

**DECISIONS SHOULD NOT BE IMPLEMENTED
BEFORE MONDAY, 28TH JANUARY, 2008**

CABINET
16th January, 2008

PRESENT - Councillor Williams (in the Chair); Councillors Chapman, Copeland Dixon, Harker, McEwan, D.A. Lyonette, Thistlethwaite and Wallis. (9)

INVITEES – Councillors I. Haszeldine, S. Jones, Mrs. Scott and Swainston. (4)

APOLOGIES – Mr. A. MacConachie.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillors Barker, Coultas, Galletley, B. Jones, D. Jones, Johnson, Lewis, Richmond and Walker. (9)

C161. ALDERMAN JIM SKINNER – The Chair reported at the meeting on the sad death, in hospital, on the evening of 15th January, 2008, of Alderman Jim Skinner, and as a mark of respect Cabinet held a minutes silence.

C162. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS – That in respect of Minute C164(1) below, the Chair and Councillor D.A. Lyonette declared personal and non-prejudicial interests.

C163. REPRESENTATIONS – Officers and Members in attendance at the meeting, made representations in respect of Minute C164 below.

C164. KEY DECISIONS – (1) Concessionary Fare Travel Scheme 2008/09 – The Cabinet Member with the Transport Portfolio introduced the report of the Assistant Chief Executive (regeneration) (previously circulated) explaining the new national scheme for concessionary bus travel from 1st April, 2008, and requesting that consideration be given to an option for applying the national scheme locally.

Concern was expressed at the meeting on a number of issues, including the times that passholders were eligible for free travel, particularly on a morning; travelling outside of the borough; whether the scheme would be reviewed; and the budget.

The Cabinet Member with the Transport Portfolio reported at the meeting that the scheme would be reviewed, if necessary, in light of travel behaviour and that the main concern of passholders in the past, tended to be on the inability to travel outside of the Borough free of charge, which had now been addressed by this scheme

RESOLVED – (a) That the national statutory concessionary fare travel scheme for local bus travel, be adopted, for the financial year 2008/09.

(b) That evening travel after 23.00 hours on weekdays be permitted.

(c) That the provision of companion passes for resident passholders who need to be accompanied due to disability, be continued.

(d) That the taxi voucher scheme continue unchanged during the financial year 2008/09.

(e) That no other additional elements be added to the national statutory scheme.

REASON - (a) To agree a scheme for concessionary local bus travel for people aged over 60 and for disabled people which is affordable in the current budget context.

(b) To be as consistent as possible with other authorities in order to provide a coherent understandable scheme for passholders and operators.

(2) Medium Term Corporate Plan (Incorporating the Medium Term Financial Plan 2008/12) – Draft – The Leader introduced the report of the Corporate Management Team (previously circulated) presenting, for consultation, the Council's first combined corporate and financial plan.

A copy of the draft Sustainable Community Strategy; draft Corporate Plan; projected spend against the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP); report from Darlington's Citizens Panel; detailed budget pressures that had been included within the MTFP; detailed reports from each Department, including value for money assessments; proposed Capital Programme; and further detailed capital expenditure and revenue estimates, were all appended to the submitted report.

Cabinet heard the views of the Union, Officers and Members, in attendance at the meeting, on proposals contained with the Medium Term Corporate Plan, in respect of:- the loss of posts within the Environmental Health Service, which would have an effect on environmental health inspections and pest control; the increase in parking charges to officers; the reduction in car allowances to officers; the loss of the civil advice service on trading standard issues; the loss of grants to Parish Councils; the loss of the subsidy given to bus routes 17 and 97; and to other efficiency savings that could be made throughout the Council. An alternative proposal was put forward, at the meeting by the Union Representative, which would allow the continued provision of the civil advice service on trading standards but would achieve some efficiency savings, which was supported by one of the Members in attendance at the meeting.

In addition, a petition was handed in at the meeting, requesting that residents' parking permits be provided free of charge in the College Ward and that the Stanhope Road residents' parking scheme be extended to include Fife Road.

RESOLVED - That the following proposals of Cabinet be forwarded to the special Resources Scrutiny Committee scheduled to be held on Tuesday, 29th January, 2008, and its views and comments be reported back to a special meeting of Cabinet scheduled for Tuesday, 19th February, 2008 :-

(a) That the draft Corporate Plan, as appended to the submitted report, be approved.

(b) That the draft Revenue Medium Term Financial Plan, as detailed in Appendix 15 of the submitted report, be approved, the key elements being:-

- (i) a 4.9 per cent Council Tax increase;
- (ii) £3.8m of Capital receipts being utilised to repay debt;
- (iii) proposed efficiencies and service re-prioritisations, as detailed in paragraphs 56 to 59 of the submitted report;

- (iv) the provision of headroom of £0.5m in 2009/10 and £1m in subsequent years; and
 - (v) directors proposals in Appendices 6 to 9, including carry over of resources between years and fees and charges.
- (c) That the draft Capital Medium Term Financial Plan, as outlined in Appendix 10 of the submitted report, be approved.
- (d) That funding of capital schemes totalling £0.610m, as detailed in paragraph 99 of the submitted report, be approved.
- (e) That the views and comments made at the meeting be considered as part of the consultation process on the Medium Term Corporate Plan.

REASON - (a) To enable the Council to approval the draft Corporate Plan.

(b) To enable the Council to set a budget and Council Tax for 2007/08.

(c) To approve the Medium Term Financial Plan.

(d) To approve the Capital Medium Term Financial Plan and allocate resources to specific programmes.

(e) To enable the comments to be considered as part of the consultation process.

(3) Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Strategy 2008/09 - The Cabinet Member with the Resources Portfolio introduced the report of the Director of Corporate Services (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to reviewing and adopting the Prudential Indicators and limits relating to capital expenditure and Treasury Management activity; a policy statement relating to Minimum Revenue Provision; and the Treasury Management Strategy for 2008/09, which included the Investment Strategy for 2008/09.

In response to a concern raised by a Member, the Cabinet Member with the Resources Portfolio reported that he believed that the proposed level of debt, was acceptable.

RESOLVED - That the following proposals of Cabinet be forwarded to the special Resources Scrutiny Committee scheduled for Tuesday, 29th January, 2008, and its views and comments be reported back to the special meeting of Cabinet scheduled for Tuesday, 19th February, 2008 :-

- (a) That the prudential indicators and limits for 2008/09 to 20010/11, as contained within Tables 3 to 10 of the submitted report, be adopted.
- (b) That the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRR) Policy Statement, as contained within paragraph 21 of the submitted report, be approved.
- (c) That the Treasury Management Strategy 2008/09, as contained within paragraphs 35 to 56 and the treasury prudential indicators contained within Table 13, of the submitted report, be approved

- (d) That the Investment Strategy 2008/09, as contained within the Treasury Management Strategy, and the detailed criteria included in Appendix 3 to the submitted report, specifically the criteria for specified investments and the criteria for non-specified investments, be approved.

REASON - (a) In order to comply with the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities and ODPM guidance on investments.

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

(c) To approve a framework for Officers to work within when making investment decisions.

(4) Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget 2008/09 - The Cabinet Member with the Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio introduced the report of the Director of Community Services (previously circulated) reviewing the draft revenue budget, rent levels and service charges for the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the financial year 2008/09 and the Lifeline Service.

The Housing Revenue Account 2007/08; further details on the Lifeline Service; and examples of proposed weekly rent increases, were appended to the submitted report.

Discussion ensued on the sale of Council stock; the availability of information in respect of weekly rent increases for 2008/09 for all wards; and the Lifeline Service.

RESOLVED - That it be recommended to Council that :-

- (a) the implementation of rent restructuring and formula rents be continued;
- (b) an average weekly rent increase of 5.29 per cent (£2.68) 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 of the submitted report;
- (d) all other service charges be increased, as detailed in paragraph 4 of the submitted report;
- (e) the Lifeline Service be improved to provide a three tier service and the proposed weekly charges be adopted, as outlined in Appendix 1 to the submitted report; and
- (f) the budget, as detailed in Appendix 2 to the submitted report, be approved.

REASONS - (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.

**DECISIONS DATED –
18TH JANUARY, 2008**