

Council

A meeting of Council was held on Wednesday, 20th October, 2010.

Present: The Worshipful the Mayor (Cllr Colin Leckonby); Cllr Hilary Aggio, Cllr Mrs Lynne Apedaile, 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 Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr Jackie Earl, Cllr Mick Eddy, Cllr Kevin Faulks, Cllr John Fletcher, Cllr Mrs Suzanne Fletcher, Cllr Maurice Frankland, 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 Alan Lewis, Cllr Ken Lupton, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Mrs Kath Nelson, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Bill Noble, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, 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 Mary Womphrey and Cllr Mick Womphrey.

Officers: N Schneider (CE); D E Bond, P K Bell,(LD); P Dobson (DNS); J Danks, L King, A Kelly (R); J Humphreys (CESC).

Also in attendance: Mr F W Hayes (Chairman of the Standards Committee).

Apologies: Cllr Eileen Craggs, Cllr Jean Kirby, Cllr Liz Nesbitt, Cllr Ross Patterson, Cllr Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Bill Woodhead and Cllr Barry Woodhouse.

C The Rifles - Letter of Thanks

152/10

The Worshipful the Mayor read out a letter of thanks that had been received from Brigadier J C W Maciejewski DSO MBE regarding the recent Freedom Parade for The Rifles.

C Former Councillor Norman Teasdale

153/10

Members stood in a minute's silence as a mark of respect for former Councillor Norman Teasdale.

C Declarations of Interest

154/10

Councillor Dixon declared a personal, non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 13 - Cabinet Minute CAB 81/10 as he was a Director of Barwick's Own 2nd Secondary School.

Councillor Harrington declared a personal, non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 13 - Cabinet Minute CAB 81/10 as he was a Director of Barwick's Own 2nd Secondary School.

C Minutes

155/10

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 8th September 2010 were signed by the Worshipful the Mayor as a correct record.

C The Joint Authorities Group (JAG) UK - Award

156/10

The Worshipful the Mayor presented the JAG (Joint Authorities Group) UK Award to Steve Dodds (Engineer - Highway Network Management Team) for his efforts and contribution in connection with street works and traffic management issues.

C Northumbria in Bloom Awards

157/10

The Worshipful the Mayor informed Members of the results of the Northumbria in Bloom Awards.

The Northumbria in Bloom Gold Award 2010 went to Stockton on Tees for achieving Best City in 2010 for a seventh successive year.

The Northumbria in Bloom Best Park in a Town Award 2010 went to Stockton on Tees for Ropner Park.

The Worshipful the Mayor and the Cabinet Member for Environment congratulated the Care For Your Area team on their achievements and presented the awards to the Jamie McCann (Head of Direct Services), Dave Mace and Dave Snowden (Direct Services).

C Entente Florale Awards

158/10

The Worshipful the Mayor informed Members of the results of the Entente Florale Awards.

Stockton on Tees won the prestigious Entente Florale 2010 Gold Plaque. Stockton on Tees achieved the highest possible standard after representing the UK in Europe's biggest environmental competition.

The Worshipful the Mayor and the Cabinet Member for Environment congratulated the Care For Your Area team on their achievements and presented the awards to the Jamie McCann (Head of Direct Services), Dave Mace and Dave Snowden (Direct Services).

C APSE Award

159/10

The Worshipful the Mayor informed Members of the results of the APSE (Association of Public Service Excellence) Awards.

Stockton on Tees won Best Team of the year 2010 award for Parks, Grounds and Horticulture.

The Worshipful the Mayor and the Cabinet Member for Environment congratulated the Care For Your Area team on their achievements and presented the awards to the Jamie McCann (Head of Direct Services) and Nigel Clark (Horticulture Manager).

Stockton on Tees also won the APSE (Association of Public Service Excellence) Overall Council of the Year 2010 award in Service Delivery.

From more than 300 entries across the UK this award was testament to the hard work of all of the staff, who provided a consistently high standard of front-line services.

The Worshipful the Mayor presented the award to the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council.

C Public Question Time

160/10

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

C Appointments Panel (Heads of Service) Minutes

161/10

Moved by Councillor Mrs McCoy, seconded by Councillor Gibson and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Appointments Panel (Heads of Service) held on 10th September 2010 (Minute APP 13/10 - APP 15/10) be received.

C Appointments Panel (Heads of Service) Minutes

162/10

Moved by Councillor Mrs McCoy, seconded by Councillor Gibson and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Appointments Panel (Heads of Service) held on 17th September 2010 (Minute APP 16/10 - APP 19/10) be received.

C Audit Committee Minutes

163/10

Moved by Councillor Womphrey, seconded by Councillor O Donnell and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Audit Committee held on 23rd August 2010 (Minute A 24/10 - A 30/10) be received.

C Cabinet Minutes

164/10

Moved by Councillor Lupton, seconded by Councillor Mrs Beaumont and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Cabinet held on 30th September 2010 (Minute CAB 66/10 - CAB 79/10) be confirmed or received as appropriate.

C Cabinet Minutes

165/10

Moved by Councillor Lupton, seconded by Councillor Mrs Beaumont and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Cabinet held on 14th October 2010 (Minute CAB 80/10 - CAB 81/10) be received subject to the following correction:-

At minute CAB 80/10:-

Following the paragraph relating to Councillor Patterson's declaration of Interest insert:-

"He also had a personal, non prejudicial interest in the item as he was a Director of Barwick's Own 2 nd Secondary School".

C Children & Young People Select Committee Minutes

166/10

Moved by Councillor Harrington, seconded by Councillor Eddy and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee held on 9th June 2010 (Minute CYP 12/10 - CYP 13/10) be confirmed.

C Children & Young People Select Committee Minutes

167/10

Moved by Councillor Harrington, seconded by Councillor Eddy and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee held on 30th June 2010 (Minute CYP 14/10 - CYP 19/10) be confirmed.

C Children & Young People Select Committee Minutes

168/10

Moved by Councillor Harrington, seconded by Councillor Eddy and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee held on 14th July 2010 (Minute CYP 20/10 - CYP 24/10) be confirmed.

C Children & Young People Select Committee Minutes

169/10

Moved by Councillor Harrington, seconded by Councillor Eddy and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee held on 1st September 2010 (Minute CYP 25/10 - CYP 30/10) be confirmed.

C Corporate, Adult Services & Social Inclusion Select Committee Minutes

170/10

Moved by Councillor Stoker, seconded by Councillor Apedaile and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Corporate, Adult Services & Social Inclusion Select Committee held on 20th July 2010 (Minute CAS 10/10 - CAS 15/10) be confirmed.

C Employee Appeals Panel Minutes

171/10

Moved by Councillor Rix, seconded by Councillor Mrs Nelson and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Employee Appeals Panel held on 17th June 2010 (Minute EAP 7/10 - EAP 9/10) be received.

C Employee Appeals Panel Minutes

172/10

Moved by Councillor Rix, seconded by Councillor Mrs Nelson and RESOLVED

that the minutes of the Employee Appeals Panel held on 6th July 2010 (Minute EAP 10/10 - EAP 12/10) be received.

C
173/10 **Employee Appeals Panel Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Rix, seconded by Councillor Mrs Nelson and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Employee Appeals Panel held on 12th July 2010 (Minute EAP 13/10 - EAP 15/10) be received.

C
174/10 **Employee Appeals Panel Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Rix, seconded by Councillor Mrs Nelson and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Employee Appeals Panel held on 2nd August 2010 (Minute EAP 16/10 - EAP 18/10) be received.

C
175/10 **Employee Appeals Panel Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Rix, seconded by Councillor Mrs Nelson and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Employee Appeals Panel held on 17th September 2010 (Minute EAP 19/10 - EAP 22/10) be received.

C
176/10 **Environment Select Committee Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Mrs Rigg, seconded by Councillor Smith and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Environment Select Committee held on 9th August 2010 (Minute ENV 13/10 - ENV 18/10) be confirmed subject to the following correction:-

Minute ENV 15/10, Page 370:-

At the first line delete "9th August 2010" and replace with "28th June 2010".

C
177/10 **Executive Scrutiny Committee Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Gibson, seconded by Councillor Miss Large and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Executive Scrutiny Committee held on 27th July 2010 (Minute EXC 9/10 - EXC 14/10) be received.

C
178/10 **Health Select Committee Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Mrs Cains, seconded by Councillor Faulks and

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Health Select Committee held on 5th July 2010 (Minute H 15/10 - H 21/10) be confirmed.

C
179/10 **Housing & Community Safety Select Committee Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Cherrett, seconded by Councillor Earl and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Housing & Community Safety Select Committee held on 10th August 2010 (Minute HCS 17/10 - HCS 22/10) be confirmed.

C
180/10 **Licensing Committee Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Mrs Nelson, seconded by Councillor Kirton and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Licensing Committee held on 28th July 2010 (Minute L 23/10 - L 28/10) be received subject to the following correction:-

Minute L 26/10 Page 384:-

In the first resolution second line delete the word "attainted" and replace it with the word "obtained".

C
181/10 **Licensing Committee Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Mrs Nelson, seconded by Councillor Kirton and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Licensing Committee held on 23rd August 2010 (Minute L 29/10 - L 41/10) be received.

C
182/10 **Licensing Sub Committee Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Mrs Nelson, seconded by Councillor Kirton and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Licensing Sub Committee held on 2nd August 2010 (Minute LSC 22/10 - LSC 24/10) be received.

C
183/10 **Licensing Sub Committee Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Mrs Nelson, seconded by Councillor Kirton and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Licensing Sub Committee held on 16th August 2010 (Minute LSC 25/10 - LSC 27/10) be received.

C
184/10 **Planning Committee Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Rix, seconded by Councillor Salt and RESOLVED that the

minutes of the Planning Committee held on 25th August 2010 (Minute P 48/10 - P 53/10) be received.

C
185/10 **Planning Committee Minutes**

Moved by Councillor Rix, seconded by Councillor Salt and RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 15th September 2010 (Minute P 54/10 - P 59/10) be received.

C
186/10 **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 26th July 2010 (Minute RTS 28/10 - RTS 32/10) be confirmed.

C
187/10 **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 16th August 2010 (Minute RTS 33/10 - RTS 39/10) be confirmed.

C
188/10 **Cleveland Fire Authority Authority Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Cleveland Fire Authority held on the 30th July 2010 were noted.

C
189/10 **Cleveland Police Authority Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Cleveland Police Authority Executive held on the 15th June 2010 were noted.

C
190/10 **Cleveland Police Authority Executive Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Cleveland Police Authority Executive held on the 25th June 2010 were noted.

C
191/10 **Parish Council Liaison Forum Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council Liaison Forum held on the 20th September 2010 were noted subject to the following correction:-

At minute PCL 9/10 delete the words "Council appointed" from the declaration by Councillor Mrs Beaumont.

C **Schools' Workforce Joint Consultative Panel**

192/10

The minutes of the meeting of the Schools' Workforce Joint Consultative Panel held on the 14th July 2010 were noted.

C
193/10 **Proposed Dispensation for Non-Attendance – Councillor Nesbitt**

It was reported 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 his/her authority then he/she 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 Nesbitt was incapacitated due to illness and had been unable to attend any meeting of the authority for a period in excess of 4 months. It was requested that Council consider granting her a dispensation.

RESOLVED that Council grant a dispensation to allow Councillor Nesbitt to remain qualified as a Member until such time as she has recovered from illness and is able to attend a meeting of the Council.

C
194/10 **Members' Question Time**

The following question was submitted by Councillor Walmsley for response by the Leader of the Council:-

"As the only group to argue against the re-branding of the former Teesside International Airport – ironically referred to as TIA – can we now assume that with the introduction of extortionate charges to all would be passengers to keep the airport afloat that the other TIA (Thornaby Independent Association) were absolutely right in opposing the utter nonsense which has now led to the airport being in such a perilous state?"

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

"The Chief Executive Officer from Peel Airports has supplied the following response:-

It would be quite misleading to suggest any relationship between the issue of the name change at Durham Tees Valley, introduced some years ago, and the current urgent need to achieve financial stability at the airport.

The reality, as outlined to our local authority shareholders recently, is that, in common with all sections of air transport industry, Durham Tees Valley has been severely affected by the impact of the global recession, leading to significant falls in passenger numbers.

When Vancouver Airport Services took the decision earlier this year to invest in Peel Airports it was made clear that putting Durham Tees Valley on a firm financial footing would be a top priority—along with working to increase the range of flights and services.

Already significant savings in operating costs have been put in place and the drive to improve efficiency will continue. At the same time it has to be

recognised that some services, such as air traffic control and firefighting, must be maintained regardless of passenger numbers.

The decision to introduce a Passenger facility fee was taken only after a great deal of careful consideration. We recognise that no-one likes to be asked to pay money, but it must be understood that this measure is a vital element in the plans for securing the future of the airport.

We are continuing our efforts to attract new services and develop new opportunities, despite conditions in the air transport industry remaining very challenging.

We are aware of the ongoing debate over the area's identity and views on the airport name. It is matter which we will keep under consideration and review but at present our key objective is to achieve financial stability."

Councillor Walmsley asked the following supplementary question:-

"I was sitting up here when the presentation was made to us on the re-branding and how this would make the airport as good as Newcastle. Flying over ICI will not be the same as flying over Durham Cathedral. We do not want to see the airport in financial difficulty but the people that agreed the re-branding should step down. Re-branding has not worked?"

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

"Over £30 million has been spent on the airport including new runway lighting. The airport can only make money from airlines and passengers which makes it difficult for the airport in the current economic climate."

The following question was submitted by Councillor Walmsley for response by the Cabinet Member for Housing & Community Safety:-

"TriStar: How much was spent on Decent Standards and how much can TriStar legitimately guarantee to be spent on housing following stock transfer?"

The Cabinet Member for Housing & Community Safet responded with:-

"In the eight years of the ALMO there has been £200million spent on improvements, maintenance and repairs.

Following transfer, Tristar plans to spend:-

- around £140million on improvements, maintenance and repairs in the first five years
- around £600million on improvements, maintenance and repairs over thirty years

All of the spend alongside the income coming into the new company forms part of the detailed Tristar Business Plan which gets submitted to funders as part of the transfer process.

Details of investment in Tenants homes is part of the offer document that was sent to tenants as part of the ballot process. Post transfer it will be part of the legally binding agreement between the Council and Tristar Homes."

Councillor Walmsley asked the following supplementary question:-

"I am delighted the Cabinet Member has responded. Is the £600 million a guaranteed figure and can residents have confidence in that?"

The Cabinet Member for Housing & Community Safety responded with:-

"Yes the figure is a legally binding guarantee. There will be a programme of works to replace windows and kitchens."

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

"The Mandale Triangle Gyratory scheme – oddly suggesting that it will improve bus transport – has led to a glut of complaints to ward and town councillors about what purpose it really serves. Can the Cabinet member inform us who designed this project and at what cost?"

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Transport responded with:-

"The Mandale Gyratory bus works form part of the Tees Valley Major bus scheme, which received funding from Central Government in June this year.

The detailed design of the works was undertaken by the Council and the cost of the works was £600K, which is funded directly from the major scheme. Works to repair Victoria Bridge were also completed at the same time, which were funded from maintenance budgets."

Councillor Walmsley asked the following supplementary question:-

"This is leading to my next question but are the only beneficiaries the occasional bus that travels over the Victoria Bridge. Whoever inherits Thornaby Town Hall will also have £100k of improvements. Isn't all this a waste of public money?"

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Transport responded with:-

"The answer to the second part of your supplementary question is no. The answer to the first part is that the scheme was developed by the Council and former JSU to improve overall bus journey times between Stockton and Middlesbrough, with over 40 buses per hour in each direction using the route. The works have deliberately taken out capacity for cars to use the route as the opening of 1825 Way to the A66 was always intended to reduce traffic over Victoria Bridge.

Improvements in reliability for bus services are key to improving the experience for users and increasing patronage. The Mandale works, together with the improvements scheduled for Riverside Roundabout will reduce journey times for

buses significantly."

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

"I have sat on the Licensing Committee when taxi drivers were not only obliged to pay for the cost of improving or replacing vehicles, but also pay the consequences of not providing an acceptable service. Therefore, why should this Council fork out £450k or thereabouts to subsidise bus companies who routinely do what they want? Isn't this akin to the tail wagging the dog?"

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Transport responded with:-

"I am glad you have toned down your question Councillor Walmsley and you should apologise to the Licensing Committee Members.

The bus companies run commercial services that don't always suit the ideals of the Council for covering community areas. The Council has to therefore fund additional services for those areas that are not commercially viable yet do have a demand for public transport, including some de-minimus diversions.

This is a national position since bus deregulation in 1985. Some examples include:-

- 588/589 service linking The Clarendons with Billingham and Stockton
- 507 daytime services running through Yarm and Thornaby to Stockton Town Centre.

All services that are subsidised are done under contract that specifies the route, timings and frequency to ensure the Council's objectives are met."

Councillor Walmsley asked the following supplementary question:-

"I will not apologise to Licensing Committee Members. Taxi drivers have a job to do and should be treated with the respect they deserve. I was at a recent meeting regarding the houses on Westbury Street. Some of the houses have structural damage because of the buses and the kids take their life into their own hands when they are going to school. Why couldn't we do something sensible with the £600k that was spent on the Mandale Triangle Gyrotory scheme?"

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Transport responded with:-

"We are looking at the problems in Westbury Street but it is because of the bus patronage that the buses travel on that street. We can not tell the bus companies not to use the street. I have asked officers to have a further look at the situation. Licensing Committee Members have a job to do as well as taxis drivers."

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

"(P 317) refers to the White Water Course and other matters related to the initiative. Does the Cabinet member agree that should an Olympic Steering Group ever truly scrutinise the state of the area on the Thornaby side of the river that they might re-think staging anything in this area?"

The Cabinet for Regeneration & Transport responded with:-

"It is recognised that the land ownership on Teesdale development has left inconsistencies that mean the Council does not control all areas and are therefore unable to maintain them to the levels that are seen elsewhere around the Borough.

A Member, Officer and resident group have been working towards some piecemeal solutions around the anti-social behaviour, street cleanliness and maintenance. The challenge remains around the land that is not owned by Stockton Council and that's why for some time now we have been pursuing the private developers of this site to fulfil their legal duty to properly maintain their land, with little success.

British Waterways are one organisation that owns many areas of riverside walkway that need attention. I have asked that Senior Officers ensure British Waterways responsibilities are followed up as a matter of urgency.

I am also conscious that the legal position is frustrating, particularly with the seemingly unwillingness of the private developers to take action, but before we can adopt this land and take control, we must pursue all avenues to try and make the landowners accountable for their responsibilities.

Nevertheless the Council will continue to support local residents and try and target some resources, albeit piecemeal, to improve the area whilst continuing to actively lobby and pursue legal means against the landowners to pay for the clear-up."

Councillor Walmsley asked the following supplementary question:-

"The white water course is incidental to the question and is an excellent facility. It wasn't meant to trip the Cabinet Member up. I went on a walk with a BBC reporter recently near Trinity Mews and we discussed the poor state of the area on the Thornaby side of the river. How are these companies allowed to be set up and then be dissolved leaving Stockton Council to pick the bills up? The local MP's could help the people that have moved in there and I don't mind saying that these people that set up these companies are crooks.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Transport responded with:-

"It only costs £100 to form a company and the liability is only £1 for each member. It should be a criminal offence to do what these people are doing. Two years ago I went round the site with somebody from Durham University to look at some of the areas. Officers have looked at costs for remedial work. We are trying to pursue these companies and it is a disgrace what these companies are doing to the Teesdale area."

C
195/10 **Forward Plan and Leaders Statement**

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

The Leader of the Council outlined it would be easy for Members to look on the awards received by the employees and the Council as self indulgent and self congratulatory but he believed that the success in the areas involved was an expression of the dedication and professionalism of everyone concerned in the Council in serving the community and added his thanks to everyone concerned.

By way of contrast Members were aware that the Chancellor's announcement on public spending was made earlier on the day of this meeting.

While it would take a while for the Council to understand the full details of what had come through, the Leader of the Council shared a few headlines with Members:-

- As with all budget announcements the devil would be in the detail. The headline statement for local government was that it was going to face cuts of 7.1% each year for 4 years. However, it was not yet clear whether these totals took into account additional changes to Local Government Financing.
- All Councils that freeze their council tax in 2011/12 would be funded at a flat rate of 2.5%.
- Capital funding from all departments to Councils would fall by 45% over the period of the review.
- The PFI funding for the replacement of the street lighting stock had also been withdrawn.

A more detailed briefing would be sent to all Members and there was also a Member's seminar on Monday, 25th October 2010 in the Lecture Hall, Stockton Central Library.

On the Economy:-

There were some positive announcements that could be seen in the coming weeks.

At the next Cabinet the Council would learn the outcome of two very important inspections into Safeguarding and Looked after Children and Adults inspections. These were extremely thorough and far ranging and while they won't be public until later in the week and into next – the Council had every confidence that they reflected the progress that had been made in these areas.

the Council were also expecting next week an announcement of the Tees Valley's bid to become a Local Enterprise Partnership. Again, all the signs pointed to a positive outcome for the Tees Valley which would be a tremendous opportunity for our area.

The Council had recently learnt that Stockton was one of the Country's three fastest growing places for new business start ups with the Business Barometer,

published by Royal Mail showing the number of new businesses in the UK increasing for the first time in 18 months.

The news that Stockton was a leader in enterprise growth followed last month's announcement naming it as the most enterprising place in the North east, as regional winner in the Enterprising Britain competition.

Some Local Investment News included:-

TAG Energy Solutions was developing a plant at Haverton Hill to manufacture offshore wind turbine foundations, which was likely to create 100 jobs initially with a further 300 coming on stream to service orders in a £20m investment programme.

And to recognise all this work Stockton would host next month - Stockton Enterprise Week – a whole host of enterprising activities to encourage local people to set up businesses.

From the 15th to 19th November 2010 an ambitious programme of events would offer people the chance to find out about anything from becoming a market trader, to setting up in the digital industries or getting on in the music business.

There were over 500 businesses now signed up to receive electronically a "Business Briefing" called Connected to Business an initiative from the Council outlining recent investments, regeneration news and how the Council could help business.

And finally:-

The Council was coming to the end of a legal process which would see the demolition of Billingham House starting on site early in the New Year.

And today the Leader had received a letter from the store manager of Debenhams stating that the rumours that the High street store was closing had no foundation and that they were proud to have a store in Stockton and value the support and loyalty of their customers.