

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING
(Convened in accordance with Council Minute 77/Oct/12)**

22 OCTOBER 2012

PRESENT:- Councillor Harrison (Town Mayor)(in the Chair); Councillors Mrs Bailes, Cooke, Mrs Grady (Minutes part 95 to 98 inclusive), Hinchcliffe (Minutes 93 to 96 inclusive), Peat, Robinson (Minutes 93 to part 98), Watson and Wood.

Also in attendance:- 2 members of the public (Minutes 93 to 95 inclusive).

Officers:- Mr King (Town Clerk) and Mrs Plant (Assistant Clerk).

93. APOLOGIES:- Councillor Blissett and Mrs Hamilton.

94. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with this Council's adopted Code of Conduct (Minute 72(a)/Sep/12 refers), Members were asked whether they had any personal, pecuniary or prejudicial interests in any matter on the agenda and, if so, to declare those interests at this point of the meeting. Members were reminded that a declaration could be given later in the meeting if a need arose during discussion. Councillors Cooke and Peat declared an interest in Minute 97 and left the room prior to the determination of the resolution.

95. THE COUNTY DURHAM PLAN

Submitted – Pursuant to Minute 77/Oct/12, a report which sought the formulation of the Town Council's response to Durham County Council's consultation on the Local Plan Preferred Options draft of the County Durham Plan, including a summary of the issues Members raised with the County's planning officers at the meeting on 15 October.

Resolved – That this Council's response, in respect of the County Durham Plan, be submitted to Durham County Council as follows:-

(a) *Question 4 – Policy 2* - Barnard Castle Town Council welcomes the recognition of Barnard Castle as one of the 12 main towns in County Durham which "will be the focus for significant retail, housing, office and employment providing better transport and service provision." The Town Council urges the County Council to continue to recognise the consequential demands on infrastructure for services and transport both within and connected to Barnard Castle, which flow from this status.

In particular, the Town Council would like to see explicit recognition of the potential cumulative impact of housing, retail, commercial and tourism development on the Town, due to its unique status as the gateway to Teesdale. The Town Council also expects to see more evidence of the County Council working with health and social care bodies to demonstrate that new service demands which will be created by development have been recognised and will be (capable of being) addressed.

These demands and issues including, but not limited to, parking, traffic management, sustainable travel, tourism facilities and retail development will be significant over the period of this Local Plan. The Town Council recognises the potential importance of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), in addressing these issues, and would consequently wish to see more than 50% of the CIL go directly to the local community (Policy 64).

(b) *Question 25 – Policy 23 – General Employment Sites* Barnard Castle Town Council welcomes the importance that the County Durham Plan places on a prosperous economy and upon improving the economic performance of County Durham. The Town Council feels, though, that there is insufficient provision for employment sites which will provide opportunities for new businesses and for those businesses which seek to grow from small-scale start-ups to SME status and that such provision is necessary in Barnard Castle to support and complement the area's tourism, on which there is a necessary focus.

(c) *Question 31 – Policy 30 – Housing Land Allocations* Barnard Castle Town Council notes the allocation of land at the Auction Mart, Barnard Castle to housing in the medium term (HA/108). The Town Council views this site as the only significant opportunity in the town centre for retail development over the period of the plan and, in particular, for uses which might helpfully support tourism development in and around Barnard Castle. The Town Council also believes that the site's existing commercial and employment value is an important one for the town, which should be both promoted and preserved. The Town Council would expect the County Council to recognise that specific environmental and logistical factors must be addressed in establishing a livestock market and to work with the Auction Mart to help in its relocation. Furthermore, the Town Council recommends that the current Auction Mart site is allocated for mixed retail and housing development.

(d) *Question 32 – Policy 31 – Addressing Housing Need* Barnard Castle Town Council welcomes recognition of the greater need in West Durham for affordable housing. However, that need is not quantified in the plan. The Town Council believes that this is a significant omission and that the plan for housing supply should be compared to the real and assessed need for affordable housing in Teesdale, particularly amongst young people. The Town Council, nonetheless, welcomes that the need for affordable housing is reflected in the 25% proportion of new development as the threshold for affordable provision within West Durham. The Town Council expects that the 'off-site provision of affordable units' would consequently be linked to the wider geographic area in which development takes place (in this case West Durham) and suggests that this should be made more explicit.

(e) *Question 34 – Policy 33 – Sites for Travellers* Barnard Castle Town Council welcomes this policy. The Town Council notes that the proposal to allocate 4.25 hectares at Shaw Bank to employment (Policy 23) will run contrary to it without consequent re-provision of a suitable facility for travellers in (or around) Barnard Castle. In the absence of a viable alternative, the Town Council recommends that Shaw Bank transitional site for travellers is retained.

(f) *Question 49 – Policy 48 – Transport Infrastructures* Barnard Castle Town Council welcomes this policy. The Town Council expects that the definition of a transport corridor to enable a relief road from the A66 east of Barnard Castle to the A67 (in line with the letter submitted on 12 July 2012) is a necessary consideration in Durham County Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan and the Local Transport Delivery Plan, as these programmes of work are progressed. Furthermore, the Town Council favours a solution which utilises the 'western transport corridor', as preferable to partial approaches linking minor roads to the east.

96. LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

Submitted – Pursuant to Minute 86/Oct/12, a report outlining Durham County Council's proposals to localise Council Tax support in line with new central government guidelines, including that a Local Council Tax Support Scheme would be implemented from 1 April 2013, with consequent technical changes to Council Tax discounts on empty properties in order to generate additional council tax income for that Council with effect from that date. It was highlighted that within the proposals, the "double taxation" grant paid to Town and

Parish Councils would be removed. The County Council's consultation letter was also circulated to aid Members deliberations. The consultation deadline for comments was 26 October 2012.

Resolved – (a) That the Town Council welcomes the County Council's approach in introducing the scheme for one year, subject to review.
(b) That discretion and flexibility in the removal of empty property discounts is necessary to ensure that disincentives are not introduced for the renovation and marketing of empty properties.
(c) That the County Council's review of double taxation relief grant should be de-coupled from this exercise as it is a distinct and unrelated issue, which requires a proper, negotiated solution between the County Council and local councils in County Durham.

97. PROPOSED WARD BOUNDARY EXTENSION

Submitted – Pursuant to Minute 48/Jul/12, a report and accompanying maps outlining a suggested revision as to where the Town Council's boundary should be so that Durham County Council's Democratic Services Manager could formally start the process of the proposed boundary extension of the Town Council's area. It was noted that this matter had been considered previously by the Town Council on a number of occasions since 1977.

It was also noted that it was not known as to what the effect the proposed boundary extension would have on the electoral Ward figures.

Resolved – (a) That Durham County Council be advised that this Council recommends that the Town boundary should follow the River Tees north as far as East Holme House, to the east along East Holme House track encompassing Barnard Castle golf course and the Red Well enclosure to join Black Beck and Town Pasture Lane as far as the existing north-western boundary of Westwick Parish, with the southern boundary to be the existing boundary of Marwood Parish and Westwick Parish, with the exception of a small field north of Westwick that includes Mount Eff farm.
(b) That Durham County Council be advised that this Council also recommends that the part of The Oval, Stainton Grove, should be transferred to Stainton and Streatlam Parish and that Mount Eff should be transferred to Westwick Parish.

98. BARTLEMERE - KALAFAT STREET LIGHTING SCHEME

Submitted – A report outlining a potential street lighting scheme to be installed on the footpath between Bartlemere and Kalafat and to be funded by County Councillors Richardson and Rowlandson from their Neighbourhood budgets. However, it was stressed that because the footpath was not adopted and was part of the Tenfield/Kalafat play area, it was therefore the responsibility of the Town Council and as such, Durham County Council expected the ongoing maintenance costs to be paid for by the Town Council.

It was noted that the actual land owners, i.e. Fields in Trust, had confirmed that there were no objections to a street lighting scheme along the footpath.

Resolved – (a) That this Council agrees in principle to the installation of a street lighting scheme on the footpath between Bartlemere and Kalafat.
(b) That Durham County Council be asked to contribute towards half of the annual maintenance costs.