

Minutes of a **MEETING** of **BISHOP AUCKLAND TOWN COUNCIL** held in the Wesley Room at the Four Clocks Centre, Bishop Auckland on **TUESDAY 29TH JANUARY 2013** at 6.00 p.m.

Present: Councillor Golightly (**in the Chair**) and Councillors Anderson, Fleming, Laurie, Lee, Lethbridge and Wilson.

Also Present: David Anderson (Town Clerk) Clive Auld, Lee Brownson (Bishop Auckland Town Team), Insp Peace (Durham Constabulary), James Cook and Michael Lowe (Durham County Council).

TC 138/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors, Huntington, Kay, Lesley Zair and Sam Zair.

TC 139/12 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no members of the public present.

TC 140/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were submitted.

TC 141/12 COUNTY DURHAM LOCAL PLAN

James Cook, Senior Policy Officer within Durham County Council's Spatial Policy Team was in attendance to give a presentation on the County Durham Local Plan and in particular its relevance to Bishop Auckland.

The Senior Policy Officer explained that the County Durham Local Plan set out the County Council's preferred approach to development of County Durham and built on previous consultations. It was the first opportunity for the new unitary authority to look at County Durham in a strategic context.

The Preferred Options stage was the last main opportunity to give views before submission to the Government inspector.

He went on to explain the context in which the Plan was drafted together with the prevailing economic, social and environmental challenges and opportunities in the County. The Plan set out a spatial strategy for future development which gave the best opportunity for economic growth, directing development to the most sustainable and deliverable locations. It aimed to ensure access to housing, employment and retail areas to meet the needs of existing and future residents, protect and enhance the natural build and historic environment and to deliver an accessible, integrated and sustainable transport system.

The strategy was based on 12 main towns, which included Bishop Auckland, but with sufficient development identified to allow all settlements to have a sustainable future.

The following had been proposed for Bishop Auckland:-

Employment Land Allocations

- South Church Enterprise Park (B. Auckland) (7.18 hectares)

Protected Existing Employment Sites

- South Church Enterprise Park, Bishop Auckland
- Greenfield Industrial Estate, Bishop Auckland

Signed:
Town Mayor

- Laurel Way Industrial Estate Bishop Auckland
- Romanway Industrial Estate Bishop Auckland

Bishop Auckland would continue to be a focus for housing growth with an allocation of 2,685 new homes until 2030. Existing commitments accounted for around 1200 units. The following was proposed in the Plan.

Housing Allocations

- 69 houses at East of Bracks Way, Bishop Auckland (short term)
- 297 houses at Brack’s Farm, Bishop. Auckland (short term)
- 60 houses at Former Chamberlain Phipps, Bishop Auckland (short to medium term)
- 91 houses at Woodhouse Close Estate, Bishop Auckland (short to medium term)
- 54 houses at Cheesmond Avenue, Bishop Auckland (short to medium term)
- 500 houses on strategic site at Auckland Park (short to medium term)
- 61 houses at Canney Hill, Bishop Auckland (medium term)
- 600 houses on strategic site Woodhouses Farm, Bishop Auckland (medium to long term)
- 143 houses at former Cemex Plant, Walker Drive, Bishop Auckland (medium to long term)
- 92 houses on land to south and west of W. Auckland Football Ground (medium term)

Members were concerned at the large allocation of 2,685 new homes, an increase of 1,485 on existing commitments, compared to a very small amount of land allocated for employment, which had increased by only 7.8 hectares. Particular concerns were expressed at the withdrawal of the prestige employment site currently allocated at Bracks Farm.

There was strong feeling that the mismatch in homes and employment allocations would adversely affect the future vitality and sustainability of Bishop Auckland.

In addition concerns were raised relating to the adverse effect on the transport infrastructure if, as proposed, housing allocations would far outweigh employment opportunities within the town.

The Senior Policy Officer explained that the allocation of employment land was based on historical data which showed that whilst allocations made by Wear Valley District Council were higher, take-up had been low. An assessment had been carried out which had suggested the proposed allocation was viable.

RESOLVED: That Members comments be formally submitted to Durham County Council.

TC 142/12 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

Michael Lowe, Durham County Council’s Spatial Policy Team, give a detailed presentation on Neighbourhood Planning, its relationship with the County Durham Local Plan and the process in developing and getting a Neighbourhood Plan adopted.

It was noted that a Neighbourhood Plan was intended to provide local communities with a means of taking control in setting the planning agenda for their neighbourhoods. It could set a vision for the future of a neighbourhood, which could be set out in detail, or be general depending the requirements of local people. It would be able to establish

general planning policies for the development and use of land in a neighbourhood, such as allowing small scale development or protecting local green spaces.

It was noted that Neighbourhood Plans had to be in general conformity with the Durham County Local Plan and therefore could not be used to block proposals. Neighbourhood Plans would also need to comply with local and national planning policies and other legislation.

Once a Neighbourhood Plan had been produced it would be subject to independent inspection and a referendum. If the Plan was agreed by referendum Durham County Council would have to adopt it as an integral part of the overall County Durham Plan.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

TC 143/12 MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETINGS

- (a) Council 18th December 2012
- (b) Council 15th January 2013

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

There were no matter arising

TC 144/12 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

(a) Planning Committee - 18th December 2012

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be approved and adopted.

There were no matter arising

(b) Strategy Committee - 14th January 2013

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be approved and adopted.

Matters arising:-

Further to Minute No STR.11/12 Forward Plan, and following the presentation given on Neighbourhood Planning, consideration was given to whether it would be of benefit to produce a Neighbourhood Plan for Bishop Auckland.

It was suggested that the Clerk identify what use other larger local councils were making of the provision.

RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk seek further information on the approach taken by other larger local councils on Neighbourhood Planning

(c) Finance Committee - 22nd January 2013

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be approved and adopted.

There were no matter arising

TC 145/12 REPORT OF TOWN MAYOR

The Mayor had submitted his apologies for the meeting and therefore this item was deferred.

TC 146/12 UNITARY AUTHORITY UPDATE

Councillor Lethbridge reported that he had attended a meeting at the County Council regarding Welfare Reform, which was the cause of great concern across the County. Further sessions would be taking place and he advised that he would appraise the Town Council as issues developed.

Councillor Lee advised that many complaints continued to be received relating to antisocial behaviour at Boucher Court. The Police had been responding to the complaints and were dealing with the issues raised. Councillor Lethbridge also reported on the issues at Boucher Court and advised that meetings were regularly taking place with the Police.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted

REPORT OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES AND TRAINING EVENTS

TC 147/12 DURHAM CONSTABULARY

Neighbourhood Inspector Martin Peace was present at the meeting to update Members as to recent Police activities in the Town. Insp. Peace hoped to regularly attend meetings, however operational issues would mean that he would not be able to attend every meeting.

Police Presence in Town Centre

Insp. Peace advised that the Police now had an office within Morrisons supermarket. The office was equipped with IT equipment which meant that Police officers could work from that location to file reports and retrieve information, which would result in a greater presence in the town centre.

Bucher Court

Insp. Peace reported on recent incidents at Boucher Court. He advised that the Police now had an office within Boucher Court and were dealing with the issues.

Town Centre Business Security Grant Scheme

A business security grant scheme had been launched on 24th January which provided small business grants for security equipment which could help deter and detect crime. Retailers would have to fund 30% of expenditure on approved schemes themselves. The remaining 70% up to a maximum of £2,000 would be funded from the grant scheme.

Night-time Economy

Insp. Peace reported on recent operations to police the night time economy. He explained that the night time economy was an income generator for businesses in the town centre, however crime and anti-social behaviour had to be deterred to make a safe environment for people to enjoy.

Recent Police operations had been successful. Although crime figures for the period were being finalised it was clear that there had been a significant reduction.

Several comments were made by those present relating to the noticeable reduction in incidents in the town centre on an evening and that police officers seemed to be very approachable.

Insp Peace advised that crime had reduced by 14% on last year. Police were using modern methods of communication such as Twitter and Facebook and were also engaging with the public on an informal basis. The Police were also working with Alcohol Harm Reduction Unit and Durham County Council's Licensing Section to reduce alcohol related incidents. In addition operations had taken place to detect and deter the sale of alcohol to underage youths.

RESOLVED: That the information be received.

TC 148/12 TOWN TEAM

Clive Auld (Town Team) reported that a meeting of the Town Team Events sub-Group had taken place on 8th January 2013. The following had been discussed.

Christmas Activities

Activities held over the Christmas period had been successful. It was noted that a road closure order had been made for Bondgate at a cost of £309. Due to inclement weather activities planned on the road were moved to the Newgate Centre. This would be taken into account and considered when planning Christmas activities for 2013.

The Carol Service and Lighting of the Christmas Tree held on Friday, 20th November 2012 was a great success. It was noted that in future years it might continue over to the following Saturday and Sunday in order to take advantage of the amount of work involved in getting the event set up.

Suggested Events for 2013

The following events had been considered:-

- **Pancake Race (Fancy Dress) – February.** It had been decided not to proceed with this due to the shortage of time and work commitments.
- **Fashion Show with a Twist – June.** There may be a possible link with the North of England Festival of Arts. Various options were being evaluated.
- **The Weardale Railway.** Further information was being sought on this event. The Events Sub-Group wanted to ensure that this would attract people to Bishop Auckland and benefit the town rather than transport them to another location.
- **Bishop Auckland New Car Show – August.** This was to take place.

- **Bishop's Got Talent – October.** This was to be discussed further before making a commitment.
- **Christmas Activities – December.** Experiences from 2012 would be taken into consideration this year to build on its success.

Clive reported his disappointment with the failure of the Northern Echo to print a photograph and story of the Christmas hamper and shield presentation to Saks Hair and Beauty Salon. This was despite his continuous contact with their reporter who attended the presentation made by Bishop Justin Welby.

Efforts were continuing to increase interest and sales of the Christmas Street Lights Appeal Raffle tickets. Local businesses were being asked to sell a few books of tickets, either to their own staff and/or customers.

A new Trust Fund of £1M had been set up by Jonathan Ruffer for local causes. The Town Team were considering making an application.

It was noted that the Food Festival had requested use of the town lamp-posts to advertise the Festival. The Sub-Group had no objections to this as it would support of local business.

The next meeting would be held on 5th February.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

REPORT OF TOWN CLERK

TC 149/12 METRIC PROPERTIES, BISHOP AUCKLAND – SITE OF FORMER ELLIOTS MOTORS, TINDALE CRESCENT

Members noted the contents of a letter from the Department for Communities & Local Government (DCLG) informing the Council that the Secretary of State had considered the case and was satisfied that, whilst locally controversial, it did not raise issues of wider strategic or policy nature envisaged by the call-in policy. He was therefore satisfied that the application should be determined at the local level.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

TC 150/12 POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER – COMMUNITY PANELS

Nominations were sought to represent the Council and its area on Police and Crime Commissioner's Community Panels.

Community Panels would monitor local policing and crime issues and represent the community safety needs of localities. The Panels would also appoint community champions to represent the views of various sectors.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Anderson be nominated to sit on Bishop Auckland Community Panel.

TC 151/12 QUEENS GARDEN PARTY

Nominations were sought from Members to attend the Royal Garden Party to be held on 30th May 2013.

Members noted that the County Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC) had been invited to send 2 people the Garden Party. CDALC were seeking nominations from constituent local councils to be entered into a draw for the places to be allocated.

No eligible member present wished to be nominated to attend the Garden Party. It was noted that no enquiries had been received from Members that were not present at the meeting.

RESOLVED: That no nomination be made to attend the Garden Party.

TC 152/12 TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

It was noted that Chris Myers, Regeneration Projects Manager, Durham County Council was to attend the next Town Council meeting.

Jimmy Bennett, Street Scene Manager (South), Durham County Council was to attend a future meeting.