

Council

A meeting of Council was held on Wednesday, 26th November, 2008.

Present: The Worshipful the Mayor (Cllr John Fletcher), Cllr Paul Baker, Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Mrs Jennie Beaumont, Cllr Phillip Broughton, Cllr Mrs Ann Cains, Cllr Dick Cains, Cllr Julia Cherrett, Cllr Aidan Cockerill, Cllr David Coleman, Cllr Robert Cook, Cllr Alex Cunningham, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr Jackie Earl, Cllr Mick Eddy, Cllr Mrs Suzanne Fletcher, Cllr John Gardner, Cllr Robert Gibson, Cllr David Harrington, Cllr Miss Barbara Inman, Cllr Mohammed Javed, Cllr Paul Kirton, Cllr Terry Laing, Cllr Miss Tina Large, Cllr Colin Leckonby, Cllr Alan Lewis, Cllr Ken Lupton, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Mrs Kath Nelson, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Mrs Liz Nesbitt, Cllr Bill Noble, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Ross Patterson, Cllr Maurice Perry, Cllr Mrs Maureen Rigg, Cllr Roy Rix, Cllr Fred Salt, Cllr Andrew Sherris, Cllr Michael Smith, Cllr Mick Stoker, Cllr Steve Walmsley, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Mrs Mary Womphrey, Cllr Mick Womphrey, Cllr Bill Woodhead and Cllr Barry Woodhouse.

Officers: N Schneider, H Dean, E Chesworth (CE); D E Bond, P K Bell (LD); M Robinson (DNS); J Danks (R); J Humphreys (CESC).

Also in attendance: Mrs E Chapman (Vice Chair of the Standards Committee), 4 Members of the Public.

Apologies: Cllr Aggio, Cllr Apedaile, Cllr Mrs Craggs, Cllr Dalgarno, Cllr Faulks, Cllr Frankland, Cllr Larkin, Cllr Narroway and Cllr Mrs Trainer.

C Christmas Hospitality

220/08

The Worshipful the Mayor reported that Christmas Hospitality would be held after the Carol Service on 19th December 2008 and also after the meeting of Council on 21st January 2009.

C Minutes

221/08

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th October 2008 were signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

C Declarations of Interest

222/08

Councillor Cunningham declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 27 - Planning Committee minutes, minute P 83/08 as he was a Member of the Regional Development Agency Board.

Councillor Cunningham declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 11 - Cabinet minutes, minute CAB 104/08 as he was a Member of the Regional Development Agency Board.

C Public Question Time

223/08

The Director of Law and Democracy informed the Worshipful the Mayor that no Public Questions had been received.

C Members' Question Time

224/08

The following question was submitted by Councillor Broughton for response by the Cabinet Member for Environment:-

"I would like to welcome the introduction by the Council of the recycling of cardboard and plastics, we have been calling for this, before, during and after the last election. Can I now ask the Cabinet Member for Environment what

further steps the council will be taking with respect of recycling and the environment?"

Councillor Mrs Beaumont responded with:-

"Waste and the environment are key issues at the moment and with the introduction of the Waste Strategy for England 2007 Councils are now required to achieve a recycling rate of 40% by 2010 and 50% by 2020. Consequently, Stockton are currently investigating a range of recycling and re-use schemes to work alongside the new plastic and cardboard scheme.

Recycling initiatives that we have recently introduced or are considering include:-

- The Plastic and Cardboard scheme included recycling of Liquid Food & Drinks cartons, and that will continue within the roll out of the cardboard and plastic collection across the Borough.
- Waste minimisation has also become an important factor and our "no side waste" policy in conjunction with Plastic and Cardboard recycling is already seeing positive results with an average of 35 tonnes per day less waste being collected.
- "On street recycling" with a trial currently being undertaken at a shopping parade on Redhill Road, Roseworth.
- Local parks recycling with a fresh look at Ropner and Preston Park.
- Additional bring facilities are being introduced. i.e. new facilities at York apartments and extended facilities at Tesco at Billingham to include plastic bottles.
- Stockton Borough Councils own waste is also being recycled. Office buildings, schools and community centres have the ability to recycle the waste they produce. Additional work to extend this and create internal targets is also ongoing.
- Highways, Cemeteries and Grounds maintenance waste is currently being recycled along with a percentage of the waste collected from the council's bulky collections and community skips.
- Further waste streams are also being considered for recycling including litter collected by street cleansing, mechanical sweeper waste and also food from school and buildings kitchens.
- Close working with Holme House and Kirklevington prisons is also helping them towards a zero waste facility with a very high percentage of their waste being recycled, composted or re-used.
- Food recycling and Re-use days.

With regard to the environment the Council is at the forefront of many areas of policy and strategy development to enhance the protection of the environment,

the full list is exhaustive but some key aspects, and strategies, include:-

- Arups report to measure the carbon footprint of our waste and recycling service to ensure the scheme was achieving overall carbon reduction.
- 72% of the council fleet are using bio diesel and we are exploring the potential for using Electrical vehicle where appropriate.
- In March 2007 cabinet adopted an environmental policy including a climate change action plan which sets out our approach to achieving a 1.25% reduction in CO2 emissions from industry, transport and domestic emissions.
- A carbon reduction plan to deliver a 25% reduction in carbon emissions from our operations by 2013.
- Our Transport Plan includes strategies to encourage environmentally friendly forms of transport.
- Tees Valley Joint Waste Management Strategy
- Sustainability Appraisal & Strategic Environmental Assessment (LDF)
- Tees Valley Bio Diversity Action Plan
- Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy & Action Plan

Councillor Broughton asked the following supplementary question:-

"Is the economic downturn creating any issues regarding the separate collection of cardboard and plastics?"

The Cabinet Member for Environment responded with:-

"Although the Government are still insisting that authorities meet their target figures for recycling there are now some significant issues arising due to the economic downturn with markets disappearing for cardboard and plastics.

Our contractor's charges for taking these commodities are increasing and there may be a time, in the not too distant future, when a decision will need to be taken as to the viability of collecting them separately from normal refuse.

However, that time has yet not been reached and Members will be kept informed as the situation develops."

The following question was submitted by Councillor Broughton for response by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport:-

"Can the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport explain the allocation of funding for road works within the Borough?"

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport responded with:-

"Funding for the maintenance of roads comes in two ways:-

- Local Transport Capital – from central government as a part of our overall local transport funding, in 2008/09 this was £1.3m. This element is used to improve the condition of A, B and C class roads.
- The Council's own revenue funding set through the process of the Medium Term Financial Plan, in 2008/09 this was £2.1m. This element is used to improve the minor roads and footpath network.

Each year our roads and footpaths are inspected to identify any damage requiring immediate attention and to assess their general condition. The assessment of the condition of our main roads includes a sophisticated measurement of road condition using standard National processes.

Together, with requests we receive for repairs, this information is used to produce a technical assessment of those roads and footpaths in most need of repair. This usually happens around February or March of each year.

Ward members have been requested to submit those roads that they consider a priority for repair in their area and we will do the same for Town and Parish Councils later in the year. This will then be considered, alongside the assessment, to produce the final annual repairs programme.

If Councillor Broughton would like to discuss the method of assessment in more detail with technical officers then this can be arranged if he contacts the Head of Technical Services."

Councillor Broughton asked the following supplementary question:-

"We have had some major road works schemes, which we called for and we are happy with them. However the general road works situation in Grangefield is appalling, we have roads and pavements falling to bits, we have been calling for action and we are getting none. The highest level of need for road repair is level 5, of which there are 11 in my ward, can the cabinet member please explain why this standard has been ignored in Grangefield? How has the selection process of roads been carried out between wards? And won't it be fairer in future to allocate a fair share of funding for all wards throughout the borough?"

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport responded with:-

"All Wards have some parts of roads that are level 5. We are still playing catch up from 1987 - 1997 when the Conservatives were in Government. The budget for funding for road works is not a bottomless pit."

The following question was submitted by Councillor Harrington for response by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport:-

"Could the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport confirm that under the Connect2 scheme, once completed, the routes over the Bridges to Yarm and Eaglescliffe would be classed as a safe walking route for the children of Ingleby Barwick attending Conyers and Egglecliffe Schools?"

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport responded with:-

"The two proposed bridge crossings will clearly provide the potential for safe walking and cycling routes for pupils attending local schools. There may be issues to address on other sections of the route to enable them to be classed as safe routes. At this moment the most direct route between Ingleby Barwick and Conyers School, for example, requires the negotiation of Leven Bank. Clearly, this is a barrier to safe walking and cycling as a means of travel to school.

I would also like to point out that a report to Cabinet of 24th April 2008 on sustainable school travel, from the Regeneration and Transport Select Committee, highlighted several relevant points:-

1. That students from Conyers School had identified the need to make it easier for residents to walk or cycle to school, particularly from Ingleby Barwick,
2. That the proposed connect2 routes from Ingleby Barwick to Yarm and Eaglescliffe will be of particular use in relation to sustainable school travel and
3. That the role of school travel planning needed to be captured in the obesity strategy.

It is clear to me that the Connect2 project would enable us to deliver these points, in particular regarding tackling child obesity.

The Eastern and the Western area transport groups of the LSP both identified the desire for improved cycling and pedestrian links between the local communities of Ingleby Barwick, Eaglescliffe, Thornaby and Yarm. Indeed these links were included within their "Top Five" Transport Priorities.

In response to these local priorities, Stockton Council worked with Sustrans to develop the Connect2 scheme and secured a £600,000 contribution from Sustrans big lottery funding.

The proposed routes will bring the four communities closer together. It will provide a real opportunity for residents from those communities to travel to work, school, the shops, Preston Park, access the River Tees and other community facilities, on foot or by cycle.

Finally, it should be noted that the progress of the Connect2 project is subject to the availability of funding, land, and planning permission. Officers will be reporting to cabinet in May 2009 on these issues."

Councillor Harrington asked the following supplementary question:-

"The Children and Young People Select Committee have been looking at reducing obesity and potential school walking routes around the Borough. Could you identify how a risk assessment will be carried out on the routes?"

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport responded with:-

"Engineers will assess whether routes are safe or not and this will include the

bridges."

The following question was submitted by Councillor Walmsley for response by the Cabinet Member for Adult Services and Health:-

"Bearing in mind the systematic surrender of elderly care home provision to the private sector, and following the closure of Parkview Home, an establishment assessed as faultless by inspectors (and everyone else), does Rosedale have a future?"

The Cabinet Member for Adult Services and Health responded with:-

"Thank you for your question Councillor Walmsley. Although I deplore the language you use in your question it does give me the opportunity again to explain the excellent service we are providing for older people in the Borough which you clearly neither understand or support.

Older people continue to tell us they want more independence and dignity as well as support and that is what we are striving to provide.

Rosedale is a purpose built home containing four independent units. The home provides a diverse range of services within the separate units including:-

- * Permanent residential care to older people
- * Rehabilitation units for older people
- * Step up/step down provision for people with chronic obstructive airways disease

New and innovative ways of delivering care are constantly emerging and Rosedale has shown that its management and staff are able to diversify into new models of service delivery as they emerge and the building's design also means it is able to meet changes in the way services are delivered.

I would like to emphasise that the key to any future changes is our ability to be flexible so we can continue to deliver excellent services to those who need the services and particularly those of greatest need.

C
225/08 **Appeals & Complaints Committee Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Gibson, seconded by Councillor Sherris and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Appeals and Complaints Committee held on 1st October 2008 (Minute ACC 7/08 - ACC 10/08) be received.

C
226/08 **Appointments Panel (Heads of Service) Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Lupton, seconded by Councillor Mrs Beaumont and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Appointments Panel (Heads of Service)

held on 28th October 2008 (Minute APP 19/08 - APP 22/08) be received.

C
227/08 **Appointments Panel (Heads of Service) Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Coleman, seconded by Councillor Laing and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Appointments Panel (Heads of Service) held on 28th October 2008 (Minute APP 23/08 - APP 26/08) be received.

C
228/08 **Appointments Panel (Heads of Service) Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Cunningham, seconded by Councillor Beall and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Appointments Panel (Heads of Service) held on 31st October 2008 (Minute APP 27/08 - APP 30/08) be received.

C
229/08 **Arts Leisure & Culture Select Committee Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Mrs O'Donnell, seconded by Councillor Sherris and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Arts, Leisure and Culture Select Committee held on 10th September 2008 (Minute ALC 11/08 - APP 16/08) be confirmed.

C
230/08 **Cabinet Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Lupton, seconded by Councillor Mrs Beaumont and RESOLVED that the minutes of Cabinet held on 6th November 2008 (Minute CAB 94/08 - CAB 106/08) be confirmed or received as appropriate subject to the following correction and amendment:-

Correct the Cabinet minutes of 6th November 2008, Minute CAB 103/08, Page 570:-

Delete resolution 3 and replace with:-

3. The continuation of the Homes for the Future Tenants Group be endorsed.

Also add after resolution 7:-

RECOMMENDED to Council that a Member Reference Group be established.

The following amendment was also proposed and agreed to the correction as follows:-

RECOMMENDED to Council that a politically balanced Member Reference Group of 10 Members be established.

C **Children & Young People Select Committee Minutes**
231/08

Moved by Councillor Harrington, seconded by Councillor Eddy and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee held on 27th August 2008 (Minute CYP 25/08 - CYP 30/08) be confirmed.

C **Children & Young People Select Committee Minutes**
232/08

Moved by Councillor Harrington, seconded by Councillor Eddy and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee held on 24th September 2008 (Minute CYP 31/08 - CYP 35/08) be confirmed.

C **Children & Young People Select Committee Minutes**
233/08

Moved by Councillor Harrington, seconded by Councillor Eddy and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee held on 8th October 2008 (Minute CYP 36/08 - CYP 40/08) be confirmed.

C **Corporate, Adult Services & Social Inclusion Select Committee Minutes**
234/08

Moved by Councillor Stoker, seconded by Councillor Rix and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Corporate, Adult Services and Social Inclusion Select Committee held on 4th August 2008 (Minute CAS 22/08 - CAS 24/08) be confirmed.

C **Corporate, Adult Services & Social Inclusion Select Committee Minutes**
235/08

Moved by Councillor Stoker, seconded by Councillor Rix and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Corporate, Adult Services and Social Inclusion Select Committee held on 16th September 2008 (Minute CAS 25/08 - CAS 27/08) be confirmed.

C **Corporate, Adult Services & Social Inclusion Select Committee Minutes**
236/08

Moved by Councillor Stoker, seconded by Councillor Rix and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Corporate, Adult Services and Social Inclusion Select Committee held on 7th October 2008 (Minute CAS 28/08 - CAS 33/08) be confirmed.

C **Environment Select Committee Minutes**

237/08

Moved by Councillor Mrs Rigg, seconded by Councillor Smith and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Environment Select Committee held on 22nd September 2008 (Minute ENV 19/08 - ENV 22/08) be confirmed.

C
238/08 **Executive Scrutiny Committee Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Gibson, seconded by Councillor Leckonby and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Executive Scrutiny Committee held on 30th September 2008 (Minute EXC 39/08 - EXC 46/08) be received.

C
239/08 **Executive Scrutiny Committee Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Gibson, seconded by Councillor Leckonby and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Executive Scrutiny Committee held on 28th October 2008 (Minute EXC 47/08 - EXC 54/08) be received.

C
240/08 **Health Select Committee Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Mrs Cains, seconded by Councillor Beall and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Health Select Committee held on 8th September 2008 (Minute H 47/08 - H 52/08) be confirmed.

C
241/08 **Housing & Community Safety Select Committee Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Mrs Cherrett, seconded by Councillor Mrs Fletcher and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Housing and Community Safety Select Committee held on 25th September 2008 (Minute HCS 26/08 - HCS 29/08) be confirmed.

C
242/08 **Housing & Community Safety Select Committee Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Mrs Cherrett, seconded by Councillor Mrs Fletcher and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Housing and Community Safety Select Committee held on 16th October 2008 (Minute HCS 30/08 - HCS 33/08) be confirmed.

C
243/08 **Licensing Committee Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Woodhead, seconded by Councillor Mrs Nelson and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Licensing Committee held on 13th October 2008 (Minute L 49/08 - L 50/08) be received.

C
244/08 **Licensing Committee Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Woodhead, seconded by Councillor Mrs Nelson and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Licensing Committee held on 20th October 2008 (Minute L 51/08 - L 57/08) be received.

C
245/08 **Licensing Committee Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Woodhead, seconded by Councillor Mrs Nelson and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Licensing Committee held on 4th November 2008 (Minute L 58/08 - L 64/08) be received.

C
246/08 **Planning Committee Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Rix, seconded by Councillor Gardner and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 24th September 2008 (Minute P 75/08 - P 84/08) be received.

C
247/08 **Planning Committee Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Rix, seconded by Councillor Gardner and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 15th October 2008 (Minute P 85/08 - P 102/08) be received.

C
248/08 **Planning Committee Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Rix, seconded by Councillor Gardner and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 24th October 2008 (Minute P 103/08 - P 104/08) be received.

C
249/08 **Planning Committee Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Rix, seconded by Councillor Gardner and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 5th November 2008 (Minute P 105/08 - P 116/08) be received subject to the following correction:-

With reference to Minute P110/08, Page 704, Head of Terms (1), delete the

word "pool" out of the third line.

C
250/08 **Regeneration & Transport Select Committee Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Perry, seconded by Councillor Cains and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Regeneration and Transport Select Committee held on 22nd September 2008 (Minute RTS 20/08 - RTS 23/08) be confirmed.

C
251/08 **Standards Committee Minutes**

Moved by Mrs E Chapman, seconded by Councillor Dixon and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Standards Committee held on 25th September 2008 (Minute STD 67/08 - STD 74/08) be received.

C
252/08 **Standards Committee Minutes**

Moved by Mrs E Chapman, seconded by Councillor Dixon and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Standards Committee held on 23rd October 2008 (Minute STD 75/08 - STD 86/08) be received.

C
253/08 **Cleveland Police Authority Executive Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Cleveland Police Authority Executive held on 17th September 2008 were noted.

C
254/08 **Cleveland Police Authority Executive Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Cleveland Police Authority Executive held on 30th September 2008 were noted.

C
255/08 **Markets Forum Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Markets Forum held on 24th September 2008 were noted.

C
256/08 **Members Advisory Panel-New Constitution Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Members Advisory Panel held on 24th September 2008 were noted.

Councillor Eddy thanked the Mayor/Mayoress/all Members of the Council and Officers for their work regarding the Chains as well as thanks to Thornaby Town

Council Members and the Thornaby Town Council Clerk.

C
257/08 **Safer Stockton Partnership Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Safer Stockton Partnership held on 19th August 2008 were noted.

C
258/08 **Improving Decision Making - Planning Committee**

At Council on the 15th October 2008 Members agreed to the following amendments to the Cabinets recommendations relating to Agenda Item CAB 81/08, Alterations to the Constitution – Decisions made Contrary to Officer Recommendations and Informal Hearings:-

Resolution 1

The alterations to the constitution and planning protocol which refer to officer's attendance at Appeals (where Members have refused applications against officer recommendations) be approved.

Resolution 2

The necessary changes to the Constitution be made to incorporate the new protocol as in Resolution 1.

Resolution 3

The change in protocol to defer the decision notice for three weeks whilst officers examine the reasons for refusal or acceptance against Planning Officers' advice are examined be deferred for a full background report to be presented to Council at a future Council Meeting.

Resolution 4

A review be undertaken one year after the implementation of the changes to the Constitution and the planning protocol. This review to be undertaken by the Head of Planning and the Planning Committee in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport. The findings and any subsequent recommendations will be reported to Cabinet and acted upon within a timeframe agreed by Cabinet and Planning Committee.

Members considered a further report that gave further details of the proposal as required in Resolution 3.

The performance of the Planning Committee had been under review for some time and in an attempt to improve decision making, particularly relating to the procedures associated with those decisions made contrary to officer recommendations, a new procedure had been identified which was designed to give an opportunity for further consideration, by officers and Members, and to reduce the risk both in terms of reputation and potential costs.

During 2007/8 there had been 24 decisions made contrary to officer recommendation, representing 16.33% of the total number of decisions made at committee. Of those 17 had been the subject of an appeal, and of the 15 appeals determined to date, the Planning Inspectorate had allowed 9 resulting

in a performance of 60%, the bench mark of a good local authority being 30%. It would be perfectly acceptable for Members to appropriately challenge officer recommendations and there were often subjective assessments on issues of design. However, the crux of the matter remained that if Members wished to make a decision against officer recommendation there had to be justifiable planning grounds to do so that could be evidenced.

The proposed protocol would give an opportunity for Members to try a new approach to decision making which would allow time for further consideration of those decisions where officers determined that there were insufficient planning grounds, or evidence, to support the Planning Committees decision.

Members were presented with the following proposed protocol:-

"1. Following consideration of a planning application and a full debate by Members and officers the committee will be asked to make a decision based on the evidence placed before them. In exceptional circumstances if the committee is still minded to approve or refuse the application contrary to officer recommendation and contrary to the advice of the Head of Legal Services that the reasons provided appear unreasonable or unsustainable on appeal, the decision must be either 'minded to approve to minded to refuse the application'.

2. Following the meeting, Planning and Legal officers in consultation with the Corporate Director of Development and Neighbourhood Services and/or the Director of Law and Democracy will further investigate issues raised and whether the conditions/reasons are reasonable and sustainable. If it is considered that they are the decision notice will be issued accordingly. If not, the Planning Committee members will be notified, giving them an opportunity to substantiate their reasons for the interim decision and seek further information as they deem appropriate prior to the application being considered at the next Planning Committee meeting who will make a final determination."

The protocol would operate for a 12 month trial period and would demonstrate a mature approach in attempting to improve the authority's performance. It would not remove or dilute the democratic rights of committee members to determine a decision as they thought fit but would allow further time for consideration, reflection and investigation."

RESOLVED that:-

1. The necessary changes to the Constitution be made and be subject to the review process previously agreed at Resolution 4.
2. The Planning Code of Conduct be updated to incorporate the Protocol.

C
259/08

Proposed Dispensation for Non-Attendance at meetings

Consideration was given to a report that outlined that Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 provided that where a council member failed, throughout a period of six consecutive months, to attend any meeting of this authority then he ceased to be a member of the authority unless the failure was due to some

reason approved by the authority before the expiry of that period.

Councillor Frankland was incapacitated due to illness and had been unable to attend any meeting of the authority for a period in excess of 4 months. Councillor Frankland was unlikely to be in a position to attend a meeting in the near future and had requested that Council considered granting him a dispensation.

RESOLVED that Councillor Frankland remain qualified until such time as he is recovered from his illness and is able to attend a meeting of the Council.

**C
260/08** **Motion - Re-dedication of the Declaration of Human Rights**

The following motion was moved by Councillor Fletcher and seconded by Councillor Lupton:-

"On December 10, 1948 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The thirty, short, but visionary Articles set out the values for a truly inclusive society. Following this historic act the Assembly called upon all Member countries to publicise the text of the Declaration and "to cause it to be disseminated, displayed, read and expounded principally in schools and other educational institutions, without distinction based on the political status of countries or territories."

It was proposed that, in order to mark the 60th Anniversary of this proclamation, the Council authorises the Mayor, on behalf of all Members of the Council, and the communities they represent, to sign a facsimile of the Universal Declaration, re -dedicating the Borough to the principles contained in it."

The Motion was carried.

**C
261/08** **Forward Plan and Leaders Statement**

The Leader of the Council gave his Forward Plan and Leaders Statement.

Contractors, Parkinson Limited, had started on site for the £2.5 million extension to Splash in Stockton Town Centre. This hugely popular leisure facility would remain open during the 12 month construction programme.

In Billingham, the contractor had been appointed to carry out the £15 million refurbishment of the Forum. Morgan Ashurst had a proven track record in delivering first class leisure schemes of this kind across the country and work has set to start in July 2009.

The first phase of the Thornaby Town Centre development was complete. The new block of retail units had opened and already the likes of the Post Office, William Hill and Jalz Hairdressers had opened their doors. Work would continue on the Town Centre regeneration which would be completed by the middle of 2009.

The Northshore Development Partnership, a joint venture between Urban

Splash and Muse Developments, had launched the "Make me a Home" international architecture competition, challenging architects to shape the future of family housing.

The competition, organised by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), invited architects to deliver a new housing typology at Northshore. There were plans for 250 family homes to eventually stand at the site, and the partners wanted creativity and a concept which would break the mould.

The deadline for the competition was the 1st of December and the short listing process would take place during January with the overall winner expected to be announced in February 2009. At the latest count there had been over 180 expressions of interest. Displays would be available for viewing after the judging of the competition entries had concluded.

Meanwhile, the economy was still very much at the forefront of people's minds and a report on the credit crunch would go to Cabinet in December so Members could familiarise themselves with that report if they wished. Every cabinet meeting in the future would have an update report, as long as the economic crisis continued, identifying the actions the Council was taking to help residents and businesses through the difficult times. The unemployment figure for Stockton for October rose to 3.6% against the August and September figure of 3.4% an increase of just over 200 people.

The Government had asked the One NorthEast Board and the Leaders' Forum to advise on the regional priorities for expenditure over the next 10 years on capital programmes for transport, housing, economic development, regeneration and skills. The JSU was preparing a report setting out the Tees Valley's priorities for this.

This was on the back of the recently announced decision that drawing up regional strategies would be a joint responsibility of the RDAs and the Local Authority Leaders' Forum. This would plug the democratic deficit in the government's original proposals and make sure that directly elected authorities were fully involved in decisions affecting our area.

It had also been announced that RDA funding would be delegated to Councils as part of the sub national review package, as the Government had recognised that such delegation was possible under existing powers.

John Healey, the Minister for Local Government and Regeneration, had agreed to be a keynote speaker at a conference organised by Tees Valley Unlimited on its work on February 16 at Wynyard Hall. The conference would consider housing, regeneration and transport, and tours of regeneration schemes in the Tees Valley in the afternoon. All members would be invited to attend.

Finally, on 27th November 2008 the start of Stockton's first ever Christmas Market Fair and members were urged to head along and enjoy everything the town had to offer. Stockton's market was synonymous with the town and throughout the four day festival it would be at the heart of the festivities. There would also be the circus, street theatre, log cabins and specialist farmers' market. All this was part of the wider Stockton Sparkles Festival which ran until Christmas Eve and would offer festive entertainment for all the family.

Items of interest included in the Forward Plan were: -

The sale of Saltersgill School

The Annual performance Assessment of Children's Services

The Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan

Concessionary Fares – Assessment of Usage

Billingham House

Social Housing Investment – Proposed older persons housing on the former Parkview home site.

Flood management and the Council's response to the Pitt Review.