

COUNCIL
22nd February, 2006

PRESENT – The Mayor; Councillors Armstrong, Bristow, Copeland, Dixon, Flowers, Francis, Harker, Mrs. Hart, Hartley, Haszeldine, Holmes, Hughes, S. Jones, Lawton, Lewis, Long, D. Lyonette, Maybrey, McEwan, Newall, Nutt, Reynolds, Richmond, Roberts, F.S. Robson, Ruck, A.J. Scott, Mrs. Scott, Stenson, Swainston, Swift, L. Vasey, G.B. Walker, Wallis, Williams and Wilson. (37)

APOLOGIES - Councillors Baldwin, Mrs. Brown, Foster, Heaney, Hutchinson, Johnson, B. Jones, Mrs. Jones, Lee, Lister, J. Lyonette, Maddison, Thistlethwaite, Vasey-Smith and J. Vasey. (15)

84. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – Councillors Francis, Haszeldine and Williams each declared personal and non-prejudicial interests in Minute 85 below; Councillor McEwan declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute 86 below; and Councillors Dixon, Francis, Hughes, Long and Williams each declared personal and non-prejudicial interests in Minute 86 below.

85. CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS AND REPORTS – HOUSING REVENUE

ACCOUNT – REVENUE BUDGET 2006/07 – The Director of Community Services submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting approval of the draft revenue budget, rent levels and service charges for the Council’s Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the financial year 2006/07.

The submitted report outlined the principal factors and key elements taken into account in the draft budget; the Government’s policy on rent restructuring; the HRA subsidy determination; a review of garage rents and service charges; and an assessment of the housing services from a value for money point of view.

RESOLVED – That the following, as detailed in the submitted report, be agreed :-

- (a) the implementation of rent restructuring and formal rents be continued;
- (b) an average weekly rent increase of 4.78 per cent (£2.20) be implemented in line with the Government rent re-structuring model;
- (c) service charges for Extra Care and Sheltered Housing Schemes be increased as shown in Table 3; and
- (d) garage rents and service charges be increased, as detailed in Table 4.

REASON – (a) To enable the Council to deliver an appropriate level of service to Housing tenants.

(b) To reflect changing circumstances and conditions in the housing market.

86. CHANGES TO PRIMARY CARE TRUST ARRANGEMENTS IN DARLINGTON –

The Chief Executive submitted a report (previously circulated) on the County Durham and Darlington Strategic Health Authority’s consultation on new Primary Care Trust (PCT) arrangements in County Durham and Tees Valley.

The submitted report outlined the two suggested options for the re-structuring of PCT's in the North East together with the implications of both options; the Department of Health's reasons for the proposed change; the criteria against which the options would be judged together with an objective assessment of the options in respect of this criteria; and the strong case for the retention of a PCT with boundaries coterminous with the Borough of Darlington. It was reported that the Social Affairs and Health Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting held on 31st January, 2006, at which various other interested bodies were present, had given unanimous support to option 2, which would retain a coterminous relationship between the Local Authority and the Darlington PCT.

RESOLVED – (a) That, in the light of both previous discussions and of the preceding and appended analyses, detailed in the submitted report, the Leader of the Council be authorised in consultation with the Chief Executive, to write to the Chief Executive of the County Durham and Tees Valley Strategic Health Authority, expressing the Council's strong preference for option (2); the Council's preference for this option is expanded with a desire to support PCT Management arrangements that continue to deliver quality primary care services to the people of Darlington.

(b) That the Leader, in consultation with the Chief Executive also make the same representations in writing to the Chair and Board of the Darlington PCT.

REASON – Option (2), retaining current management arrangements, most readily provides a PCT structure that meets the needs of people in Darlington.

(**NOTE** – Prior to consideration of the above item Councillor McEwan left the meeting having previously declared an interest at Minute 84 above and took no part in the discussion or voting thereon).