representations made by tenants and leaseholders on the transfer proposal and Offer Document during Stage 1 of formal consultation.
- Agreed that in the light of the representations received, no changes should be made to the offers made in the council's Offer Document.
- Agreed to proceed to Stage 2 of the formal consultation process and issue a Stage 2 notice to the council's secure and introductory tenants and proceed to a ballot in September.
- Provided delegated authority to the Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic Development and the Corporate Director, Resources in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration and the Portfolio Holder for Finance to take the actions necessary following the ballot result to issue any notices to tenants as required.

**2. Adoption of North Pennines AONB Management Plan**  
**Key Decision R&ED/11/14**  
**Cabinet Portfolio Holders – Councillors Neil Foster and Eddie Tomlinson**  
**Contact – Stuart Timmiss 03000 267 334**

We have considered a report of the Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development which proposed the adoption of the North Pennines AONB Management Plan. The Council, along with other relevant local authorities has a statutory duty as set out in Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to prepare and review Management Plans for the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This work is delivered on the Council's behalf by the AONB staff unit. The latest Management Plan for the North Pennines AONB has recently been reviewed and finalised to guide the management of its protected landscapes for the period 2014-19. The Council needs to adopt these Management Plans to continue to meet its statutory duties.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are statutory land use designations made under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The primary purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. In pursuing the primary purpose, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities.

The purpose of the AONB Management Plan is to highlight the special qualities of the North Pennines and present an integrated vision for its future in light of national, regional and local priorities. Acknowledging the importance of its character and natural features, the Plan sets out agreed policies or outcomes to secure the vision; identifies what needs to be done, by whom, and when and states how the condition of the AONB and the effectiveness of its management will be monitored. The Plan will enable the development of projects and facilitate cooperation with statutory agencies, landowners, businesses and the local community. Annual action plans will be produced to monitor and measure success and achievement. The work will be guided by the AONB Partnership, which includes a County Councillor, and its Working Groups.

The adoption of the Management Plan will help with the development of a range of projects and assist with securing external project funding for project implementation.

**Decision**

We have adopted the Management Plan in keeping with the Council's statutory duty under Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

**3. Customer First Strategy Refresh 2014-2017**  
**Key Decision: NS/22/13**  
**Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Brian Stephens**  
**Contact – Alan Patrickson 03000 268 165**

We have considered a report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services which reported on the results of the consultation process for a new Customer First Strategy and sought our approval of the new Customer First Strategy for the Council for 2014-2017.

At our meeting in January 2014, we agreed to a 12 week public consultation on a revised Customer First Strategy for the Council to replace the existing one agreed in 2010 following LGR.

The main focus of the strategy document encompasses the main contact channels used by customers; streamlined service delivery and the council's approach to use of feedback, intelligence and data to inform service development. It set out a future direction for delivery of effective customer service in the light of reduced budgets and MTFP savings.

In line with the 'whole council approach' to Customer Services, the Customer First Strategy seeks to broaden accessibility to information and increase online capability relating to transacting with the council. This approach will ensure best use of existing resources and buildings to provide a network of service access points which is instantly recognisable through a single branding. When implementing this approach clarity will be provided in relation to where key transactions will be offered, such as benefits. By evolving this approach customers will have greater access to services and information in an economically efficient way.

Delivery of the Strategy will result in changes not only internally in relation to integration of services also through enabling "channel shift" so that customers are able to access services through digital means at a time and location convenient to them. Achieving an improved Customer First ethos across the Council requires constant attention and a transformation programme requiring commitment and resource from all Council services. It is a transformation programme which will take some time to deliver and the proposed strategy covers a three year period. The process has already begun however through the development and strengthening of a cross council Customer Focus Board, chaired by the Corporate Director of Neighbourhood Services and with Heads of Service representing each Service Grouping. The Board is focussed on identifying and delivering the key projects within the revised strategy.

Members of Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee have reviewed the process surrounding the development of the Customer First Strategy. The draft strategy has been updated, post-consultation to reflect the feedback from the consultation.

The Council has recently embarked on a large scale transformation programme to successfully deliver the outcomes of the Customer First

Strategy and the commitments contained within it. One of the areas considered through the consultation process was to implement an appointments based system for all appointments for benefits / Council Tax interviews in all CAPs. This system was introduced at the new Customer Access Points and operates for all the surgery type face to face arrangements. This was well received in those areas and increases efficiencies in the service.

## **Decision**

We have:

- Considered the results of the consultation and approved the new Customer First Strategy for the Council.
- Approved an appointments system to be implemented across all CAPs for Benefits and Council Tax interviews.

**4. Proposal to change the age range of Chester-le-Street C of E (Controlled) Junior School from 7-11 to 4-11 from 1 January 2015 to create a C of E (Controlled) Primary School and to close South Pelaw Infant School as a separate school from 31 December 2014  
Key Decision: CAS/01/14  
Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Ossie Johnson  
Contact – Sheila Palmerley 03000 265 731**

We have considered a report of the Corporate Director, Children and Adults Services which sought approval to change the age range of Chester-le-Street C of E (Controlled) Junior School from 7-11 to 4-11 from 1 January 2015 to create a C of E (Controlled) Primary School and to close South Pelaw Infant School as a separate school from 31 December 2014, taking account of the Local Authority's duties as prescribed in the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to secure sufficient school places, and to secure good outcomes for all children and young people in their local area.

Officers within the Education Service believe that the long term viability of separate Infant and Junior Schools is uncertain due to changes in school funding which will come about as a result of the introduction of the National Funding Formula in 2015. Officers believe that, combining separate Infant and Junior Schools is in the best interests of children and their families. Attending an 'all through' Primary School reduces breaks in children's learning and eliminates the need for additional transitions in a child's schooling. Discussions with the schools and Church of England Diocese about amalgamating South Pelaw Infant School and Chester-le-Street C of E (Controlled) Junior School began in February 2014.

Following these initial discussions, using delegated powers, the Corporate Director, Children and Adults Services approved the commencement of consultation on the proposal Consultation documents were distributed widely across the local area on 10 March 2014. A series of meetings were held

between 12 to 17 March 2014 so that Governors, staff, Parish Councils, parents, pupils and the local community could share their views with the Local Authority. Details of these meetings are included in Appendix 2 to the report. Consultation was undertaken between 10 March and 4 April 2014. A full summary of the consultation responses was attached to the report. The large majority were in support of the proposal. A statutory notice was therefore published on 1 May 2014.

There followed a statutory 4 week representation period during which comments on the proposal could be made. No objections or comments were received by the end of the 4 week statutory notice period. Once the representation period had closed, a decision on the proposal had to be made within 2 months, i.e. by 24 July 2014.

The proposed C of E (Controlled) Primary School will be on the sites of the current South Pelaw Infant and Chester-le-Street C of E (Controlled) Junior Schools with a capacity for 418 pupils. A school of this size would be large enough to accommodate the current and future pupils expected to attend the proposed C of E (Controlled) Primary School. The maximum number of pupils anticipated to be at the school up to 2020 is 348 therefore no pupils will be displaced by the proposal. The proposed C of E (Controlled) Primary School will be on the sites of the current South Pelaw Infant and Chester-le-Street C of E (Controlled) Junior Schools. Consequently there would be no increases to travel or journey time and no changes to the current accessibility of both schools.

Capital funding in the region of £20,000 will be required to upgrade the ICT provision and provide appropriate signage. The School Capital Maintenance Grant allocated to the LA from the DfE would provide this funding.

In the view of officers in the Education Service, amalgamating Infant and Junior schools is in the best interests of children and their families. A single Primary School can reduce the potential for disruption, which some children experience, when they transfer from Infant to Junior School.

## **Decision**

We have agreed:

- (i) that the age range of Chester-le-Street C of E (Controlled) Junior School should be changed from 7-11 to 4-11 from 1 January 2015 to create a C of E (Controlled) Primary School; and
- (ii) that South Pelaw Infant School should close as a separate school from 31 December 2014.



**5. Draft Corporate Tree Management Policy**  
**Key Decision: NS/25/13**  
**Cabinet Portfolio Holders – Councillors Neil Foster and Brian Stephens**  
**Contact – Oliver Sherratt 03000 269 258**

We have considered a report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services providing details of a draft countywide tree policy for the management of all trees under Durham County Council's ownership and for those trees in private ownership which pose a safety risk to the public highway, following public consultation. On 18<sup>th</sup> December 2013 we considered a report and draft policy document which brought together a number of tree management policies and practices inherited from the former Districts and County Council. Whilst the day to day works on the ground are already in keeping with the draft policy, it was felt that having a written document is helpful so that service requests can be consistently responded to and there is a clear basis for decision making. The policy also encourages others responsible for trees to take a positive approach to management as well as outlining ways in which the Council will help ensure its own tree stock is in a safe condition.

Tree related complaints can be highly emotive, and in some circumstances can cause polarised views relating to their maintenance. For this reason, Members approved the recommendation to consult widely on the draft policy. Consultations began on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2013 and ended on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2014, with a wide variety of organisations contacted and residents all invited to respond either directly or using a questionnaire format on the County Council's website.

A total of forty nine responses were received. Thirty one were from residents (63.3%) and eighteen were from organisations (36.7%). These organisations included six Town & Parish Council's, County Durham Association of Local Councils, three Residents Groups / Community Partnerships, a community newspaper, Access & Rights of Way Team, Countryside Service, DCC Senior Forester, The Woodland Trust, Forestry Commission, and the Campaign to Protect Rural England. The survey was open ended and allowed respondents to answer freely on any aspect of the policy.

The consultation has revealed an overall strong endorsement of the draft proposals with the majority of respondents supportive of a new countywide policy. Some Parish Councils felt that they would want to adopt similar policies themselves, which is welcomed in bringing a consistency of approach.

The suggestions / comments made by respondents were considered and some changes were made to the draft proposals in light of the feedback. None has substantially changed the original draft proposals and in many cases have enhanced them or led to greater clarification. The main changes were detailed in the report.

**Decision**

We have adopted the draft tree management policy.

**6. Medium Term Financial Plan (5), Council Plan, Service Plans 2015/16 – 2017/18 and Review of the Council’s Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

**Key Decision: CORP/R/14/02**

**Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council – Councillors Simon Henig, and Alan Napier**

**Contact – Jeff Garfoot 03000 261 946**

We have considered a joint report of the Corporate Director, Resources and Assistant Chief Executive which provided an update on the development of the 2015/16 budget, the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP (5)) and Council Plan/Service Plans 2015/16 to 2017/18 and a review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, which has been in place since 1 April 2013.

The financial outlook for the Council continues to be extremely challenging. Although the Chancellor of the Exchequer’s March 2014 Budget did not announce any additional specific funding cuts for local government, it confirmed that funding cuts to the public sector will continue until at least 2018/19. Future funding cuts are expected to be of the same scale and scope as those experienced over the last four years although this is conditional upon an additional £12bn of savings being identified against the national Welfare budget.

In terms of future forecasting, the Council has only received indicative Government funding allocations for 2015/16. Indicative funding allocations beyond 2015/16 have been extrapolated from the chancellor’s budget statements and estimates of the impact on the Council made against these. For 2016/17 and beyond, the cuts will only be known after the May 2015 General Election, which means there will be significant uncertainty and risk to planning across years 2016/17 and 2017/18 of the MTFP (5) period. With this in mind, it is prudent for detailed savings plans in MTFP (5) to be focussed upon 2015/16 only at this stage.

There can be no doubt that the achievement of savings across the three years of the MTFP (5) period will become ever more challenging. The emphasis since 2011/12 has been to minimise savings in front line services protecting them wherever possible whilst maximising savings in management and support service functions. This will become much more difficult in the future however as the scope for management and back office efficiencies are increasingly exhausted.

The Council has utilised reserves of over £10m in 2014/15 to balance the budget in order to reduce the immediate impact of savings upon the public and it is likely that this policy will become a constant feature of budget planning in the MTFP (5) period and beyond as the Council continues to deal with the uncertainty of future financial settlements, and seeks to delay where practical, the impact of service cuts.

Between 2011/12 and the end of 2014/15 the Council will have delivered £136.9m of savings. It is forecast that by the end of the MTFP (5) period

2015/16 to 2017/18 additional savings of £87.5m could be required, resulting in a cumulative savings total between 2011/12 and 2017/18 of £224.4m.

The development of MTFP (5) will utilise the public feedback the Council received during the extensive consultation process in the Autumn of 2013. It is recommended that this consultation feedback continues to drive the development of MTFP (5).

Similarly the results of the extensive consultation process in the Autumn of 2013 are reflected in the Council Plan and Service Plans which will be updated in the final draft Council Plan presented to us, and Council for consideration following agreement of the final MTFP(5) proposals.

The Council is one of only two local authorities in the North East to have retained entitlement levels for Council Tax discounts via the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme in line with that which applied under the Council Tax Benefit regime prior to 2013/14. This policy has protected vulnerable residents at a time when Welfare Reform changes have had a significant adverse impact. This report is recommending that the current Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme is retained for 2015/16. Should we agree, the Council will need to formally adopt this proposal at Full Council by 31 January 2015.

## **Decision**

We have:

- (i) Noted the updated 2015/16 budget position with the requirement for £16.362m of savings to balance the budget at this stage;
- (ii) Noted the current budget shortfall of £61.111m for the two year period 2016/17 to 2017/18;
- (iii) Noted the option to create a Planned Delivery Programme Reserve and utilise £10m in 2016/17 and 2017/18 to delay savings and to smooth savings implementation;
- (iv) Agreed the proposed approach to preparing the Council Plan and Service Plans;
- (v) Agreed the approach outlined for consultation;
- (vi) Agreed the high level MTFP (5) and Council Plan timetable;
- (vii) Agreed the proposals to build equalities considerations into decision making;
- (viii) Agreed that we recommend to Full Council that the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme should remain unchanged for 2015/16, with a review to be undertaken in quarter 1 of 2015/16 to inform budget options for 2016/17 and beyond.

**7. 2013/14 Final Outturn for General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Collections Fund**

**Deputy Leader of the Council – Councillor Alan Napier**

**Contact – Jeff Garfoot 03000 261 946**

We have considered a report of the Corporate Director, Resources which provided details of the revenue and capital outturn for both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for 2013/14 and also provided details of the outturn for the Collection Fund in respect of Council Tax collection and Business Rates Collection.

In setting the 2013/14 budget, the Council continued to face unprecedented levels of reductions in Government grants. Over the period of the current Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) period to 31 March 2015 the expectation for local government was a 28% cut in Government grant for the period 2011/12 to 2014/15. Since then, the position has deteriorated further for local government and in total the Council is forecasting that Government support over the six year period 2011 to 2017 will reduce by £139m, which equates to a 36% reduction in Government support over this period.

The Council agreed a net revenue budget of £457.814m for 2013/14. Factoring in cuts in Government grant, inflation and other budget pressures required the delivery of £20.900m of savings in 2013/14 in order to deliver a balanced budget.

Quarterly forecast outturn reports have been considered by us throughout the 2013/14 financial year.

This final outturn for 2013/14 has been determined as part of the production of the Annual Statement of Accounts. During the process of finalising the Statement of Accounts, the Corporate Director Resources will be required to make a number of technical decisions in the best financial interests of the Council. Such decisions will be fully disclosed in the Statement of Accounts.

**Decision**

We have noted:

- (i) the addition to the Cash Limit Reserves of £3.032m in the year. These sums will be held as Earmarked Reserves and be available for Service Groupings to utilise to manage budgets effectively.
- (ii) the closing General Reserve balance of £28.132m.
- (iii) the closing balance on Earmarked Reserves (excluding Cash Limit Reserves) is £143.013m of which £31.051m relate to school and DSG balances.
- (iv) the closing HRA balance of £7.155m.
- (v) the closing balance on HRA Earmarked Reserves of £1.043m.

- (vi) the position for the Collection Funds in respect of council tax and business rates.

We have approved:

- (vii) that capital budget carried forward of £22.341m for the General Fund is moved into 2014/15 and that Service Groupings regularly review capital profiles throughout 2014/15 reporting revisions to MOWG and Cabinet as necessary.

**8. Transfer of Land Held in Trust at Peases West, Crook  
Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Neil Foster  
Contact – Gerard Darby 03000 267 024**

We have considered a report of the Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development which sought our approval, in their capacity as Trustees, to disposing of an area of land held on trust by the Council at Peases West Crook to Crook Community Leisure.

In 2012 the Council took the decision to hold a participatory budget event in Crook to allow the community to decide where they would like to see a resource of £500,000 allocated to assist community groups and associations to develop locally based initiatives and schemes. The funding had been originally earmarked for Elite Hall in Crook, but had become available as the increased costs for the refurbishment of that building had made such a scheme unviable.

Following the public vote in 2013, Crook Community Partnership were awarded in principle, subject to the project fulfilling a number of requirements set as part of the bidding process, the full funding provision of £500,000 towards the first phase of a three phase project to develop new leisure provision in the town. Phase one of the project is to develop a fitness suite and dance studio for the residents of Crook and the surrounding area. Phase two will include a sports hall and the final phase a swimming pool. The latter stages are subject to further funding being obtained. The partnership has created a charitable organisation known as Crook Community Leisure (CCL) and it is this organisation that seeks the necessary land to deliver this project.

The initial proposal was to develop the project on a former school site situated at Croft Street, however, after detailed consideration of the scheme it was concluded that this location was not a viable option for the proposal and alternative sites were considered with a site at Peases West, shown on the plan attached to the report, considered the most suitable alternative.

In order to gauge public opinion on the potential relocation of the proposed leisure facility, a survey was sent out to 696 email addresses and to 784 postal addresses, a total of 1480. 449 people responded (30.3%) and a large majority of nearly 70% were in favour of relocating the leisure facility to the Peases West site.

The delivery of the project meets the overall objectives of the Council in working towards its Altogether Healthier objective through the increased participation in physical activity the new facilities will provide. It also contributes to both the children and young people and altogether wealthier objective through the provision of both opportunities to play sport and to be employed in sport

## **Decision**

We have, acting as Charity Trustee, approved the transfer of the site at Peases West to Crook Community Leisure subject to:

- any necessary approvals being obtained from CISWO and the Charity Commission, and,
- the provision of a satisfactory Business Case from Crook Community Leisure for the project, as supported at the participatory budget event, with this decision delegated to the Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Economic Development.

### **9. World War 1 Centenary Activity: Victoria Cross Winner's Commemorative Paving Stone Project Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Neil Foster Contact – Stephen Howell 03000 264 550**

We have considered a report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services which outlined the Council's involvement in delivering the Department of Communities and Local Government's Victoria Cross Winner Commemorative Paving Stone Project. The report proposed a process for determining where the paving stones will be permanently located.

In August of 2013 The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) announced an open competition for a design to be put on to commemorative paving stones to honour Victoria Cross recipients throughout the UK. It is intended that individual stones will be given to the relevant participating local authority so that they may determine their location. Durham County Council was among the first authorities to confirm it would take part in supporting the scheme and would place the commemorative stones within the County. On Monday 4 November 2013 the Communities Secretary unveiled the design of the paving stone. The winning design uses the material, form and lettering of the family of memorials used by the War Graves Commission. The stones will be unveiled across the country in a rolling programme exactly 100 years after each individual won the Victoria Cross.

County Durham has seven Victoria Cross winners appearing on the DCLG list and each of these will be allocated a paving stone. The first stone will be placed on 4th November 2015. The Council will take charge of the stones in late 2014 and will need to store them until they are required for placing in their final location; the first stone not being installed in its permanent location until November 2015. It is proposed that rather than place them in store that they

are placed on temporary public display in the Durham Light Infantry Museum. In order to facilitate the display of the stones within the Museum, it would be appropriate that they are displayed properly and complimented with interpretive information. The cost of producing a temporary exhibition of the stones is estimated to be circa £10K.

The permanent location of the stones is for the Council to determine. The basic cost of placing the stones will be met by the Council. This is estimated by Technical Services as being £300 per paving stone. Additional costs will be dependent upon the needs of the community. It is therefore proposed that the Council meets the £300 installation costs of each stone and the communities source the funding for any commemorative events and/or additional landscaping that may be desired. Each community will be advised to contact the Council to arrange a quote on delivery of any associated work.

The Council's financial commitment to the installation of the paving stones is £2,100. It is anticipated that the majority, if not all, of this will be in staff time and use of existing resources from within Direct Services and Culture and Sport. In addition, £10,000 is requested for exhibiting all stones at the Durham Light Infantry Museum prior to installation. This takes the total cost from the Council to £12,100.

### **Decision**

We have agreed:

- That arrangements are made to display all County Durham paving stones at the Durham Light Infantry Museum prior to permanent installation.
- The process of determining the permanent location of stones as set out in the report.
- That funding of £12,100 is identified from Neighbourhood's cash limits to fund the project.

### **10. Durham County Council's Festivals and Events Programme Development Cabinet Portfolio Holders – Councillors Neil Foster and Maria Plews Contact – Stephen Howell 03000 264 577**

We have considered a report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services which reviewed the current position regarding the Council's involvement with festivals and events and provided a framework to ensure the best use of existing resources to create a vibrant and diverse programme of events and festivals.

Until recently the Council's event programming, content and delivery was spread across a number of service areas. As a result, events and festivals

emerged from a number of individual initiatives including the City of Culture bid. Whilst in many instances these festivals and events addressed the economic needs of the county, in ongoing austere times it is recognised that a programme that offers best value for the Council's investment is required. The report focused upon the development of a coherent structure for activity within the available resources and proposes a framework of three programmes of work. This should lead to a clearer plan and process for the future development of festivals and events.

The newly created Culture and Sport revenue budget for events incorporates all festival and events related costs. This identifies a total resource of £698,000 for 2014/15, which is split between direct delivery and support, £350,000 and £348,000 respectively.

Following the merger of Sport and Leisure and Culture, Heritage and Libraries into a combined Culture and Sport service, the strategic development and delivery of events is now carried out by a single service. A Festivals and Events Project Team has been developed to provide an overview of all activities. Any events and festivals programme needs to be promoted to external audiences in a consistent, coherent and compelling way. This requires a single agreed approach and clear brand recognition. Within the Council there are a range of specialist skills in areas such as destination marketing, and it is vital that they are utilised to best effect and play a major role in determining the approach both to individual events and as a collective programme. Consideration will also need to be given to the resource implications in supporting this work.

In order to understand the value of each event or festival there needs to be a robust and consistent evaluation framework. There are no common performance measures (social and economic) and currently each event commissions its own evaluation making it harder to compare the value of supporting individual events. It is proposed that evaluation of events is centralised and an evaluation model developed via a single provider. This would allow for a range of indicators, social, economic, health etc that could be consistently applied to all events against pre-agreed outcome profiles. In order to achieve this, individual events would be top-sliced proportionately and the evaluation resource moved to a central pool in order to facilitate a single contractor appointment. In order to ensure the Council maintains an overview of its Festival and Events Programme across it is proposed that an annual review is carried out. Given the nature of this programme and the need to plan in advance, consideration would need to be given up to five years in advance. It is envisaged that an initial review will take place in time to agree a refreshed programme for 2015/16.

## **Decision**

We have agreed that:

- i. The proposed budget alignment for the future delivery of Festivals and Events is approved.



- ii. DCC Festivals and Events programme is managed by the Culture Board under a framework of:-
  - a. Annual Programme
  - b. Investment and Development
  - c. Signature Events
- iii. The Festivals and Events Project Team continue to review and develop the programmes for consideration by the Culture Board.
- iv. Individual reports are prepared to bid against funding from outside cash limits for the Signature Programme of festivals and events as appropriate.
- v. An annual review of Festivals and Events is undertaken by the Culture Board to agree the continuation of the Annual Programme, approve the Investment and Development Programme and provide full evaluation feedback on the years' activities.
- vi. A single evaluation process and provider for the Festivals and Events programme is established.
- vii. A marketing and promotion plan is established encompassing all Festivals and Events programmes.

**11. Lumiere 2015**  
**Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Neil Foster**  
**Contact – Stephen Howell 03000 264 577**

We have considered a report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services which informed us of the evaluation of the 2013 Lumiere festival and to consider whether a similar event should be held in 2015.

The report 'Durham County Council's Festivals and Events Programme Development' also considered by us at our meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2014 sets out a framework for the Council's involvement in festivals and events focusing on three stands of programming which include; an annual programme, investment and development programme and a signature event programme.

Signature events are recognised as those which provide the Council with the opportunity to participate in or stage events of a scale that are unachievable from existing revenue budgets and for which it would be necessary to seek funding from outside the Culture and Sport budget envelope. Having considered this approach to resourcing festivals and events, Lumiere is the first 'Signature Event' to be put forward for consideration.

Following the extremely successful light festivals in 2009 and 2011, Artichoke was again commissioned by the Council to produce and deliver a third festival

in 2013. Whilst commissioned by the Council, the festival was supported by over eighty partners and funders, including Arts Council England (ACE), Durham University, Durham Cathedral, East Coast Trains and Carillion. The Council also had a significant role in the delivery of the event. Artichoke was primarily responsible for generating the non-Council income for the festival.

The popularity of Lumiere has grown dramatically since the first festival held in 2009. In 2013 more than 175,000 visitors attended the festival compared to 150,000 in 2011 and 75,000 in 2009. It is now considered to have become an important event in the North East cultural landscape. These challenges were addressed in the delivery of Lumiere 2013, with significant improvements made in the areas of crowd and traffic management.

As in previous years, the 2013 event was subject to a detailed evaluation. A report has been produced by Public Knowledge Evaluation Consultancy, an independent organisation with a proven track record in the events and festivals sector. The report concluded that Lumiere 2013 had been a considerable success. It particularly highlighted: the significant beneficial economic impact; the substantial value of media coverage and the high profile enjoyed by Durham as a consequence; the high satisfaction amongst people who had filled in questionnaires; and the considerable return on investment for the Council. It is clear from the evaluation of the 2013 event that Lumiere makes a significant contribution to all of the proposed criteria and that it was able to deliver a range of outcomes in line with the Council's aspirations and objectives. It would appear that there is public demand for the Council to deliver an equally spectacular event again. If the biannual pattern previously adopted was followed, this would see a further Lumiere event in 2015. The wider consideration of the evaluation of the festival has re-enforced the view that there is a compelling case for commissioning a further Lumiere festival for 2015. In order to meet the growth in demand and increased expectations of the public and to fully maximise the economic benefit to the County, the report proposed that the Council commissions a 2015 Lumiere event.

## **Decision**

We have agreed that:

- i. Artichoke be re-commissioned to plan and programme a Lumiere festival for delivery in 2015, in consultation with relevant stakeholders
- ii. The Council provides a cash contribution of £500k from remaining Performance Reward Grant and £100k of in-kind assistance.
- iii. The terms of the contract are delegated to the corporate Director of Neighbourhood services in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio for Culture.
- iv. Further reports providing an update on progress in relation to the 2015 event will be presented to Cabinet.

**12. Dog Control Order – Seasonal Exclusion of Dogs from Seaham Beach**  
**Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Brian Stephens**  
**Contact – Oliver Sherratt 03000 269 258**

We have considered a report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services which requested us to consider the making of a Dog Control Order which would prohibit dogs from Seaham Beach for the summer months (1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September). This would be effective from 2015 onwards.

In August 2009 the Council introduced its first countywide Dog Control Order for the 'failure to remove dog faeces'. This harmonised the arrangements which had previously been in place in the former district councils (under the Dogs 'fouling of land' Act 1996) and extended the Order to apply to all areas of land that are open to the air and to which the public are entitled or permitted to have access (with or without payment) and this includes Seaham Beach.

Before making or amending a Dog Control Order, an authority must consult any other primary or secondary authority within the area in which a Dog Control Order is being made. Authorities must also publish a notice describing the proposed order in a local newspaper circulating in the same area as the land to which the order would apply and invite representations on the proposal. The legislation sets out regulations for the introduction of any proposed dog control order (Appendix 2). It is a legal requirement that, where practicable, signs must be placed summarising the order on land to which a new order applies, thereby informing the public that land is subject to an order. Where orders are made that apply only at certain times of the day or year, any signage must also make clear the periods in which the Dog Control Order will apply.

Seaham Town Council has requested the implementation of a ban on dogs along the stretch of beach at Seaham highlighted on the plan attached to the report at Appendix 3. The proposal would be to ban dogs from this area of the beach from 1<sup>st</sup> April until 30<sup>th</sup> September each year. This ban would not include the promenade or the area of beach to the north of the Seaham Hall car park. People may still walk their dogs along the remainder of the beach at Seaham, not included within the highlighted area, and would also be able to walk their dogs on the highlighted stretch of beach between 1<sup>st</sup> October and 31<sup>st</sup> March. The requirement to remove any dog fouling would of course remain in force at all times.

The introduction of a seasonal dog exclusion order at Seaham beach is in keeping with the ambition of encouraging tourism and regeneration. It is also in line with the practice of neighbouring authorities in addition to being at a location where alternative dog walking areas are readily available. There is local support from Seaham Town Council to introduce a seasonal dog ban. They have indicated that their two environmental wardens would provide education and guidance for the beach during the summer months. This will

help with the education of the order along with the general compliance of the population.

## **Decision**

We have:

- Approved consultation on the proposed dog control order for Seaham Beach in line with legal requirements.
- Delegated the confirmation of the order to the Corporate Director of Neighbourhood Services, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Local Partnerships.

### **13. Review of Children's Centres in County Durham Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Ossie Johnson Contact – Carole Payne 03000 268 983**

We have considered a report of the Corporate Director, Children and Adults Services which detailed a review of the current service delivery model in view of the new Early Years Strategy and the role/requirement of Children's Centre buildings to deliver improved outcomes.

The outcome of the review proposes a new model of service delivery for children and families in the early years and gives consideration to the implications for the existing stock of Children's Centre buildings in the implementation of the new model.

The proposals put forward for consultation as a result of this review are intended to improve service delivery while at the same time reducing the cost base of the service. This will be achieved by retaining as many front-line staffing posts as possible, reducing the number and cost of fixed buildings and making more use of community venues to improve access and use of these services.

Proposals outlined within this report sets out an approach that will:-

- Shift emphasis from the provision of buildings to the provision of services;
- Deliver services closer to where families live;
- Concentrate resources where deprivation levels and needs are highest;
- Deliver services that are directly linked to local needs and outcomes;
- Retain the flexibility to move points of delivery as community needs change;
- Make better use of existing buildings in the heart of communities such as libraries, leisure centres, youth centres, community centres and schools, and

- Reduce the financial, managerial, administrative and regulatory burdens faced by the council linked to the current children's centres.

This report sought our agreement to consult on the proposals contained in the report, namely:

- The proposed Community Delivery Model
- A proposed change to the number of children's centres from 43 to 15

The Council's Medium Term Financial Plan requires savings of £224 million over the period 2011 to 2017. The Council must review all services to ensure they are cost effective and fit for purpose.

The report proposes a reduction in the number of Children's Centre buildings from 43 to 15. The centres proposed for retention and transfer have been identified following detailed analysis of a range of data.

A new service model is proposed that will reduce the cost base of the service and at the same time increase access to services and protect service delivery. This will be done by shifting the emphasis from the provision of buildings to the provision of services and by making better use of existing buildings in the heart of communities to deliver services close to where children and families live.

In undertaking this review, the following were considered:-

- The evolution of Children's Centres;
- An analysis of need relating to deprivation;
- The impact of Children's Centres in relation to social, economic and learning outcomes;
- OfSTED inspection outcomes;
- Views of service users;
- Required efficiency savings.

The report requested us to agree to a full 12 week public consultation exercise, during which it is proposed to consult on the following:-

- The community delivery model
- The 43 Children's Centres and the 15 it is proposed to retain

Following the consultation period, a further report will be provided to us, in Spring 2015, which will make final recommendations with regard to retention and transfer of Children's Centre buildings.

## **Decision**

We have agreed to:

- A public consultation commencing 31 July 2014 for 12 weeks until 23 October 2014 which will present the proposals to all key stakeholders, paying particular attention to current and potential service users.
- That the consultation will seek the views and opinions of all key stakeholders on:-
  - The community delivery model
  - The 43 Children's Centres and the 15 it is proposed to retain
- The presentation of a final report to Cabinet in Spring 2015, making recommendations following consultation and including a full Equality Impact Assessment.

**Councillor S Henig**  
**Leader of the County Council**

9 September 2014