

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At an Ordinary Meeting of the County Council held in the Council Chamber - County Hall, Durham on **Wednesday 18 April 2018 at 10.00 a.m.**

Present:

Councillor B Kellett in the Chair

Councillors E Adam, J Allen, J Atkinson, P Atkinson, B Avery, A Bainbridge, B Bainbridge, A Batey, D Bell, J Bell, R Bell, H Bennett, J Blakey, G Bleasdale, L Boyd, D Boyes, P Brookes, D Brown, J Brown, L Brown, C Carr, J Chaplow, J Charlton, J Clare, M Clarke, I Cochrane, J Considine, K Corrigan, P Crathorne, M Davinson, S Dunn, S Durham, D Freeman, N Grayson, O Gunn, C Hampson, K Hawley, T Henderson, S Henig, D Hicks, A Hopgood, K Hopper, S Hugill, E Huntington, S Iveson, I Jewell, O Johnson, L Kennedy, J Lethbridge (Vice-Chairman), K Liddell, H Liddle, L Maddison, J Makepeace, R Manchester, C Marshall, L Marshall, C Martin, E Mavin, L Mavin, M McGaun, M McKeon, I McLean, O Milburn, S Morrison, A Napier, H Nicholson, J Nicholson, R Ormerod, A Patterson, C Potts, L Pounder, S Quinn, J Robinson, S Robinson, A Savory, E Scott, P Sexton, K Shaw, A Shield, J Shuttleworth, M Simmons, A Simpson, H Smith, T Smith, W Stelling, J Stephenson, B Stephens, A Surtees, L Taylor, P Taylor, O Temple, 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 Bell, J Clark, G Darkes, A Gardner, J Grant, D Hall, L Hovvels, P Howell, P Jopling, A Laing, J Maitland, S McDonnell, P Oliver and D Stoker

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Chairman of the County Council with great sadness reported the death of former Alderman and Teesdale District Councillor Ossie Hedley, who gave 30 years' service to the District Council. Ossie was a longstanding Chairman of the Planning Committee and had served as Leader at one time. He had also served on Staindrop Parish Council.

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

1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2018 were confirmed by the Council as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Councillor Temple informed Council that he wished to clarify that comments he had made at the meeting on 21 February 2018 regarding the Council's Budget for 2018/19 were not directed towards officers who had drafted the report but were in opposition to the decision of the leading political group to raise Council Tax by 5%.

2 Declarations of Interest

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

3 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman congratulated those bands which had participated in the Brass Band Championships on 17 and 18 March 2018, and in particular those who would be representing the region at the Royal Albert Hall in October.

4 Leader's Report

The Leader informed the Council about a number of forthcoming events within the County.

A service to dedicate a memorial to Lieutenant Commander George Nicholson Bradford, VC, would take place at 11.00 a.m. on Saturday 21 April 2018 at Witton Park, Bishop Auckland. Lt Commander Bradford, one of the famous fighting Bradford brothers, was awarded a Victoria Cross for his bravery after being killed storming the Belgian port of Zeebrugge on St George's Day in 1918.

A Commonwealth Event would be held in Durham on 25 April to coincide with the current Commonwealth Summit in London. The County was also delighted to welcome the Spanish Ambassador who would be visiting Bishop Auckland to see the excellent Spanish cultural connections being developed in the town.

The coming weekend would see the return of the annual Bishop Auckland Food Festival which regularly attracted more than 30,000 visitors to its range of food stalls and events.

Finally, another regular event, the Tour Series Cycle Race would take place in Durham City on 22 May.

The County had suffered from the 'Beast from the East' since the last full Council meeting and Councillor Henig took the opportunity to report on the Council's delivery of Winter Maintenance for the current period.

2017/18 had been one of the most challenging winters the unitary authority had ever faced, including several heavy snow events and the usage of more than 10,000 tonnes of salt in one week alone. The cost of that week's activity alone was estimated at £1m as the Council's fleet of seventy gritters and local farmer contractors battled to keep the road network across County Durham clear. It was worth noting that snow drifts in that week were up to five feet deep in places and everyone did a tremendous job that week, as throughout the year.

To acknowledge the commitment and hard work of all staff within the service, a Great Staff Great Stuff award was issued with a message of thanks from Cabinet Member Brian Stephens.

The service had been inundated with compliments from the public congratulating the team's good work. The same week saw two members of staff going the extra mile by saving two ewe's stranded in several feet of drifting snow at Landon Beck, Teesdale.

The snow had continued into April. In all of this poor weather the Council had used more than 61,500 tonnes of salt, almost double the figure from last year. Consequently, the Council had overspent its budget by more than £1.6m to the end of March. This was why reserves were needed.

As a consequence of the winter weather conditions the County's road network had taken a battering. This had been recognised by the Department for Transport who had allocated the Council an additional £1.3m through the pothole fund. As an authority the Council had taken the decision to supplement this figure by investing an additional £700,000. This brought the total council investment in roads this financial year to £5.7m, which when added to government funding brought the total for highways repairs in 2018/19 to more than £17m.

On behalf of all Members Councillor Henig placed on record thanks to Cabinet Member Brian Stephens and all hard working staff for their tremendous efforts throughout what had been a very difficult winter.

5 Questions from Area Action Partnerships

Questions had been received from Teesdale AAP and Mid Durham AAP relating to the following:

- Whether the funding available for the replacement household waste recycling centre at Stainton Grove would cover the whole of the original project;
- How the authority and its partners were planning to improve children and young people's emotional resilience within and outside of school/college and how the authority and partners intended to promote these services to children and young people and their families.

Adam White, Teesdale AAP Coordinator and Janet Box, Mid Durham AAP Board Member were in attendance to ask their questions.

Councillor B Stephens, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Local Partnerships thanked the Teesdale AAP for their question and provided a response.

Councillor O Gunn, Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services thanked the Mid Durham AAP for their question and provided a response.

6 Questions from the Public

No questions from the public had been received.

7 Petitions

There were no petitions for consideration.

8 Report from the Cabinet

The Leader of the Council provided the Council with an update of business discussed by Cabinet on 14 March 2018 (for copy see file of Minutes).

9 Interim Update and Revision of the Council's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy

The Council considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services regarding an interim revision and update of the County Council's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy, more commonly referred to as the Taxi Policy (for copy see file of Minutes)

Councillor C Carr informed the Council that the interim revision of the Policy had been considered by the General Licensing and Registration Committee on 18 January 2018. The revision to the Policy, which reflected recent changes in legislation, did not propose significant alterations and had been brought to the attention of the taxi trade. Councillor Carr **moved** approval of the revised Policy.

In **seconding** approval of the revised Policy Councillor Stephens, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Local Partnerships informed the Council that the revised Policy proposed only minor amendments, had been considered by the General Licensing and Registration Committee and brought to the attention of the taxi trade.

Resolved:

That the proposed updated version of the Taxi Policy be adopted with immediate effect and publication of the revised policy take place following its adoption.

10 Local Code of Corporate Governance

The Council considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources regarding the inclusion of an updated Local Code of Corporate Governance in the revised Council Constitution (for copy see file of Minutes),

Moved by Councillor A Napier, seconded by Councillor Henig and

Resolved:

That the updated Local Code of Corporate Governance be approved to replace the existing version in the Council Constitution.

11 Motions on Notice

In accordance with a Notice of Motion it was **Moved** by Councillor Wilkes and **Seconded** by Councillor Martin:

This winter's weather has caused serious damage to our highways network and placed significant pressure on the Council's services and staff.

Council therefore:

- 1. Places on record its thanks for the immense work done by our staff, keeping our highways and other services running, including many staff going way beyond the call of duty.*
- 2. Recognises that as with each year, there needs to be a review of winter maintenance but that this year all County Councillors, Town and Parish councils, other stakeholders and the public will be asked to put forward their views on how we can improve future winter maintenance programs.*
- 3. Agrees to review the current scoring system for grit bins so that areas not currently meeting criteria may become accepted where full long term funding is provided if they meet an amended scoring system.*
- 4. Welcomes the £1.3m additional government funding for highways but believes this is inadequate and will not touch the sides of the work required and therefore calls on the government to immediately provide to councils affected by the severe weather with more significant additional capital funding to deal with the damage to public highways caused by recent conditions.*
- 5. Calls on Cabinet to invest additional funding into the highways budget in-year to help address existing and additional pressures, following the current review underway of the damage caused.*

Councillor B Stephens, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Local Partnerships, while welcoming the recognition of the work of the Council's winter maintenance staff and also the call for extra funding, **moved** the following amendment, **seconded** by Councillor E Adam:

This winter's weather has caused serious damage to our highways network and placed significant pressure on the Council's services and staff.

Council therefore

- 1. Places on record its thanks for the immense work done by our staff, keeping our highways and other services running, including many staff going way beyond the call of duty.*
- 2. ~~Recognises that as with each year, there needs to be a review of winter maintenance but that this year all County Councillors, Town and Parish councils, other stakeholders and the public will be asked to put forward their views on how we can improve future winter maintenance programs.~~*

- ~~3. Agrees to review the current scoring system for grit bins so that areas not currently meeting criteria may become accepted where full long term funding is provided if they meet an amended scoring system.~~
- ~~4. Welcomes the £1.3m additional government funding for highways but believes this is inadequate and will not touch the sides of the work required **to address the highway maintenance backlog and damage caused by the recent severe weather conditions** and therefore calls on the government to immediately provide to councils affected by the severe weather with more significant additional capital funding to deal with the damage to public highways caused by recent conditions.~~
- ~~5. Calls on Cabinet to invest additional funding into the highways budget in-year to help address existing and additional pressures, following the current review underway of the damage caused.~~

Upon a vote being taken the Amendment was **carried** and therefore became the Substantive Motion.

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

12 Questions from Members

Councillor C Martin

With Chester-le-Track closure at Chester-le-Street Railway Station what is the Council doing to help minimize any disruption for passengers and ensure no further reductions in services the station offers occurs?

Councillor C Marshall, Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration thanked Councillor Martin for his question. Whilst many similar sized stations in the UK had been unstaffed since the 1980s, Chester-le-Street had benefited from a local business, Chester-le-Track, who had been leasing and running the station as an independent operation for the past 19 years. Their business had been sustained by earning commission on the sale of tickets, but unfortunately, the increase in online purchases, e-tickets and 'single operator only' promotions had led to a decline in revenue from traditional ticket sales, to the extent that the business was no longer considered viable. Whilst the loss of any local business was unwelcome, Councillor Marshall was pleased to advise that the Council had been leading on discussions with Northern Rail, and as a result, the train operator had agreed to continue to provide a staff presence at the station. The ticket office would be staffed from 0730-1300 Monday to Saturday, and other facilities such as the waiting room and toilets would be open for use 6am to 6pm as previously. The railway station at Chester-le-Street was an important asset to the town, providing residents and businesses with links to Tyneside, Durham and beyond. The station attracted nearly quarter of a million passenger journeys last year, and Councillor Marshall assured Members that supporting local transport opportunities such as this would continue to be a priority for this council.

Councillor L Brown

Can information be provided regarding the changes to the standard start times for builders and developers? These are usually enforced by conditions put in place at the time a planning application is approved. I should like information regarding the original start times across the County and the newly amended times. I would also appreciate knowing who made this decision and who was consulted to reach it?

Councillor C Marshall, Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration thanked Councillor Brown for her question. Planning officers regularly reviewed their standard suite of recommended planning conditions. Construction times were subject to a recent review where it was felt appropriate to recommend a normal start time of 7.30 a.m. in the working week as opposed to 8 a.m. which was previously the usual standard. This change, which was made following discussion between Planning and Environmental Health Officers, reflected the times often applied elsewhere and fitted with standard industry practice. The recommended normal end time for construction was 6 p.m. during the working week and 2 p.m. on Saturdays for external works and 5 p.m. for internal works e.g. painting, decorating etc. No works were permitted on a Sunday or Bank Holidays. Officers considered that the revised start time would ensure that the amenity of any neighbouring residents would be safeguarded at the time of day when they could reasonably be expected to have peace and quiet. However as with all planning conditions, these could be amended at Planning Committee if it was felt that the circumstance of a particular planning application merited this. As an example, on a recent application in Sacriston, Committee changed the start time in the week, limited working hours at weekend and bank holidays, and limited access arrangements for heavy plant and delivery vehicles. This demonstrated it was possible for local Members to raise their concerns and for Committee to consider them.

Councillor Brown asked why neither residents nor their representatives had been consulted on these changes. Councillor Marshall replied Planning Committees were open to both residents and local Members who could raise their concerns on any planning application.