

## **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

At a Ordinary Meeting of the County Council held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Wednesday 17 September 2014 at 10.00 a.m.**

**Present:**

**Councillor J Robinson in the Chair**

Councillors E Adam, J Allen, J Alvey, B Armstrong, J Armstrong, L Armstrong, B Avery, A Bell, D Bell, E Bell, J Bell, R Bell, H Bennett, J Blakey (Vice-Chairman), G Bleasdale, A Bonner, J Brown, J Buckham, C Carr, J Chaplow, J Charlton, J Clare, J Clark, J Cordon, P Crathorne, R Crute, M Davinson, K Dearden, M Dixon, N Foster, D Freeman, B Glass, B Graham, J Gray, O Gunn, S Guy, C Hampson, J Hart, K Henig, S Henig, D Hicks, J Hillary, M Hodgson, A Hopgood, K Hopper, L Hovvells, E Huntington, S Iveson, I Jewell, O Johnson, A Laing, P Lawton, J Lee, J Lethbridge, H Liddle, R Lumsdon, J Maitland, C Marshall, L Marshall, N Martin, P May, S Morrison, A Napier, M Nicholls, H Nicholson, A Patterson, T Pemberton, M Plews, C Potts, L Pounder, A Savory, K Shaw, A Shield, J Shuttleworth, B Stephens, D Stoker, P Stradling, A Surtees, L Taylor, P Taylor, K Thompson, R Todd, E Tomlinson, J Turnbull, A Turner, A Watson, M Wilkes, M Williams, A Willis, C Wilson, S Wilson, R Yorke and R Young

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Batey, D Boyes, P Brookes, P Conway, K Corrigan, K Davidson, S Forster, I Geldard, D Hall, B Harrison, G Holland, C Kay, J Maslin, P McCourt, J Measor, O Milburn, B Moir, T Nearney, P Oliver, R Ormerod, G Richardson, S Robinson, J Rowlandson, M Simmons, M Simpson, T Smith, W Stelling, O Temple and S Zair

Prior to the commencement of the business, the Chairman of the Council formally reported the death of serving Councillor, former Chairman of Durham County Council and Mayor of Durham City, Councillor Pauline Charlton. Councillor Robinson described Pauline as being 100% committed to Durham County Council and 200% committed as Mayor of Durham. Councillor Robinson informed the Council that Pauline had been ill since late last year. Despite her illness, Pauline continued to attend as many civic duties as she could from November up until the end of her term of office.

Group Leaders then paid tribute to Councillor Charlton.

The Leader of the Council passed on his condolences from the County Council's Labour Group, all members of the Council and the Labour Party in County Durham. Councillor Henig described Pauline as a well-respected, dedicated local Councillor, extremely proud of the area she represented. She had served with distinction and made a real difference to people's lives across County Durham and would be sorely missed.

Councillor R Bell, Leader of the Conservative Group recalled his time on Teesdale District Council with Pauline when he became a Councillor in 2003. Councillor Bell spoke of his high regard for Pauline and her passion for Cockfield and the Gaunless Valley. Councillor Bell remarked how Pauline carried out her duties diligently,

respectfully and with affection. She talked common sense, was sensible and a great woman who had made a more than substantial contribution as a Councillor. She was held in very high regard and esteem, had a tremendous last year as Chairman and was one of a kind.

Councillor Hopgood spoke of her respect for Pauline who she had originally met as a District Councillor through an IDeA course. The turnout at Pauline's funeral and the way people spoke of her simply demonstrated how much people thought of her. Councillor Hopgood explained how Pauline's personal role in local communities spoke volumes and remarked that everyone who knew her, and met her, would come away with a very happy memory.

Councillor A Shield, spoke on behalf of all the Durham Independent Group who were united in their sadness on hearing the sad news of Pauline's passing. Councillor Shield remarked that people had great admiration for Pauline and she had held her office with great aplomb;

Councillor Shuttleworth remarked that Pauline had been one of the best Chairman of Durham County Council in the last 17 years and she would be sorely missed by everyone.

The Chairman then went onto formally report the deaths of the following:-

- former Derwentside District Councillor and Alderman Mary Page who had gained her initial interest in politics through her trade union, the Union of Shop Distributors and Allied Workers. Mary had founded the West Stanley Branch of USDAW and later joined the Labour Party. Mary was made the first female chairman of Derwentside District Council in 1989/90 and represented the South Stanley Ward on the District Council between 1983-1999;
- Watch Manager Peter Brown of County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service who had worked for the Service for nearly 28 years, joining on 29 September 1986. Peter had served extensively at Peterlee station as a Firefighter, Leading Firefighter and lately as a Watch Manager. He had also spent a number of years as an instructor in Training and had been instrumental in the design of the new Training Centre which was currently being built at Bowburn. Peter was a well-known and very popular member of staff and his death would no doubt impact on the entire Service;
- celebrated artist Norman Cornish who passed away peacefully on the evening of the 1st of August, aged 94. Norman was known as the Pitman Painter, a phrase he actually had a strong dislike of. In his own words Norman had said he was simply an artist who happened to be a miner. Norman had been described as one of the greatest draughtsmen Britain has ever produced and was commissioned by the County Council to create a special mural for County Hall when it was opened by Prince Philip in 1963.

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

## **Northumbria in Bloom Awards**

The Chairman asked Councillor Brian Stephens to join him on the dais to make a presentation regarding the County's success in the Northumbria in Bloom competition.

The Chairman then informed the Council that Durham City had secured gold in the large town category and was named the overall category winner in the Northumbria in Bloom Competition. In addition to this achievement, Chester-le-Street had collected a silver award and an entry led by Sedgefield Town Council and Sedgefield in Bloom won gold in the small town section and was the overall category winner. There was further success as the council's senior civic pride officer Pauline Walker secured the award for Outstanding Contribution by a salaried employee for her contribution to the campaign.

Hardwick Park in Sedgefield had scooped gold in the Conservation Project category. Durham Business Improvement District was named the joint winner of the gold award in the Best Shopping Precincts, Arcades and Business Improvement District category.

The Chairman placed on record his personal thanks to everyone involved in achieving the awards which were testament to the hard work and dedication of many and hoped that the County would be as equally as successful in the Britain in Bloom competition. Councillor Stephens congratulated everyone involved and commented that the project had added vibrancy and colour across County Durham.

### **1 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held 23 July 2014 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 items of business on the agenda.

### **3 Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman commended all those involved in the Durham Light Infantry Reunion World War 1 Centenary Commemoration Services held in Durham Cathedral. The Chairman remarked that the Sounding of the Last Post and Reveille was something he would never forget.

The Chairman then placed on record his congratulations to:

- Councillor O Johnson, the Corporate Director of Children and Adults Services and her staff for the good show of exam results across County Durham;

- Caroline O'Neill, Head of Education for her work during the event to celebrate perfect school attendance records, whereby 14 children had gone through school with a 100% attendance record. The Chairman also referred to a child who had gone through their entire school life from nursery school to the day they had left comprehensive school with a 100% attendance record;
- Councillor N Foster for the Durham at War project; and
- everyone involved in the Chairman's Golf Charity Day at Ramside Hall, Durham.

Finally, the Chairman reminded the Council that his Annual Civic Dinner would be held on 21 November 2014.

#### **4 Leader's Report**

The Leader of the Council added his own personal congratulations to all the young people across County Durham who did well in their exams and to all those involved in the Durham at War project, which generated a full house for its formal launch and would look forward to the many other events to follow.

Councillor Henig also placed on record his thanks to Councillor Bob Alderson who had recently made the difficult decision to end his term of office as a Councillor. Councillor Henig informed the Council that he had personally written to Councillor Alderson to thank him for his long and dedicated service to local government.

Councillor Henig referred to the up and coming Scotland Referendum and explained that the result could have a significant on the North East as Scotland's nearest neighbour. The Leader commented that the North East should have more power devolved to the region and felt that there was something inherently wrong when multi-billion pound rail improvements and ring roads were being agreed in London, whilst in the North East there was one single three-lane motorway and parts of its major road infrastructure not even duelled.

#### **5 Questions from the Public**

There were no questions from the public.

#### **6 Petitions**

There were no petitions for consideration.

#### **7 Report from the Cabinet**

The Council noted the latest report of the Cabinet detailing business from 16 July 2014 which included a range of reports including the Housing Stock Transfer (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor Hopgood thanked the Cabinet for the work carried out on the Tree Management Policy which would help provide clarity, direction and would help lots of people. Councillor Hopgood asked if the Cabinet would give due consideration to the devising of a similar policy relating to parking on green areas where severe damage was caused at a considerable cost to the Council.

Councillor Stephens thanked Councillor Hopgood for her comments and would take her question into consideration.

**8 Update Housing Strategy following the outcome of Stage 2 formal consultation in relation to Housing Stock Transfer**

The Council considered a report of the Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development which set out proposals to update the Housing Strategy to reflect the outcome of the Stage 2 formal consultation ballot in relation to the housing stock transfer (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development informed the Council that 51.2% of tenants (11,316 tenants) voted in the independent ballot with 82% (9149 tenants) voting in favour of the transfer proposal. The Cabinet had already endorsed a report recommending that the Council to the update of the Housing Strategy.

**Moved** by Councillor E Tomlinson, **Seconded** by Councillor M Dixon and

**Resolved**

That the Council authorise officers to update the Housing Strategy to reflect the new developments set out in the report.

**9 County Durham Plan: Supplement to Consultation Feedback Reports**

The Council considered a report of the Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development regarding the County Durham Plan and supplements to the consultation feedback reports (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development informed the Council that following the submission of the plan in August 2014, the Council had revisited all of the representations made as part of the Pre- Submission Draft Consultation undertaken between the 14 October 2013 and the 9 December 2013 and had identified that an additional 32 items of correspondence had not been correctly processed. The correspondence contained a total of 86 representations across a number of plan policies.

To correct this oversight and the representations not considered during the production of the consultation feedback report, the Council were taking the necessary steps to ensure that the additional representations were handled consistently.

Councillor Wilkes commented that the report confirmed all that was wrong with the County Durham Plan where it appeared that in excess of 80 responses had been

overlooked and not processed and taken into account. Councillor Wilkes felt that the report was an add-on of an already flawed report and hoped that the County Durham Plan could be saved at the examination in public stage.

Councillor Hopgood expressed her disappointment over the lack of information being provided to Ward Members on important issues arising from the plan and highlighted a recent example. Councillor Hopgood asked when the Council would start advising Members of the significant impacts in their respective Divisions.

**Moved** by Councillor N Foster, **Seconded** by Councillor J Allen and

**Resolved**

That the Council agree the supplement to the consultation feedback report and authorise its submission, together with the additional representations to the Secretary of State.

**10 Safe Durham Partnership Plan 2014/2017**

The Council considered a report of the Corporate Director, Children's and Adult Services regarding the Safe Durham Partnership Plan for 2014-2017 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Corporate Director, Children's and Adult Services informed the Council that the development and implementation of the Safe Durham Partnership Plan was a statutory requirement for Durham County Council and other responsible authorities, including the Police and NHS. The purpose of the plan was to demonstrate how the responsible authorities would work together to reduce crime and disorder across County Durham. The strategic objectives framework was as follows:-

- Reduce anti-social behaviour
- Protecting vulnerable people from harm
- Reducing re-offending
- Alcohol and substance misuse harm reduction
- Embed the Think Family approach
- Counter terrorism and prevention of violent
- Road Casualty reduction

The Council then heard from Assistant Chief Constable Dave Orford who explained that he was extremely proud of the partnership working that had taken place over many years and proud of being able to put victims and citizens at the centre of the plan. Times were challenging and new approaches together with restorative approaches were key. Extra focus had been given to reduce reoffending, again placing the citizen at the core. The partnership had also secured £500,000 from the Department for Communities and Local Government to embark on a project to make as many homes as safe as possible.

Councillor Hovvels spoke of the achievements highlighted in the plan and praised the contribution of all stakeholders and also to the County Council's Overview and Scrutiny process for their positive contribution.

Councillor Wilkes echoed the words of Councillor Hovvels and the positive impact of the Safe Durham Partnership Plan, whilst also praising the work of the Cabinet Portfolio Holder. Councillor Wilkes expressed his worry that more could be done in terms of road safety and referred to the speed management strategy. Councillor Wilkes had been unable to find any references to the road safety action plan and felt that the issue of 20mph speed zones around schools should be explored in more detail, particularly when similar schemes introduced in other parts of the country had been of real benefit.

Councillor Hovvels informed the Council that public health were working on a discussion paper jointly with Highways regarding the issue Councillor Wilkes had raised. This work would hopefully be coming to fruition in the very near future and would be focussing on 'hotspot' areas.

Councillor R Bell agreed with Councillor Hovvels regarding 'hotspot' areas and would look forward to the paper coming through. Councillor Bell commented that he was nervous about the possible introduction of a blanket 20mph speed limit policy around schools and explained that locations had to be explored in detail, be specific, credible, realistic and appropriate to the locality.

Referring to the discussion paper regarding 20 mph speed zones around schools, Councillor Hopgood felt that the piece of work appeared to bear the hallmarks of a key decision, yet there was no reference to the work on the forward plan. Councillor Hopgood informed the Council that she had raised the issue previously at the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and queried the purpose of the plan if it did not contain such information. Councillor Hopgood felt that Councillors were being repeatedly left in the dark over such issues and that such information, including this specific example should be provided to them in advance, which would also help all Councillors manage queries from their constituents.

**Moved** by Councillor L Hovvels, **Seconded** by Councillor A Laing and

**Resolved**

That the Council agree the Safe Durham Partnership Plan for 2014-2017 and endorsed its publication on the internet.

**11 Independent Remuneration Panel: Appointments to Panel**

The Council considered a report of the Corporate Director, Resources regarding the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel arrangements (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Corporate Director, Resources informed the Council that under the Local Authorities (Member's Allowances) (England) Regulations the County Council were required to establish an Independent Remuneration Panel which must consist of at least three members. The last appointments to the panel were made in July 2009 following the resignation of the previous panel to coincide with the establishment of the new unitary Council.

Two vacancies had now arisen, and there remained five members in office. The Corporate Director, Resources informed the Council that approval was being sought to appoint a new panel of seven people, with advertisements to be made in the local media. The Council were required to follow guidance to ensure that the appointments process commanded public confidence. Positions would be offered to the existing five members if they were willing to continue in the role. The suggested term of office for members would be for a five year period.

**Resolved**

That the Council:

- (i) Agree the establishment of a new panel of up to seven members, with the term of office of its members being for a five year period.
- (ii) That the Corporate Director, Resources be authorised, in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, to make appointments to the panel and fill any vacancies that may arise within the term of office of the panel.

**12 Treasury Management Outturn 2013/14**

The Council noted a report of the Corporate Director, Resources regarding the treasury management outturn position for 2013/14. The report was required under the regulatory framework of Treasury Management and provided detailed information of the Council's cash management, loans and investments (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Council were informed that the report also incorporated the needs of the 'Prudential Code', regarded as best operational practice, to ensure adequate monitoring of the Council's capital expenditure plans and prudential indicators.

**13 Motions on Notice**

There were motions for consideration.

**14 Questions from Members**

There were no questions from Members.