

COUNCIL
18th July 2013

PRESENT – The Mayor; Baldwin, Carson, Copeland, Cossins, Coultas, Crudass, Crumbie, Curry, Dixon, Donoghue, Francis, Harker, Harman, I. Haszeldine, C. L. B. Hughes, L. Hughes, B. Jones, Kelley, Knowles, Landers, Lewis, Lister, Long, D. A. Lyonette, Macnab, McEwan, Newall, Nutt, Regan, E. A. Richmond, S. Richmond, A. J. Scott, Mrs. H. Scott, Stenson, Swainston, C. Taylor, J. Taylor, Thistlethwaite, L. Vasey, Wallis and Wright. (42)

APOLOGIES – Councillors Cartwright, Galletley, Grundy, L. Haszeldine, Hutchinson, Mrs. D. Jones, Lawton, Lee, J. M. Lyonette, J. Vasey and York. (11)

OTHER APOLOGIES RECEIVED – Mr. Ron Hogg, Police and Crime Commissioner for Durham and Darlington.

9. MINUTES – Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Council held on 2nd May 2013.

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

10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

11. ORDER OF SEALING DOCUMENTS – Presented – The Register showing the documents which had been sealed since the last meeting of Council.

12. ANNOUNCEMENTS – (1) Deaths (a) Former Councillor John Williams DL MBE – The Mayor reported on the death of former Councillor John Williams, who had passed away on 12th July 2013. He highlighted that John had been elected to the Council in 1979, and served as Leader of the Council from 1991, until he retired in 2011. John had made a significant impact on public life in Darlington, and had been heavily involved in the creation of the Darlington Partnership in 1992.

John had held leading positions on all of the main regeneration and economic development bodies in the region, and had worked tirelessly leading the Council's campaign to achieve unitary status in 1997. He had served as Mayor of the Borough of Darlington in 1994/1995; was appointed as a Deputy Lieutenant of County Durham; was awarded an M.B.E. in the 2008 Queen's New Year's Honours List for his services to Local Government; and was recognised for his commitment to Darlington in 2012, when he was made an Honorary Freeman of the Borough.

(b) and Terry Heppenstall - The Mayor also reported the death in service of Terry Heppenstall, on 29th June 2013. Mr. Heppenstall was a greenkeeper at Stressholme Golf Club, where he had worked for the Council for just under 21 years. It was reported that Terry was a valued member of the team that achieved the quality of the golf course at Stressholme, and was a respected colleague in the Cultural Services team.

As a mark of respect, Members held a short silence in memory of former Councillor John Williams and Terry Heppenstall.

(2) John Sunley Prize – The Mayor announced that Ged Doughty, Safeguarding Adults Practice Officer, had been awarded the John Sunley prize, for his dissertation entitled 'Does familiarity breed contempt? A conceptual and theoretical analysis of 'Mate Crime'.

(3) Queen's Award for Voluntary Service 2013 – The Mayor congratulated the Darlington Credit Union on being honoured, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of Her Majesty's Coronation, with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service 2013. The Award recognised the outstanding contribution made to our community by Darlington Credit Union Volunteers, and the Mayor advised that the Award had the equivalent status for voluntary groups as the Member of the British Empire (MBE) had for individuals.

(4) Proms in the Park – The Mayor thanked everyone involved in arranging the recent Proms In The Park event, and The Royal Signals (Northern) Band, the Hurworth Concert Band, the 102 Battalion REME Pipes and Drums, and the 405 (Darlington) Squadron Air Training Corps Band, for their participation in the event. The Mayor also thanked Modus Seabed Intervention, who sponsored the event.

(5) The Big Debate – The Mayor reminded Members of the Big Debate event, taking place on 20th July 2013, as part of the consultation on the Medium Term Financial Plan.

13. QUESTIONS – TO ANSWER QUESTIONS (WHERE NOTICE HAS BEEN GIVEN) FROM – (1) The Public – There were no questions from members of the public.

(2) Members to Cabinet/Chairs – There were no questions from Members, where notice had been given, for the Mayor, Members of the Cabinet, or the Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees.

14. COUNCIL REPORTS – (1) Representation on Other Bodies 2013/14 Combined Fire Authority – The Director of Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that further consideration be given to this Council's representation on the various Committees of the Combined Fire Authority for the 2013/14 Municipal Year.

The submitted report advised Members that, since the appointments were made to the various Committees of the Combined Fire Authority at the Annual Meeting of the Council on 16th May 2013, a number of changes had been made to the Committee Structure of the Combined Fire Authority, and therefore it was necessary to submit revised nominations.

RESOLVED – That the nominations to the various Committees and outside bodies of the Combined Fire Authority for the 2013/14 Municipal Year, as detailed in paragraph 6 of the submitted report, be approved.

REASON – To comply with the nominations received from the Political Groups.

15. CABINET REPORTS – (1) Overview Reports of Cabinet Members – The Leader and Cabinet Members each gave a report (previously circulated) on the main areas of work undertaken under their relevant portfolio during the previous cycle of meetings. Cabinet Members answered questions on their portfolios.

(2) Treasury Management Annual Report and Outturn Prudential Indicators

2012/13 – The Director of Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) which provided information in relation to the regulation and management of the Council's borrowing, investments and cash-flow. The submitted report also sought approval of the Prudential Indicators results for 2012/2013, in accordance with the Prudential Code.

The submitted report outlined the exceptional circumstances with regard to treasury management for 2012/2013. It was reported that continued uncertainty in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis prolonged the extremely cautious approach undertaken by the Council, with investments made only where there was low counterparty risk. It was stated that this manifested itself in a continued reliance on internal borrowing, which in turn had had a positive effect of the Medium Term Financial Plan's financing costs as investment rates were lower than borrowing rates, and that the Council had taken two loans totalling £5.500M to replace loans which had matured for the same amount.

The submitted report stated that the Council had complied with its legislative and regulatory requirements, and that the need for borrowing was only increased for capital purposes.

The submitted report stated that at 31st March 2013, the Council's external debt was £112.161m, which was the same as the previous year. It was reported that the average interest rate of 3.42% paid on this debt represented an increase from the figure of 3.22% in the previous year, and that investments totalled £16.454m at 31st March 2013, in comparison to £11.095m at 31st March 2012, earning interest of 0.56% on short term investments, and 2.06% on longer term investments.

RESOLVED - (a) That the outturn 2012/13 Prudential Indicators within the submitted report, and those in Appendix 1 of the submitted report, be noted.

(b) That the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2012/13 be noted.

REASONS – (a) In order to comply with the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities.

(b) To inform Members of the Performance of the Treasury Management function.

(c) To comply with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003.

(3) Town Centre Regeneration and Inward Investment – The Director of Place and the Director of Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) to seek approval for the allocation of funding to build a Multi Storey Car Park (MSCP), and to advance a secured loan for inward investment purposes.

The submitted report stated that recent approvals for the development of offices to be occupied by the Department for Education (DfE), and for plans to develop a cinema and leisure complex on the former bus depot site, would create a net loss of 360 parking spaces from existing car parks.

The submitted report highlighted that the Draft Car Parking Strategy, considered by Cabinet on 1st July 2013, identified Feethams as an area where there was a high demand for parking, particularly during peak periods when short stay parking by shoppers was in high demand, and, in conjunction with the expected increase in demand for parking, there was an urgent need to develop options to provide new parking in the Feethams area of the town centre. The submitted report identified the car park site on Beaumont Street (North) as the preferred option.

The submitted report also informed Members that the Council had been approached by Moorfield Developments to help facilitate a significant inward investment opportunity by way of supplying a secured loan. Members were advised that the loan would secure the Debenhams store location to the Northern Echo building for a period between six and ten years, and be secured on the assets of the investor. The submitted report confirmed that the loan represented capital expenditure for the Council, and would be funded by prudential borrowing, with repayments being funded by payments from the inward investor.

RESOLVED – (a) That a capital allocation of £6M for a MSCP funded by prudential borrowing, subject to Cabinet agreeing the detailed business case, be approved.

(b) That a capital allocation of £3M to provide an inward investment loan to be funded by prudential borrowing, subject to Cabinet approving the terms of the loan.

REASONS – (a) To provide sufficient car parking in the Town Centre to meet growing demand.

(b) To facilitate significant inward investment into the Borough.

16. SCRUTINY REPORTS – OVERVIEW REPORTS – The five Scrutiny Committee Chairs each submitted a report (previously circulated) on the main areas of work undertaken by their relevant Scrutiny Committee during the last cycle of Committee meetings.

17. MEMBERSHIP CHANGES – There were no membership changes reported at the meeting.