

## FULL COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2025 – 7.00 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 12<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2025** at **7.00 p.m.**

### PRESENT

#### **Councillor Joanne Jones (Chairman)**

Councillors Eddy Adam, Tony Armstrong, Martin Ashcroft, Lindsey Aston, Jim Atkinson, Dorothy Bowman, Arun M. Chandran, George Gray, Ian Gray, Brian Haigh, Phillip Hawkins, Andy Hill, Jed Hillary, Wendy Hillary, Sandra Kirby, Neville Jones, John Moore, Peter Musa, Carl Robinson, Ken Robson, Michael Stead, Anne Woodward and John Woodward.

### OFFICERS

Mr. Dan Austin (Town Clerk)  
Mrs. Tracey Woodhead (Finance Manager)  
Miss. Amanda Donald (Corporate and Policy Officer)  
Mrs. Sharna Stretch (Senior Administration Officer)

### IN ATTENDANCE

One member of the public.

#### **119. NOTICE OF MEETING**

The notice convening the meeting was taken as read.

#### **120. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Peter Bergg, John Clark, Neil Collinson, Sandra Haigh and Brian McAnaney.

#### **121. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS**

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

#### **122. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **123. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

There were no public questions.

#### **124. MINUTES**

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and seconded by Councillor Andy Hill and;

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on the 29<sup>th</sup> January 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **125. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor gave a list of appointments for the period from the 23<sup>rd</sup> January to 5<sup>th</sup> March.

**RESOLVED** – as follows:

- i) that the Mayor's announcements be received.

## **126. COMMITTEE MINUTES**

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

It was proposed by Councillor Andy Hill, and seconded by Councillor Carl Robinson; and

**RESOLVED** – as follows:

- i) that the minutes of the meeting of the Recreation Committee held on the 26<sup>th</sup> February 2025 be received, and
- ii) that the minutes and recommendations be approved and adopted.

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

It was proposed by Councillor Ian Gray, and seconded by Councillor Andy Hill; and

**RESOLVED** – as follows:

- i) that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment Committee held on the 26<sup>th</sup> February 2025 be received, and
- ii) that the minutes and recommendations be approved and adopted.

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

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran, and seconded by Councillor Ken Robson; and

**RESOLVED** – as follows:

- i) that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on the 5<sup>th</sup> March 2025 be received, and
- ii) that the minutes and recommendations be approved and adopted.

## **127. ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SYSTEM OF INTERNAL CONTROL**

The Finance Manager submitted a report to put forward the annual review of the effectiveness of the Council's system of internal control for the 2024/25 financial year for Members consideration and approval.

Councillor Martin Ashcroft wished to record in the minutes his appreciation to all of the officers for their outstanding work on this report adding that it was pleasing to receive assurance that all requirements are in place and working effectively.

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and seconded by Councillor Andy Hill; and

**RESOLVED** – as follows:

- i) That the annual review of the effectiveness of the Council's system of internal control in respect of the 2024/25 financial year is approved by the Council; and
- ii) That the review is taken into account and provides the assurance that the Council requires in order to approve the 2024/25 Annual Governance Statement, as set out in Section 1 of the 2024/25 Annual Governance and Accountability Return later in the year.

## **128. ANNUAL REVIEW OF RISKS**

The Corporate and Policy Officer submitted a report setting out an overview of the Council's risk management arrangements including a full list of current corporate business risks for the Town Council for the 2024/25 financial year for consideration and approval.

Councillor Martin Ashcroft thanked staff for their due diligence in relation to risk management adding that he was thankful and grateful for their work.

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and seconded by Councillor Ken Robson; and

**RESOLVED** – as follows;

- i) That the report be received; and
- ii) That the year-end Business Risk Register for the 2024/25 financial year be approved.

## **129. CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINT DECISION NOTICE**

The Town Clerk submitted a report advising the Council that a Code of Conduct complaint had been made against a Member of the Council, and reporting the outcome of the investigation by the Durham County Council Governance Solicitor, as required by Council Standing Order 32 – Code of Conduct Complaints.

It was advised that the Durham County Council Governance Solicitor had concluded that no action was needed in relation to the complaint,

Councillor Michael Stead wished to record his disappointment regarding this complaint, adding that as soon as the recording of the meeting was received by the Monitoring Officer at Durham County Council, the complaint should have been rejected saving time and effort.

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

**RESOLVED** – as follows;

- i) That the report be received; and;
- ii) That the outcome of the Code of Conduct Complaint and the publication of the Decision Notice be noted by members.

**130. THE COUNTY RESTAURANT – REQUEST FOR A FURTHER LICENCE TO USE A SECTION OF AYCLIFFE VILLAGE GREEN FOR OUTSIDE DINING**

The Town Clerk submitted a request by the operators of The County Restaurant and Public House for a further licence to allow the continued use of a section of Aycliffe Village Green, immediately to the front of the establishment, for outside dining and socialising.

It was requested that Members consider the request and if a further licence is to be agreed, what the period of the licence should be.

Councillor Martin Ashcroft advised that he had no issues with this request and suggested permitting a three-year licence. This was seconded by Councillor Carl Robinson.

Councillor Lindsey Aston suggested an indefinite licence be granted.

Councillor Arun Chandran asked for clarification regarding the legal implications of a licence period of more than one year.

The Town Clerk advised that if the licence for greater than one year and the Council wished to end the licence, it may mean a legal process would be required. He suggested that a one-year licence be given which would allow the new Council to review it at a later date. He further added that he would need to seek further advice on issuing a longer term or indefinite licence.

Councillor Arun Chandran proposed an amendment to the proposal of a three-year agreement, that the Town Clerk have the delegated authority to automatically 'roll over' the licence on an annual basis unless there are reasons against doing this. This was seconded by Councillor Jed Hillary.

Councillor Martin Ashcroft accepted this amendment and withdrew his original proposal.

Various members then spoke in favour of Councillor Chandran's proposal.

**RESOLVED** – as follows;

- i) The request from The County Restaurant and Public House for a further licence to use part of the village green for the purpose of temporarily siting tables and chairs for outside dining and socialising be received;
- ii) The previous advice provided by solicitors and officers regarding the various considerations in relation to the request be noted;
- iii) That a one-year licence be issued; and
- iv) That the Town Clerk be given the delegated authority to automatically renew the licence on an annual basis, subject to the same terms and conditions being requested, that there are no complaints received from residents, and regular review of residents' feedback.

## 131. OUTSIDE BODIES

Members received verbal reports from representatives on the following Outside Bodies:

- a) **County Durham Association of Local Councils**  
There had been no meeting.
- b) **Aycliffe Village Community Association**  
Councillor Carl Robinson gave a verbal update.
- c) **Woodham Village Community Association**  
Councillor Lindsey Aston gave a brief update.
- d) **Great Aycliffe and Middridge Local Councils' Committee**  
There had been no meeting.
- e) **Larger Local Councils' Forum**  
Councillor Jed Hillary gave a verbal update on the meeting advising that a number of issues had been discussed including government consultations on standards and remote meetings, the new Simpler Recycling legislation, Martyn's Law and Prevent, and Durham County Council's Housing Allocation Policy. He added that the next meeting will be on 17<sup>th</sup> July.
- f) **Aycliffe and District Bus Preservation Society**  
Councillor Ian Gray gave a verbal update.
- g) **Friends of Stockton and Darlington Railway**  
Councillor Jim Atkinson gave a verbal update, advising that there will be a 'spring clean' event at Locomotion No1 on 12<sup>th</sup> April.
- h) **Western Area Partnership**  
Councillor Ken Robson gave a verbal update advising members on various anti-social behaviour issues which have occurred, particularly involving off-road bikes. A credit union was opening at the Ark, and a drug and alcohol service.
- i) **Cornforth Partnership**  
Councillor Eddy Adam gave a verbal update advising that the Partnership have four key priorities; families, employment training and welfare, domestic abuse and young people. The Partnership are working with 30 young people from Newton Aycliffe.
- j) **Community Hub Development Group**  
Councillor Dorothy Bowman advised that she had not received any information about the meeting. The Town Clerk advised that her contact information had been supplied and he would follow up with them. He further advised that the work in the old Woolworths store has commenced, that they have secured lottery funding, and will hopefully be opening in May.

**CHAIRMAN**