

EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING

WEDNESDAY 11TH OCTOBER 2023 – 7.00 p.m.

Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, on **WEDNESDAY 11TH OCTOBER 2023 at 7.00 p.m.**

PRESENT

Councillor Carl Robinson (Chairman)

Councillors Eddy Adam, Martin Ashcroft, Lindsey Aston, Peter Bergg, Dorothy Bowman, Arun M. Chandran, John Clark, Neil Collinson, George Gray, Ian Gray, Brian Haigh, Andy Hill, Jed Hillary, Wendy Hillary, Simon Hocking, Neville Jones, Sandra Kirby, Ken Robson, Michael Stead, Anne Woodward and John Woodward.

OFFICERS

Mr. D. Austin (Town Clerk)

Mrs. S. Stretch (Senior Administration Officer)

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr and Mrs Ingram

73. NOTICE OF MEETING

The notice convening the meeting was taken as read.

74. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Jim Atkinson, Sandra Haigh, Phillip Hawkins, Joanne Jones, John Moore and Anita Sparrow.

75. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS

No dispensation requests had been received.

76. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest submitted.

77. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

78. NEWTON AYCLIFFE POLICE STATION UPDATE

The Town Clerk provided members with an update in relation to the search for a new police station premises for the Newton Aycliffe Neighbourhood Policing and Response Teams.

It was advised that a viable premises had been identified by the police at Parsons Court on Aycliffe Business Park but that the Police and Crime Commissioner was reluctant to investigate this further due to the previous Council resolution that the premises must be in the town centre.

It was requested that the Council rescind the previous resolution that the police premises must be in the town centre and that a letter be sent to the Police and Crime Commissioner requesting that she investigate the feasibility of the freehold purchase of the identified premises at Parsons Court.

A draft letter was attached to the report for consideration and agreement.

The Town Clerk advised that Standing Orders would need to be suspended to allow the motion to be rescinded at less than six months had passed since the motion was agreed.

Councillor Peter Bergg indicated that he believed that there was never any intention of having a police station within the Town Centre, highlighting that if the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) had intended to build in the town centre they would have used part of the land that they sold off. As the PCC had not done that, despite saying that this was their intention, Councillor Bergg indicated that he would agree only grudgingly with the recommendations of the report.

Councillor Eddy Adam strongly disagreed that it was the intention of the police to not have a presence in the town centre.

There then followed a lengthy discussion during which a number of councillors expressed their opinions on the search for a new premises for the police.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M. Chandran and seconded by Councillor Peter Bergg that the recommendations of the report be approved subject to it being recorded in the minutes that the Council agrees to the premises at Parsons Court being investigated 'under duress' as a result of there being no other viable options available, and that the original motion i.e. that the police station should ideally remain in the town centre, remains the preferred option of the Council.

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft and seconded by Councillor John Clark that Standing Orders be suspended to allow the original resolution to be rescinded.

Councillor Eddy Adam highlighted that the letter to the PCC would need to be updated to reflect the above comments.

The proposal was agreed by majority vote.

Councillor Jed Hillary wished to have it recorded in the minutes that he had voted against the decision.

RESOLVED – as follows:

- i) That the Standing Orders are suspended in order to rescind the original motion;
- ii) That the Motion agreed at the July Council Meeting requiring the police premises to be in the town centre be rescinded.
- iii) That a letter be sent to the Durham Police and Crime Commissioner requesting the following actions:-
 1. that the Durham Police and Crime Commissioner investigate the feasibility of the freehold purchase of the identified premises at Parsons Court and submitting a formal expression of interest to purchase the premises as a matter of priority and;

2. that the above is progressed as quickly as possible subject to a public consultation exercise being undertaken and;
3. that a drop-in facility is maintained at all times in Newton Aycliffe Town Centre either via the current arrangement or the alternatives of a vacant shop premises or the new 'Community Hub'
4. that the PCC liaise closely with Durham County Council regarding any future 'Levelling Up' funding bids for Newton Aycliffe Town Centre with a view to earmarking funds for a permanent premises in the town centre and;
5. that a comment be added to the letter stating that the Council was making this request 'under duress' as a result of there being no other viable options available, and that the original motion i.e. that the police station should ideally remain in the town centre remains the preferred option of the Council.

CHAIRMAN.