

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At an Ordinary Meeting of the County Council held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Wednesday 22 June 2016 at 10.00 a.m.**

Present:

Councillor E Bell in the Chair

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Bell, A Bonner, K Henig, D Hicks, G Holland, C Kay, J Measor, M Nicholls, J Robinson, J Rowlandson, A Savory, A Shield, J Shuttleworth, M Simmons, P Stradling and M Williams.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Chairman referred to the deeply shocking, appalling and tragic events surrounding the death of the Member of Parliament for Batley and Spen, Jo Cox, whilst carrying out her everyday constituency work.

Jo was just 13 months into representing her constituency and it was clear from the many heartfelt tributes heard over the last week and in the House of Commons that Jo was a highly respected and much loved MP whose presence would be very sorely missed.

The Chairman reported with great sadness the death of former Durham City Labour Councillor, Margaret Davies who had recently passed away.

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

1 Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 16 and 25 May 2016 were confirmed by the Council as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2 Declarations of interest

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

3 Chairman's Announcements

Stanley Crook Primary School

The Chairman extended a warm welcome to pupils and staff from Stanley Crook Primary School and hoped they found their visit an interesting experience.

Retirement of Director of Public Health

The Chairman informed the Council that Anna Lynch, Director of Public Health was to retire from the Council at the end of June, with Gill O'Neill being appointed to the post on an interim basis until a formal appointment was made.

Councillor Henig, Leader of the Council praised the Director of Public Health for her distinguished career across health and local government. She had identified where areas of health priority should be and had established excellent joint working with Health Service colleagues. Councillor Henig thanked the Director for her service and wished her well for a happy retirement.

Councillor Stelling, Leader of the Durham Independent Group echoed the words of Councillor Henig.

Councillor Temple, on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group praised the Director of Public Health for her passion and commitment to health and to closing the gap between the health of residents of County Durham and the rest of the country.

Councillor R Bell, Leader of the Conservative Group praised the Director of Public Health who had done a tremendous job and was always helpful.

Queen's Birthday Honours

The Chairman placed on record congratulations to the following:

- Dr Peter Trewby of the County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust who had been awarded an OBE;
- Jean Johnson, Volunteer at Belmont Cheveley Park Primary School who had been awarded a BEM;
- Audrey and Edward Stringer who had received BEM's for services to young people in Burnopfield;
- Karl Wharton, Director of Deerness Gymnastics Academy who had been awarded an MBE.

Municipal Journal Achievement

The Chairman informed the Council that he was delighted to announce that the Council had won a Municipal Journal Achievement Award for 'Excellence in

Governance and Scrutiny'. The prestigious national award was presented to the Council that best demonstrated how excellent governance and scrutiny had added value to the way it conducted its business and delivered improved outcomes for residents. Judges were looking for aspirational approaches to decision-making, underpinned by a commitment to local democracy and insight from partners and communities.

Councillor Henig received the award which had been achieved thanks to the work of many people involved in the scrutiny and engagement process.

Charity Cycle Ride

The Chairman congratulated Councillor Brookes and Andrew Gilmore on the completion of their charity ride from the border of County Durham to the Welsh border and return in 24 hours to raise funds for Dementia Durham. Donations could be made through the Just Giving web page or through sponsorship forms which were available in Member Support.

Code of Conduct

The Chairman reminded all Members of their obligations under the Code of Conduct in treating each other with respect.

4 Leader's Report

The Leader of the Council paid tribute to Jo Cox, MP, who had been killed while doing her job as an elected representative, this being an attack on democracy. He hoped that in future any debate could be carried out in a more reasoned and calm manner.

The Leader of the Council reported that he had attended a memorial service for Don Robson which was held at the Riverside at Chester le Street. The service was a fitting tribute to Don, who had played a leading role in the North East since the 1970's.

The Leader of the Council reported that he had stood down as Chair of the North East Combined Authority at its Annual General Meeting, adding that the intention was always to rotate the position of Chair around the seven constituent authorities. The position of Durham on the Combined Authority was that there were red lines around the issues of fair funding, Durham being no worse off, governance arrangements being in place to protect Durham's position and an embedded Mayor. A devolution scheme was due to be published in July and consultation would take place over the summer, with a Governance Order being published in the autumn.

The Leader of the Council reported that the Chief Officer Appointments Committee had made the following interim appointments:

- Corporate Director, Resources – Paul Darby
- Director of Public Health – Gill O'Neill
- Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services – Jane Robinson

The process of appointing to permanent positions had commenced.

The Leader of the Council was pleased to report that Lumiere was to return to Durham City for the fifth time in 2017. 200,000 people had attended Lumiere event in 2015, which was considered to be Britain's largest light festival. Additionally the Lighting Urban Community International would be hosting its Conference in Durham alongside the festival in 2017.

5 Questions from Area Action Partnerships

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

- Improvements to key destination parks such as Chester le Street Riverside Park
- The opportunity to help develop the criteria and procedures for the allocation of funding for youth support.

Andrew Megginson, Chester le Street AAP Coordinator was in attendance to ask their question and Jane Bellis East Durham AAP Coordinator was in attendance to ask their question.

Councillor M Plews, Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Libraries and Lifelong Learning thanked the Chester le Street AAP for their question and provided a response. Councillor O Johnson, Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services thanked the East Durham AAP for their question and provided a response.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services informed the Council that the questions, together with the responses, would be placed on the Council's website and a copy of the responses would also be sent to the Area Action Partnerships.

6 Questions from the Public

A question had been received from a Member of the Public regarding the Troubled Families Programme. In the absence of the questioner, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services informed the Council that a copy of the question, together with the responses would be placed on the Council's website and a copy of the response would also be sent direct to the questioner.

7 Petitions

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services explained the procedure for the presentation of petitions to Council.

Councillor Hart informed Council that a 91 signature petition had been gathered by the pupils of Stanley Crook Primary School to request a lowering of the speed limit outside of the school. The road outside of the school currently had a speed limit of 60 m.p.h. with no footway either side of it. The petition was presented to Council by two pupils of the Primary School.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Hart and the pupils of Stanley Crook Primary School for the petition.

8 Report from the Cabinet

The Leader of the Council provided the Council with an update of business discussed by the Cabinet at its meetings held on 6 April and 11 May 2016 (for copy see file of Minutes).

9 Motions on Notice

In accordance with a Notice of Motion it was **Moved** by Councillor Lumsdon, **Seconded** by Councillor Brookes

As the council for a county with high levels of deprivation where some of the poorest of its inhabitants have faced severe cuts in income due to restrictions on the public purse at the same time as many large corporations are evading and avoiding tax, this council asks the Government to implement legislation to allow councils to take into account in its procurement a fair tax requirement; requiring bidders seeking to do business with councils in England to be open and transparent in their financial dealings, especially with reference to their tax affairs in the UK, and thereby contribute to the public purse;

This Council supports this campaign for tax justice by:

Setting up a cross party working group to explore how we can encourage the development of the Fair Tax Mark and to consider how best to promote the Fair Tax Campaign and transparency in all tax dealings.

Upon a vote being taken it was

Resolved:

That the Motion be **carried**.

10 Questions from Members

Councillor A Watson

This Council was promised a report of the inquiry for this Council Meeting into how a School Teacher who had her career ruined and was awarded £1.5m by an Industrial tribunal was allowed to happen and the lessons learned from it. Can the Portfolio Holder explain why the report has not been presented to this meeting?

Councillor Johnson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services thanked Councillor Watson for his question.

Councillor Johnson had been informed that the Council's Chief Internal Auditor and Corporate Fraud Manager had recently completed his comprehensive independent review of this complex case and had drafted his report. The reason for the delay was that the investigating officer was awaiting a response from the former teacher,

having sought her views and input on the key lines of enquiry within the scope of the review. It was Councillor Johnson's understanding that the Chief Internal Auditor and Corporate Fraud Manager intended to present his report to the County Council meeting to be held on 20 July 2016.