

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At an Ordinary Meeting of the County Council held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Wednesday 24 January 2018 at 10.00 am**

Present:

Councillor B Kellett (Chairman)

Councillors J Allen, J Atkinson, P Atkinson, B Avery, A Bainbridge, B Bainbridge, A Batey, D Bell, E Bell, J Bell, R Bell, H Bennett, G Bleasdale, L Boyd, D Boyes, P Brookes, D Brown, J Brown, L Brown, C Carr, J Chaplow, J Charlton, J Clare, J Clark, M Clarke, I Cochrane, J Considine, K Corrigan, R Crute, G Darkes, M Davinson, S Dunn, D Freeman, A Gardner, J Grant, N Grayson, O Gunn, C Hampson, T Henderson, S Henig, D Hicks, A Hopgood, L Hovvels, P Howell, E Huntington, S Iveson, I Jewell, O Johnson, P Jopling, C Kay, L Kennedy, A Laing, J Lethbridge (Vice-Chairman), L Maddison, J Maitland, J Makepeace, R Manchester, C Marshall, L Marshall, C Martin, E Mavin, M McKeon, I McLean, S Morrison, A Napier, H Nicholson, J Nicholson, P Oliver, A Patterson, C Potts, L Pounder, S Quinn, A Reed, G Richardson, J Robinson, J Rowlandson, E Scott, P Sexton, K Shaw, A Shield, J Shuttleworth, M Simmons, A Simpson, H Smith, T Smith, W Stelling, J Stephenson, A Surtees, L Taylor, P Taylor, O Temple, K Thompson, F Tinsley, T Tucker, J Turnbull, A Watson, M Wilkes, A Willis, M Wilson, S Wilson, D Wood, R Yorke and S Zair

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E Adam, A Bell, J Blakey, P Crathorne, S Durham, K Hopper, S Hugill, K Liddell, H Liddle, L Mavin, S McDonnell, M McGaun, O Milburn, R Ormerod, S Robinson, A Savory, B Stephens and C Wilson

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Chairman of the County Council with great sadness reported the death of former Wear Valley District Councillor and Alderman Olive Brown of Crook. Olive served for three decades as a Councillor, including 10 years as Leader of the Wear Valley District Council and was awarded an MBE in 2007.

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

1 Presentation to Honorary Aldermen/Alderwomen

The Chairman presented Certificates of Office to the following former Councillors made Honorary Aldermen/Alderwomen at the Special Meeting of the County Council held on 6 December 2017:

Joseph Armstrong
James Sands Cordon
Neil Crowther Foster
Michele Hodgson MBE
June Elizabeth Lee
Nigel Martin

The Chairman reported that Joan Maslin and Paul Stradling could not be present and alternative arrangements would be made for the presentation of their Certificates of Office.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 6 December 2017 were confirmed by the Council as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3 Declarations of Interest

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

4 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman placed on record his congratulations to all those in the region who were recognised in the Queen's New Year Honours, with special mention to:-

- Gary Ridley, Assistant Chief Officer, Durham Constabulary who was awarded an OBE for services to Policing;
- Former Derwentside District Councillor, Durham County Councillor and Alderwoman Michele Hodgson from Stanley who was awarded an MBE for services to Fire and Rescue;
- Dorothy Rand from Chester-le-Street who was awarded an MBE, for services to local government and the community; and
- Christine Robson from Stanley who was awarded an MBE, for services to the Fire and Rescue Service and to the community.

The Council joined with the Chairman in congratulating these recipients, together with everyone else in County Durham who had been recognised in the New Year Honours.

The Chairman was pleased to report that a member of staff from the Council had been selected to attend a prestigious training programme at the Houses of Parliament.

Rich Hurst, education development advisor with responsibility for citizenship at the council's education development service, was selected from more than 170 applicants to attend 'Teachers' Institute', which gave teachers from all parts of the UK a detailed understanding of how parliament worked. Those taking part in the programme then became UK Parliament Teacher Ambassadors and go on to teach students and fellow education professionals about democracy and the Houses of Parliament.

The Leader of the Council emailed Members on 17 January following the Cabinet meeting, regarding the Aykley Heads Strategic Employment Site. Members were now aware of the outline proposals to relocate the county's archives, along with a number of other services to Mount Oswald Manor on the outskirts of Durham City, including a new history centre and registry office. In his email, the Leader

explained the immediate priority to begin a public consultation on what should be located within the new history centre.

A drop-in session had been arranged to follow the Council meeting where all Members were invited to fill in a questionnaire to help shape the project.

If Members were not able to talk to the staff on hand at the drop in session following the County Council meeting, they could find out more and fill in the online questionnaire at www.durham.gov.uk/consultation until 18 February.

All Members were invited to attend a Suffragette Centenary Celebration march in Bishop Auckland on Saturday 3 February at 12 p.m. This was probably the first in the region to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the passing of the Representation of People Act 1918 that enabled women over 30 to vote for the first time. More details could be provided by contacting Councillor Joy Allen.

The final announcement was about Holocaust Memorial Day and the Chairman hoped members would wear the badges provided.

5 Leader's Report

The Leader wished all Members a Happy New Year and congratulated those who had received New Year's Honours and also the Council's new Honorary Aldermen.

The Leader encouraged Members as well as the public to help shape the plans for a new Durham History Centre, which would potentially bring together the county archives with other important collections at a single site at Mount Oswald. The Leader believed this would offer a tremendous opportunity in the future to open up the County's rich heritage and history to greater numbers and views on what should be included would be sought over the next month.

The plans were part of a Cabinet paper on Aykley Heads which was agreed last week and would be formally reported to Council at its next meeting. Councillor Henig repeated that he believed this was a very exciting opportunity for Durham, not least the prospect of thousands of additional jobs on the current County Hall site and a real boost to the County's economy in years to come.

The Council had continued its 'Durham Place of Light' campaign over recent weeks which had included a 'Durham's got it covered' supplement in the national Times newspaper over the Christmas/New Year break and another live broadcast from two of the County's beautiful locations yesterday, these being the Durham Coast and Wharton Park.

Councillor Henig drew Members' attention to the first exhibition in the new gallery space at the Gala Theatre which featured work of young children from schools, nurseries and early year's settings in the east of the county. Entitled 'Into the light' it was inspired by Lumiere and the Council's campaign to shine a light on all that was great in County Durham. Councillor Henig commended the work of the children, their teachers, art educator and County Hall Early Years staff. The exhibition ran until the end of the month and was a stunning display of the amazing work young children could achieve.

Finally, Councillor Henig drew Member's attention to the exhibition in the Durham Room which marked Holocaust Memorial Day which was commemorated on 27 January each year.

6 Questions from Area Action Partnerships

Questions had been received from the Three Towns Area Action Partnership and the East Durham Area Action Partnership relating to the following:

- The development of a new Aldi on the former Queen Street depot in Crook and other development opportunities in the town;
- Tourism initiatives being explored for the east coast area.

Sandy Denney, Three Towns AAP Co-ordinator and John Murphy, East Durham AAP Co-ordinator were in attendance to ask their questions.

Councillor C Marshall, Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration thanked the Three Towns AAP for their question and provided a response.

Councillor O Johnson, Portfolio Holder for Tourism, Culture, Leisure and Rural Issues thanked the East Durham AAP for their question and provided a response.

7 Questions from the Public

There were no questions from the public.

8 Petitions

There were no petitions for consideration.

9 Report from the Cabinet

The Leader of the Council provided the Council with an update of business discussed by Cabinet on 13 December 2017 (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor M Wilkes asked the following question relating to the Cabinet report Item 3, the Quarter 2 Performance Management Report

'I would draw member's attention to Item 3. Within the report brought to Cabinet, Performance Indicator 100 referred to the number of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents on our roads.

The figure showed the Council's performance as red, deteriorating from the previous period.

A large number of accidents occurred in the winter months when road and weather conditions were far poorer. The Council had a positive record in County Durham on winter maintenance which helped to keep the public safe and reduced the number of accidents.

However on Newton Hall estate this winter a gritting route had been cut and there had been accidents for the first time in 15 years. Local Members were never contacted by residents before this winter about a single accident on these roads.

Prior to this winter and without any consultation with County Councillors, the Council removed the gritting route. Having printed the new routes, and cancelled this route, Local Members were belatedly told.

The Council reported it had issues last winter with gritting the route due to parked cars. However at no point did it contact Local Members to seek to find a solution or even tell them there was an issue. Nor did it write to residents to tell them the route was being cut. Little if anything had been done to work with residents to solve the problems.

To the knowledge of Local Members, so far this winter there had been two accidents with a total of five cars involved on this route, and a number of near misses. In all these cases ice was a contributory factor. The Council had still not informed residents on this route that it was no longer being gritted or why.

The Council's Winter Maintenance Policy did not include any requirement to consult with residents prior to removing any route from the program. Nor was a risk assessment report required. If the Council was to ensure that accident rates in County Durham were kept to the absolute minimum, it was imperative that changes to services were consulted on and carried out with visible due diligence.

Would the portfolio holder therefore please:

1. Change Council policy;
 - (a) so that there was a requirement to consult with County Councillors and residents before considering removing a gritting route, and
 - (b) ensure a risk assessment was carried out and report produced when removing any gritting route.
- 2 Find a way, if agreement had not been reached by the time of the Council meeting to reinstate the route whilst all options were considered.'

In asking his question, Councillor Wilkes thanked Councillor Stephens, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Local Partnerships, and officers for work undertaken within the last few days to address this situation.

The Chairman informed Council that Councillor Stephens was not present due to illness and invited the Cabinet Support Member, Councillor R Yorke to provide a response.

Councillor R Yorke thanked Councillor Wilkes for his question and provided the following response.

Road safety was of paramount importance to the Council. The Council was not aware of any serious accidents on these roads recently but if there were any road safety issues these would be investigated.

The Council reviewed gritting routes at the end of every winter maintenance season. Unfortunately, for safety reasons, it was considered necessary to take Cotherstone Road, Lindisfarne Road and Featherstone Road from the gritting network this winter. This was due to the high volumes of on-street parking on these narrow residential roads, during the evening and early hours of the morning when gritting was usually undertaken. Local Members were informed before the start of the winter maintenance season and offered meetings with highway officers to discuss any concerns.

During the 2016/17 winter season the Council's gritter driver reported that that on at least 50% of gritting runs he had major issues due to on-street parking and had to take evasive action. There was also a wider road safety issue regarding the rest of the route if the gritter was delayed or unable to complete the route which could not be allowed to happen. As mitigation for the cessation of gritting the Council had provided three additional salt bins to complement the ones already in situ.

Following the recent severe winter weather the Council had written to residents to explain why these changes had been necessary and the support that remained available.

Councillor Yorke took the opportunity following the severe winter weather last week to thank all staff involved for their excellent work in clearing priority roads and footpaths of snow and ice.

Councillor L Maddison asked the following question on the Cabinet report: Item 3, the Quarter 2 Performance Management Report

'On page 16 of the Report from Cabinet meeting of 13 December it had been recognised that Children's Social Care demand continued to be high with further review needed on Social Worker caseload levels.

Reports indicated that Level 4 Children in Need open cases had risen by 552 children between September 2016 and June 2017 to a level of 3624 children, and that the number of referrals were also up from last year. Although down at September 2017, level 4 Children in Need open cases were still up by 401 cases since September 2016, putting increased pressure on Children's Social Services.

As there appeared to be an upward trend in the numbers of children needing support from the local Authority could the Portfolio Holder advise what programs were in place to improve the life chances for these children, working with parents and where needed to encourage more foster families and adoptive parents to come forward.'

Councillor O Gunn, Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services thanked Councillor Maddison for her question and provided the following response:

'Young babies were particularly vulnerable to abuse and early assessment, intervention and support work carried out during the ante-natal period could help minimise any potential risk of harm. Where a coordinated response by agencies would be required to ensure that the appropriate support was in place during the pregnancy to best protect the baby before and following birth, a newly created

Social Work “Pre-Birth Interventions Team.” was being created. The team would work with parents during the early stage of pregnancy where there was a clear identified risk of potential harm to the child following birth. During this period, assessment and intensive support to parents would be provided with the aim of making the best decision regarding the potential risk of harm to the child following birth and whether it was in the best interest of the child to commence care proceedings.

A new “Edge of Care” service would work with families of teenagers where there was a risk of family breakdown. The service would deliver two primary functions, the coordination and provision of Family Group Conferencing and the provision of wrap-around and intensive support into families to prevent older children, predominantly teenagers, coming into care and would work with children and young people aged 11 to 17 and their families. The service would offer respite care and overnight emergency accommodation, where necessary, together with support directly into the family home to help the family overcome difficulties and challenges and to keep the young person at home.

Children and Young People’s Services had consistently faced challenges in recruiting and retaining experienced social workers in permanent roles in frontline social work teams. As a result an active recruitment and retention programme is in place, managed through the Raising the Bar Group chaired by Carole Payne, Head of Early Help, Assessment and Safeguarding Services.

The Council now had a range of routes into social work qualification to ensure a Workforce. A social work academy supported newly qualified social workers ready to start work each year including traditional university programmes, Step Up to Social Work and Frontline, and expected to be one of the first local authorities in England to offer an apprenticeship in social work from Autumn 2018. Stable staffing was one of the characteristics of effective social work. All of these initiatives had reduced vacancies.

Durham County Council Services and partner organisations had formed a multi-agency Child Poverty Working Group in response to the increasing levels of child poverty across County Durham. A plan on a page had been developed to address child poverty including supporting schools to address the cost of the school day, training frontline staff to have conversations with families about financial support available including debt management and credit unions, and providing holiday activity schemes which included food during school holiday. The plan also aimed to address supporting parents into employment through access to adult learning programmes and providing information regarding financial support available to support childcare.

The One Point Service also worked closely with secondary schools through Team around the School programme, in which a range of activities and programmes were delivered in school for vulnerable pupils including those at risk of CSE, risk of exclusions due to poor behaviour or poor attendance. The service was currently supporting 2300 children.

The Council was very aware of the need to recruit more foster carers and adoptive parents to meet the needs of an increasing number of looked after children. As well

as the more traditional, broad approach, which had given many fantastic carers, the Council was also now taking a more innovative, targeted approach to recruitment. Putting people at the heart of what the Council did, using a combination of press, digital, advertising and community outreach to reach those who could offer the loving homes that children needed. This had increased the Council's foster carer base this year including the diversity in the types of foster carers.'

10 Members' Allowances Scheme 2018/19

The Council considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which sought agreement to a Members Allowances Scheme for 2018/19 having due regard to the recommendation of the Independent Remuneration Panel (for copy see file of Minutes).

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

Resolved:

That the Members Allowances Scheme for 2018/19 be approved.

11 Motions on Notice

In accordance with a Notice of Motion it was **Moved** by Councillor Wilkes, **Seconded** by Councillor L Brown

That this Council resolves to:

Request that a report be brought to Full Council on the options for bringing an end to the use of unnecessary Single Use Plastics (SUP) in County Durham, taking account of the following measures to:

a) enable Durham County Council to become a full signatory of the 'Plastic Free Pledge', by phasing out the use of unnecessary SUPs in all County Council buildings, and working with commissioning partners to end the purchase and procurement of SUPs through the DCC supply chain;

b) encourage the County's businesses, organisations and residents to go 'plastic free,' working with best practice partners across the County to explore the creation of a 'plastic free network,' that could provide business support, practical guidelines and advice to help local businesses transition from SUPs to sustainable alternatives;

c) to incentivise traders on Council land to sell re-usable or non-plastic biodegradable containers and invite customers to bring their own, with the aim of phasing out SUPs; including investigating the possibility of requiring food and drink vendors to avoid SUPs as a condition of their event permission, strengthening DCC's existing guidance for exhibitors and traders.

Councillor Crute considered that it was more appropriate to refer this to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and **Moved** an amendment that the words '*a report be brought to Full Council*' be replaced by '*a report be brought to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board*':

Seconded by Councillor A Patterson.

Councillor Wilkes accepted the amendment to the Motion. The following then became the substantive Motion:

That this Council resolves to:

Request that a report be brought to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on the options for bringing an end to the use of unnecessary Single Use Plastics (SUP) in County Durham, taking account of the following measures to:

a) enable Durham County Council to become a full signatory of the 'Plastic Free Pledge', by phasing out the use of unnecessary SUPs in all County Council buildings, and working with commissioning partners to end the purchase and procurement of SUPs through the DCC supply chain;

b) encourage the County's businesses, organisations and residents to go 'plastic free,' working with best practice partners across the County to explore the creation of a 'plastic free network,' that could provide business support, practical guidelines and advice to help local businesses transition from SUPs to sustainable alternatives;

c) to incentivise traders on Council land to sell re-usable or non-plastic biodegradable containers and invite customers to bring their own, with the aim of phasing out SUPs; including investigating the possibility of requiring food and drink vendors to avoid SUPs as a condition of their event permission, strengthening DCC's existing guidance for exhibitors and traders.

Upon a vote being taken the substantive motion was **carried**.

12 Questions from Members

There were no questions from Members.