

## **FULL COUNCIL**

**WEDNESDAY 14<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2023 – 7.15 p.m.**

Minutes of the proceedings of the **ORDINARY MEETING** of the **COUNCIL** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, on **WEDNESDAY 14<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2023** at **7.15 p.m.**

### **PRESENT**

#### **Councillor Carl Robinson (Chairman)**

Councillors Eddy Adam, Tony Armstrong, Martin Ashcroft, Lindsey Aston, Jim Atkinson, Peter Bergg, Arun M. Chandran, John Clark, Neil Collinson, Ian Gray, Jed Hillary, Simon Hocking, Neville Jones, John Moore, Ken Robson, Anita Sparrow, Michael Stead, Anne Woodward and John Woodward.

### **OFFICERS**

Mr. D. Austin (Town Clerk)  
Mrs. T Woodhead (Finance Manager)  
Mrs. S. Stretch (Senior Administration Officer)

### **IN ATTENDANCE**

Joy Allen, Durham Police and Crime Commissioner  
Neal Bickford, Assistant Superintendent, Durham Constabulary  
Inspector Sarah Honeyman, Newton Aycliffe Police  
Sergeant Andy Boyd, Newton Aycliffe Police  
A representative from Greenfield Arts

### **26. NOTICE OF MEETING**

The notice convening the meeting was taken as read.

### **27. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors:  
Dorothy Bowman, Bob Fleming, George Gray, Brian Haigh, Sandra Haigh, Phillip Hawkins, Andy Hill, Wendy Hillary, Joanne Jones and Sandra Kirby.

### **28. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS**

There had been no requests for dispensations under disclosable or non-disclosable interests.

### **29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **30. GUEST SPEAKER**

Durham Police and Crime Commissioner Joy Allen, Assistant Superintendent Neal Bickford, Inspector Sarah Honeyman and Sergeant Andy Boyd were in attendance to discuss concerns regarding future policing in Newton Aycliffe following Newton Aycliffe Police having been given notice to vacate their premises at Newton Aycliffe Fire Station.

Joy Allen gave a brief report regarding the future relocation of the police station at Newton Aycliffe and the status of the sale of the current building at the Newton Aycliffe Fire Station. She advised that the lease expires in December 2023 and the Fire Service had given the Police notice to quit, adding that they had been searching for premises and to date, have not found any suitable sites within the town area.

Councillor Ken Robson presented an extensive list of questions highlighting the concerns of the townspeople which was given to the Durham Police and Crime Commissioner for consideration.

Durham Police and Crime Commissioner Joy Allen and Assistant Superintendent Neal Bickford recognised members concerns and stated that there is a clear and honest intent to replicate the current provision in Newton Aycliffe but that finding a suitable site is an ongoing process. They are looking for a building or site with similar footprint to what is there now. It was clarified that policing numbers are not at full capacity and there are plans to address this. It was further advised that any unanswered questions would be followed up after the meeting via a direct response to Councillor Robson.

Councillor Ken Robson added that there have been suggestions for buildings to explore and that the town is growing exponentially, and we do not want to lose a police station to an out-of-town location.

Inspector Sarah Honeyman gave details on Newton Aycliffe policing numbers and incident figures for this area and added that there are always officers based in Newton Aycliffe and they recognise the importance of this. She added that they are actively looking for somewhere but that there is little scope in Newton Aycliffe as they would rather buy than lease and there are cost implications to make any buildings usable.

Councillor Jim Atkinson asked who would ultimately make the decision to move off the town.

It was clarified that this would be the Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable.

Councillor Jed Hillary stated that he was disappointed that no consultation had been carried out regarding this issue and further suggested the town centre vacant shops/banks could be utilised on a temporary basis.

Joy Allen advised that we want to stay on the town as long as possible and that the Fire Service would hopefully be able to accommodate them in the interim. She added that there was nothing to consult about at the present time except the notice to quit.

Councillor Eddy Adam thanked Joy and the team for coming to the meeting. He added that he was also disappointed and that so far, he had not heard any guarantees that the Response and Beat Teams will stay in Aycliffe.

Councillor Michael Stead stated that he had spoken to the Fire Service and Durham County Council prior to this meeting, and they had advised that Durham County Council did not purchase the building from under the Police departments' feet. It was his understanding that the Fire Authority gave Newton Aycliffe Police first refusal. He asked why they did not act faster to purchase the building, and that it would have incited value for money as the alternative would cost more in the long run to the taxpayer.

Councillor Arun M. Chandran then quoted a news article from 2013 regarding the proposed new building for the police and added that the land was sold, asking why they did not retain the site and stating that they are managing decline rather than resisting it. He suggested that if Durham County Council have not purchased it then Councillors needed to pressure them to find out what is going on. He further suggested an area of land off Burnhill Way that is available and that the Police station must stay and the Fire Service can relocate instead.

The Police and Crime Commissioner advised that she would take all comments back to the next meeting and find out what the current situation is and if there is any recourse.

Councillor Tony Armstrong asked if the Police and Crime Commissioner can challenge this and if there have been any meetings with our MP?

Insp. Honeyman advised that the MP is aware and is keenly listening, adding that the Fire Service do not want to lose them either.

Councillor Neville Jones added that the Fire Station is not fully manned overnight and to move the Fire Station would be a better idea.

Councillor John Moore added that the suggestion of the land available should not be overlooked.

*Councillor Peter Bergg left the meeting at 8.50pm.*

The Chairman then closed the discussion, and the meeting was adjourned at 8.55pm.

*Councillor Martin Ashcroft left the meeting at this point.*

The meeting resumed at 9.02pm.

### **31. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

A representative from Green Arts was in attendance and made a short statement regarding their proposal to use the Environment Centre at Moore Lane.

Councillors asked a number of questions regarding nature of the use of the building, car parking and potential funding streams.

The Chairman requested that Agenda Item 10 be brought forward, so that the request to use the Environment Centre could be discussed directly following the Public Questions with the Green Arts representative present.

### **32. REQUEST TO USE MOORE LANE ENVIRONMENT CENTRE – GREEN ARTS**

A report was submitted by the Town Clerk and Works and Environment Manager requesting the Council's consideration of a proposal received from Green Arts (formerly Greenfield Arts) to move their operations to Moore Lane Environment Centre.

A discussion took place regarding the nature of the use of the building, ensuring that the building is still available for use for Council environment events, licence conditions, rent and rates, ensuring that usage costs are covered, maintenance of the building, VAT rules and car parking.

The Town Clerk emphasised that the report was seeking agreement in principle for Green Arts to use the building and that the conditions of use and recovery of costs would be subject to an appropriate licence agreement being drawn up in consultation with the Council's solicitors, and reported to the Council for agreement.

Councillor Jed Hillary proposed that the building be offered to Green Arts on a peppercorn rent basis but with running costs being charged on a pro-rata basis to include utilities and business rates. This was seconded by Councillor Lindsey Aston.

**RESOLVED** – as follows:

- (i) that the report be received.
- (ii) that permission be granted, in principle, to Green Arts to use Moore Lane Environment Centre on the basis highlighted in the report and attached proposal.
- (iii) that the building be utilised on a peppercorn rent basis as requested with a pro-rata contribution towards building running costs.
- (iv) that it be noted that any agreement in principle is subject to Green Arts providing all required information to officers, an appropriate licence or tenancy agreement being drawn up by the Council's solicitors.
- (v) that the applicant should pay the costs of the advice and support required from the solicitor.

### **33. MINUTES**

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M. Chandran, and seconded by Councillor Eddy Adam; and

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Council held on the 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **34. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor listed his appointments from the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2023 to the 8<sup>th</sup> June 2023 and stated that his chosen organisation for fundraising in his year in office is 'All Disabilities Matter' and briefly outlined their work. He added that the Mayor At Home event will be held at the Oak Leaf Sports Complex on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> July at 2pm.

**RESOLVED** – that the information be received.

## **35. COMMITTEE MINUTES**

### **(a) Recreation Committee (AGM)**

It was proposed by Councillor Jim Atkinson, and seconded by Councillor Ken Robson; and

**RESOLVED** – as follows:

- (i) that the minutes of the meeting of the Recreation Committee held on the 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023 be received, and
- (ii) that the minutes and recommendations be approved and adopted.

### **(b) Environment Committee (AGM)**

It was proposed by Councillor John Clark, and seconded by Councillor Ken Robson; and

**RESOLVED** – as follows:

- (i) that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment Committee held on the 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023 be received, and
- (ii) that the minutes and recommendations be approved and adopted.

### **(c) Policy and Resources Committee (AGM)**

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M. Chandran, and seconded by Councillor Lindsey Aston; and

**RESOLVED** – as follows:

- (i) that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on the 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023 be received, and
- (ii) that the minutes and recommendations be approved and adopted.

### **(d) Environment Committee**

It was proposed by Councillor Michael Stead, and seconded by Councillor John Clark; and

**RESOLVED** – as follows:

- (i) that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment Committee held on the 31<sup>st</sup> May 2023 be received, and
- (ii) that the minutes and recommendations be approved and adopted.

### **(e) Recreation Committee**

Councillor Jed Hillary raised a concern regarding the decision refusing additional junior pitch allocation for the Newton Aycliffe Sports Club football teams. He requested that the Council reconsider the previous decision made at a future meeting of the Recreation Committee.

It was proposed by Councillor Jed Hillary, and seconded by Councillor Jim Atkinson; and

**RESOLVED** – as follows:

- (i) that the minutes of the meeting of the Recreation Committee held on the 31<sup>st</sup> May 2023 be received; and
- (ii) that the minutes and recommendations be approved and adopted subject to minute 19(v) *'that the Council rejects the proposal that officers further explore the feasibility of offering further additional junior pitches to Newton Aycliffe Sports Club at Moore Lane next season'* be referred back to a future meeting for reconsideration.

**(f) Policy and Resources Committee**

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M. Chandran, and seconded by Councillor - Michael Stead; and

**RESOLVED** – as follows:

- (i) that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on the 7<sup>th</sup> June 2023 be received, and
- (ii) that the minutes and recommendations be approved and adopted.

**36. LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION CONSULTATION – CHANGES TO THE COUNTY DURHAM ELECTORAL DIVISION BOUNDARIES**

A report was submitted regarding the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC) consultation on changes to the electoral division boundaries for Durham County Council and to consider whether the Council should submit a corporate response.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M. Chandran, and seconded by Councillor John Clark; and

**RESOLVED** – as follows:

- (i) that the report and supporting consultation information be received.
- (ii) that a corporate response is not required.

**37. COUNTY DURHAM ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS' NOMINATIONS**

The Town Clerk submitted an email request from CDALC informing of nominations to its Executive Committee for Member's consideration.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M. Chandran, and seconded by Councillor Lindsey Aston; and

**RESOLVED** – as follows:

- (i) that the report be received and;
- (ii) that the Town Council advise CDALC that they support the nominations and do not have any further nominations to make.

### **38. COUNCIL MEETING TIMES**

A report was submitted by the Town Clerk to request Member's consideration of the start times of Council meetings with a view to establishing the most mutually beneficial start time for both Members and Officers of the Council.

Councillor Eddy Adam thanked the officers for the report and proposed that all meetings should start at 7pm, stating that ultimately the needs of the Councillors, particularly those who work during the day, exceed those of the staff on this issue, and that the Town Clerk can manage the situation by offering time off in lieu, working from home and flexible working to ensure the officers are not negatively impacted.

It was proposed by Councillor Eddy Adam, and seconded by Councillor Jim Atkinson; and

**RESOLVED** – as follows:

- (i) that the report be received and;
- (ii) that all Council and Committee Meetings including Sub-Committee and Working Group Meetings start at 7pm.

### **39. APPROVAL OF THE 2022/23 ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT**

A report was received from the Finance Manager requesting that the Council approve the Annual Internal Audit Report, which forms part of the Council's Annual Governance and Accountability Return, for the 2022/23 financial year.

It was proposed by Councillor Lindsey Aston, and seconded by Councillor Arun M. Chandran; and

**RESOLVED** – as follows:

- (i) that the report be received; and
- (ii) that the Annual Internal Audit Report be approved.

### **40. APPROVAL OF THE 2022/23 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT**

A report was received from the Finance Manager requesting that the Council approve the Council's Annual Governance Statement, which forms part of the Council's Annual Governance and Accountability Return, for the 2022/23 financial year.

It was proposed by Councillor Eddy Adam, and seconded by Councillor Jed Hillary; and

**RESOLVED** – as follows:

- (i) that the report be received;
- (ii) that the Annual Governance Statement in respect of the 2022/23 financial year, as set out in Section 1 of the 2022/23 Annual Governance and Accountability Return, is approved; and
- (iii) that the Annual Governance Statement is signed off by the Town Clerk and the Chairman of the Council.

#### **41. APPROVAL OF THE 2022/23 ACCOUNTING STATEMENTS**

A report was received from the Finance Manager requesting that the Council approve the Council's Accounting Statements for the 2022/23 financial year, as set out in Section 2 of the 2022/23 Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

It was proposed by Councillor Michael Stead, and seconded by Councillor Lindsey Aston; and

**RESOLVED** – as follows:

- (i) that the report be received.
- (ii) that the 2022/23 Accounting Statements set out in Section 2 of the Annual Return, and attached at Appendix 1, are approved;
- (iii) that the supporting financial documents to be submitted to the external auditors with the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and which are attached at Appendix 2, are approved;
- (iv) that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return and supporting documents are sent to the external auditor on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> June, following their approval;
- (v) that the unaudited Annual Governance and Accountability Return is published on the Council website on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> June;
- (vi) that the thirty-day public inspection period in relation to the statement of accounts commences on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> June, running until Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> July;
- (vii) that notice of the publication of the accounts and the public inspection rights and period will be advertised on the Council website on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> June;
- (viii) that following the completion of the external audit by Mazars LLP, and receipt of the signed audit opinion and certificate, the Annual Governance and Accountability Return will be published in accordance with the statutory framework.

#### **42. COUNTY DURHAM ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS – HOSTING OF THE LARGER AND SMALLER COUNCIL FORUM MEETINGS**

The Town Clerk requested the members consider a request from CDALC who are seeking to host the meetings of the Larger and Smaller Council Forums on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023 at the Oak Leaf Sports Complex, with the Council meeting the cost of the room hire and lunch and refreshments.

It was proposed by Councillor Jed Hillary, and seconded by Councillor Michael Stead; and

**RESOLVED** – as follows:

- (i) that the meetings of the Larger and Smaller Council Forums be held at the Sports Complex on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023; and
- (ii) that this cost would be met from the Council's Civic Hospitality Budget, offset by the income generated for the Sports Complex Budget.



#### **43. OUTSIDE BODIES**

Reports were given by representatives on the undermentioned Outside Bodies:-

**(a) Youth Council**

There had been no meeting. Councillor Tony Armstrong advised that a youth section would be added to the Town Council Survey later in the year.

**(b) County Durham Association of Local Councils**

Councillor Arun Chandran advised that minutes and reports were available from the Town Clerk if required.

**(c) Aycliffe Village Community Association**

There is no Council representative on this organisation at the present time.

**(d) Woodham Village Community Association**

There had been no meeting.

**(e) Great Aycliffe and Middridge Local Councils' Committee**

There had been no meeting.

**(f) Larger Local Councils' Forum**

Councillor Arun Chandran advised that he and the Town Clerk had attended a meeting and that he had stepped down as Chairman. The minutes and reports were available from the Town Clerk if required.

**(g) Aycliffe and District Bus Preservation Society**

Councillor Ian Gray gave an update report.

**(h) Friends of Stockton and Darlington Railway**

Councillor Jim Atkinson supplied copies of his notes to the Town Clerk for circulation.

**(i) Western Area Partnership**

Councillor Ken Robson gave an update report.

**CHAIRMAN.**