

COUNCIL

Thursday, 19 June 2025

PRESENT – The Mayor, Councillors Allen, Anderson, Baker, Bartch, Beckett, Cossins, Crudass, Crumbie, Mrs Culley, Curry, Dillon, Dulston, Durham, Garner, Harker, Haszeldine, Henderson, Holroyd, Johnson, Keir, Laing, Lawley, Layton, Lee, Mahmud, Mammolotti, McCollom, McEwan, McGill, K Nicholson, M Nicholson, Pease, Porter, Ray, Roche, Mrs Scott, Snedker, Storr, Toms, Tostevin and Wallis

APOLOGIES – Councillors Ali, Coe, Donoghue, Marshall and Dr. Riley

ABSENT – Councillors Renton, Robinson and Walters

85 INTRODUCTION / ATTENDANCE AT MEETING.

86 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

There were no declarations of interest reported at this meeting.

87 QUESTIONS - TO ANSWER QUESTIONS (WHERE APPROPRIATE NOTICE HAS BEEN GIVEN FROM):-

88 THE PUBLIC;

There were two questions, received with notice, from Members of the Public. Both Members of the Public attended the meeting to ask their question in person, and received answers from the relevant Cabinet Members thereon.

89 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.

90 NOTICE OF MOTION

91 TO CONSIDER A MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR DURHAM AND SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR DULSTON

The following Motion was submitted by Councillor Durham and seconded by Councillor Dulston:

Supporting Sporting Clubs & Protecting Green Spaces for the Stars of Tomorrow

That this council notes:

a) Strong sports clubs are vital community assets, offering social connections, promoting physical and mental health, and fostering a sense of belonging. They provide opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to interact, build relationships, and contribute to their local areas. Furthermore, sports clubs can address social challenges like reducing crime and

improving educational

b) Where supported they can contribute to a vibrant economy, not only bringing in much needed investment into the town through improved facilities but support the small trader, the local cafe or pub.

c) Darlington has a strong history of producing sporting stars, each honing their fledgling skills or exercising on the various green spaces we have within the Borough.

d) For the small child, “Tommy Crooks Park” can become Wembley, “Bellburn Field” Anfield and “Fryers field” the crease at Lords.

e) It was important as a Council to refresh the Playing pitches & Built facility strategy in 2021 to understand the Towns current capacity, how we could help sports clubs such as Darlington FC finding its forever home. This strategy was guided by short, medium and long term actions, the latter maturing no later than 2026.

f) The Labour/Lib Dem administration has recently approved its Physical Activity Strategy for the next 10 years, it makes reference to the actions within the above report, however it puts a longer timeframe on delivery up to 2031.

That this Council Believes:

a) Any decisions approved by this council which effect Sporting Clubs and spaces where sports are played goes beyond politics and should be cross party and made by “Full Council”

b) Darlington Council has a chequered history when it comes to supporting the sporting clubs in Town or protecting the green spaces used to play sport on.

c) We can’t reverse what has gone before but can do better in the future.

d) This Council will always be an anchor for Sporting Clubs in choppy waters, the best interests of the club at the heart of joint working arrangements.

e) Any review of the actions required within the Playing pitches and Built facility strategy cannot be pushed back, if anything we must do more and we must go faster.

That this Council resolves to:

a) Bring forward the review of the Playing pitches & Built facility strategy 2021 to identify which aims require renewed focus.

b) Officers provide clarity and full transparency on any plans which may impact on the Economic health or security of Tenure for any Sporting Club within the Borough.

c) Commit to bringing forward the required changes to the Local Plan either through policy or Land Designation which will ensure that all recreational spaces are protected from House Building.

- d) Commits to an unwavering support to ensure Darlington FC finds its forever home.
- e) Ensuring that any plans which effects a sporting club, either economically or its secure tenure, these decisions are scrutinised by a committee made up of all members from Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee, Community and Local Services Scrutiny Committee and Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee.
- f) Following the above review, "Full Council" rather than "Cabinet" approves or rejects said plans.
- g) This Council delegates to the Monitoring Officer the task of making any Constitutional changes necessary to facilitate the above.
- h) If required ask the Mayor to convene an Extraordinary meeting of Council to approve changes set out in g), if the next meeting of Council is more than 45 days from date of this meeting.

Councillor Durham also thanked Members and Officers for their attendance at this Extraordinary Meeting of the Council.

The following Amendment to the Motion was moved by Councillor Harker and Seconded by Councillor Roche:

The Following amendment was submitted by Councillor Harker and seconded by Councillor Roche:

Supporting Sporting Clubs and Protecting Green Spaces for the Stars of Tomorrow

This council notes:

- a) Strong sports clubs are vital community assets, offering social connections, promoting physical and mental health, and fostering a sense of belonging. They provide opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to interact, build relationships, and contribute to their local areas. Furthermore, sports clubs can address social challenges like reducing crime and improving educational attainment.
- b) Where supported they can contribute to a vibrant economy, not only bringing in much needed investment into the town through improved facilities but support the small trader, the local café or pub.
- c) Darlington has a strong history of producing sporting stars, each honing their fledgling skills or exercising on the various green spaces we have within the Borough.
- d) For the small child, "Tommy Crooks Park" can become Wembley, "Bellburn Field" Anfield and "Fryers Field" the crease at Lords.
- e) It was important as a Council to refresh the Playing Pitch & Built Facility Strategy in 2021 to understand the Borough's current capacity, how we could help all sports clubs find security of tenure. This strategy states that it "sets out the strategic direction and site-specific priorities for the future delivery of sports facilities across the Borough until 2031."

f) The Labour/Lib Dem administration has recently approved its Physical Activity Strategy for the next 10 years, it makes reference to the actions within the above report, keeping to the same timeframe that it stated.

g) Preparations are already underway to review and refresh the Playing Pitch & Built Facility Strategy.

This Council Believes:

a) Any decisions approved and scrutinised by this Council which affect Sporting Clubs and spaces where sports are played goes beyond politics and should be made according to the agreed constitution of the Council.

b) Darlington Council has a positive history when it comes to supporting the sporting clubs in the Borough, developing sports facilities and protecting the green spaces used to play sport on, as well as creating new ones (e.g. West Park).

c) We have an opportunity to build on what has gone before and do even better in the future.

d) This Council will always be an anchor for Sporting Clubs in choppy waters, with the best interests of the clubs at the heart of any joint working arrangements.

e) The planned review and refresh of the Playing Pitch & Built Facility Strategy this year represents a great opportunity to further the support of sporting clubs, as well as helping people to move more, enjoy sport and develop the wonderful facilities in the Borough further.

This Council resolves to:

a) Review and revise the Playing Pitch & Built Facility Strategy 2021 to identify which aims require renewed focus, as already planned for this year.

b) Continue to provide clarity and full transparency on any plans which may impact on the Economic health or security of tenure for any Sporting Club within the borough, whilst ensuring commercial sensitivities are respected and maintained.

c) Ensure house building continues to give due regard to access of local people to recreational spaces, including creating new such facilities.

d) Reaffirms the importance of security of tenure for all sporting clubs, as referenced in the Playing Pitch & Built Facility Strategy.

e) Ensuring that any plans involving the Council, which affects a sporting club, either economically or its secure tenure, are scrutinised by the relevant scrutiny committee and all decisions required are considered by relevant committees, according to the agreed Constitution of the Council.

f) That all members take responsibility for communicating about sports clubs and playing

fields in an accurate manner, avoiding rumour, speculation and “fake news”.

Members then entered into discussion on the amendment, with some Opposition Members noting that the contents of both the Motion and the amendment were not on the Forward Plan and thus not on the Council’s radar. This part of the discussion was concluded with Opposition members’ reference to the Motion’s support to Sporting Clubs facing financial difficulty and impacts on green spaces following the increase in housing developments.

Members responded to the discussion by referring to the seriousness of this attempt to inhibit change, noting that this was an area for discussion on 3 separate occasions in Scrutiny which was not addressed by the Conservatives, but was addressed by the Green and Ruling Group.

The Amendment was Carried.

The Amendment became the Substantive Motion and was put to the meeting, and was Agreed.