

1. The make-up and skills of an unelected board who will be responsible for disposing of ~£20M of public funding.

In accordance with the guidance for Long Term Plan for Towns, the existing membership of the Towns Fund Board was fully retained and expanded to include representatives of the voluntary and community sectors. This process was led by the Chair, supported by the Council and involved the Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy Group. In accordance with the subsequent guidance for Plan for Neighbourhoods, this Board membership was fully retained and submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in April and was subsequently confirmed as in line with the guidance. The Board includes senior representation from public and voluntary and community sectors and local businesses. In providing secretariat support to the Board the Council has senior staff in attendance to provide technical guidance and ensure adherence to legal requirements. The Board's composition is in line with the guidance, the programme is being delivered in line with the guidance and there is no evidence that the Board lacks the necessary skills or competence.

2. To establish how council elected members will have scrutiny and oversight of ~£20m of public money spend.

The Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Lead for Stronger Communities are Board members. Progress of the programme is included in the Stronger Communities Portfolio reports to Council in the normal manner and reports are taken to Cabinet when there are significant developments or key decisions are required.

3. To determine if the current arrangements obviate the democratic process in respect to ~£20M public funding given to DBC.

Much the same as for The Towns Fund and Long Term Plan for Towns, the prospectus and guidance issued by Government instructs that a Board must be established in each place to receive funding. The Council provides secretariat support and acts as the accountable body. The Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Lead for Stronger Communities are Board members. The funding has been provided with clear guidance on how its deployment should be overseen and the role of local authorities which are being adhered to. Democratic arrangements have therefore not been obviated.

4. To understand how the decisions, laid out in the agenda, were made and if indeed the current proposal decisions are valid.

The Pride in Place Regeneration Plan was considered at the meeting of Cabinet and Senior Leadership Team at its meeting of November 25th.

The Plan for Neighbourhoods programme had been announced in May. The decisions laid out were recognised as necessary for the programme to be progressed in a timely manner.

5. Why this has been pushed through Cabinet so quickly with no member involvement other than cabinet.

The Pride In Place Regeneration Plan was agreed at the Neighbourhood Board meeting on November 17th and therefore could not have been considered at an earlier Cabinet meeting. The Pride in Place proposals for Darlington include an investment of £5 million towards the STEM Centre. This in turn has released an additional £16 million from the Growth Mission Fund. For the project to be in a position to deliver required the Council to have governance arrangements agreed.

Items regarding the Plan for Neighbourhoods and the Neighbourhood Board were included in the Overview Report of the Stronger Communities Portfolio at the Council meetings of May 26th, July 17th and October 2nd.

6. How Cabinet satisfied itself that the paper had to be considered at this meeting and not deferred until a future date, given a ward benefiting from the proposals was under purdah rules due a live by-election.

As outlined above: The Pride In Place Regeneration Plan was agreed at the Neighbourhood Board meeting on November 17th and therefore could not have been considered at an earlier Cabinet meeting. The Pride in Place proposals for Darlington include an investment of £5 million towards the STEM Centre. This in turn has released an additional £16 million from the Growth Mission Fund. For the project to be in a position to deliver required the Council to have governance arrangements agreed.