

## **NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **COMMUNITIES AND PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

At a meeting of the **Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 1, County, Hall, Morpeth on Wednesday, 21 June 2017 at 2.00 p.m.

#### **PRESENT**

Councillor J. Reid  
(Chairman, in the Chair)

#### **COUNCILLORS**

Armstrong, E.  
Beynon, J.  
Cartie, E.  
Dunbar, C  
Dunn, E

Gallacher, B.  
Gibson, R.  
Pattison, W  
Swithenbank, I.C.F.

#### **MEMBERS**

Castle, G.  
Flux, B  
Jackson, P.  
Sanderson, H.G.H

Local Member (Alnwick Playhouse)  
Deputy Business Chair  
Leader of the Council  
EM: Environment and Local Services

#### **ALSO IN ATTENDANCE**

P. Jones  
S. Nicholson

Director of Local Services and Delivery  
Scrutiny Co-ordinator

#### **1. MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Committee noted the following membership and terms of reference for the Communities and Place OSC, which were agreed by Council on 24 May 2017.

**Chair: J. Reid**

**Vice Chair: I.C.F. Swithenbank**

**Quorum - 3**

<b>Armstrong, E.</b> <b>Beynon, J.</b> <b>Cartie, E.</b> <b>Dunbar, C.</b>	<b>Dunn, E.</b> <b>Gallacher, B.</b> <b>Gibson, R.</b> <b>Pattison, W.</b>
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## Terms of Reference

- (a) To maintain an overview of the Management Agreements in place between the County Council and Active Northumberland, Woodhorn Museum Charitable Trust and Northumberland Tourism.
- (b) To monitor, review and make recommendations about:
  - Development planning
  - Neighbourhood Planning
  - Conservation
  - Housing
  - Climate Change
  - Countryside, Biodiversity and landscape quality
  - Waste Management and Energy Use
  - Public and community transport network and travel to school
  - Highway maintenance, Streetscape and the local environment
  - Local and Neighbourhood services
  - Crime, Community Safety, and fear of crime
  - Antisocial behaviour and domestic violence
  - Fire and rescue
  - Emergency services and Emergency planning
  - Customer Services
  - Provision of cultural and leisure facilities
  - Improving quality of life through access to culture and leisure;
  - Supporting economic growth in the arts, culture and leisure sectors

## 2. MINUTES

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Communities and Local Services OSC held on 22 March 2017, as circulated, to be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

## 3. FORWARD PLAN

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator presented the latest Forward Plan of key decisions (July to October 2017). (Schedule enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix A).

**RESOLVED** that the Forward Plan be noted.

#### **4. SCRUTINY OF CABINET REPORTS**

##### **Union Chain Bridge Restoration Project**

Councillor H.G.H Sanderson, Executive Member: Environment and Local Services and Paul Jones, Director of Local Services and Housing Delivery, presented the report. The Committee were advised that the Cabinet's approval would be sought for the submission of a Stage 1 Bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund in respect of the Union Chain Bridge Restoration Project, which would seek undertake essential restoration works to this important heritage asset that would safeguard its future and status as the world's oldest single span suspension bridge still open to traffic and enhance its contribution to the local tourism economy. The report also sought a financial commitment of £755,000 from the Council's capital programme over the 3 year period from 2018/19 to 2020/21 as part of the match funding required to support the delivery of this £7.8m project. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix B).

The report would be considered by the Cabinet on 11 July 2017 and the Committee were invited to comment on the proposals. Members welcomed the report and agreed that a successful application to the Heritage Lottery Fund provided the best opportunity to raise the necessary funds to enable the bridge repairs to be undertaken.

Members hoped that, as part of the procurement process to appoint contractors to carry out the works, opportunities could be created to offer apprenticeships to local people.

Councillor Sanderson reported that he would meet with his counterpart at Scottish Borders Council to progress this issue in the next week, and that he appreciated the support of this Committee to the proposals in advance of those discussions.

**RESOLVED** that Cabinet be advised that, subject to the Committee's comments, the recommendations as set out in the report be supported.

#### **5. REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATOR**

##### **Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme**

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator advised members of the arrangements for setting out the Committee's Work Programme. He reported that members should raise potential issues with the Chair, Vice Chair or the Scrutiny Co-ordinator who would then discuss them with the relevant officers and portfolio holder to evaluate whether the issue would be best dealt with through the overview and scrutiny process, or if it would be more productive to have it discharged in another way.

The work programmes for the OSCs together with the Local Area Councils would then be confirmed by the Business Chair, to ensure that issues raised by members were considered by the most appropriate body, thereby avoiding duplication and maintaining consistent decision making.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

## **6. POLICY DIGEST**

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator advised the Committee that this report, which gave details of the latest policy briefings, government announcements and ministerial speeches which may be of interest to members was available through the service finder element of County Council's web site at [www.northumberland.gov.uk](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk).

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

## **7. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item on the Agenda as it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Act as set out below, and
- (b) that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure for the following reasons:

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Paragraph of Part I of Schedule 12A</b>
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- |    |                                                                                                                                            |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 11 | 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). |
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The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the interest in disclosure because the proposed SLA agreement is linked to the commercial arrangements for the acquisition of the Alnwick Playhouse which is still under negotiation.

## **8. REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

### **Proposed SLA with the Northumberland Theatre Company**

Councillor P. Jackson, Leader of the Council advised the Committee that the Cabinet's approval would be sought to enter into a Service Level Agreement with the Northumberland Theatre Company (NTC) to provide a 10 year programme of live performances across Northumberland. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix C).

Councillor G. Castle, as the Local Member, also addressed the Committee in support of the proposals.

Whilst the Committee supported the proposals they did seek assurances regarding the ownership of the building; building maintenance arrangements, and performance against the SLA, whereby payments could be withheld if the agreement had not been fully met by the NTC (as set out in the report).

However, members acknowledged that the Alnwick Playhouse was a significant and popular facility in north Northumberland and hoped that the proposals would secure its future over the next few years.

**RESOLVED** that Cabinet be advised that, subject to the Committee's comments, the recommendations as set out in the report be supported.

Chairman \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_